‘Rural Restructuring’:
A Multi-Scalar Analysis of the Otago Central Rail Trail.

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Science

at

Lincoln University

by

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Lincoln University

2008
Abstract


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‘Rural restructuring’ has frequently been used to indicate the magnitude, and conceptualise the nature, of contemporary change in the countryside. Most notably, concern has focused upon the fundamental changes in economic and social organisation brought about by the increasing leverage of consumption-based activity as a path to rural development. By drawing on the relevant literature, however, I suggest in this thesis that the use of ‘rural restructuring’ as a conceptual framework has been inconsistent. The issue of scale is a case in point with scholars positioning their studies of rural change at varying levels of analysis. In response, I adopt Massey’s (2004) arguments about space and place to present an alternative model which considers ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process.

To explore the feasibility of approaching ‘rural restructuring’ in this way, the thesis focuses, in particular, upon the development of rural tourism at five different scales. These comprise the national scale (New Zealand), the regional scale (Central Otago), the sub-regional scale (the Otago Central Rail Trail), the business scale (five business case studies) and the individual scale (five entrepreneurial case studies). Reflecting the exploratory nature of the study and its multi-scalar approach, I use a number of qualitative research methods. These include interrogating the promotion of New Zealand and Central Otago as tourist destinations, cycling along the Otago Central Rail Trail, staying at accommodation businesses along the Rail Trail, and interviewing individual entrepreneurs about their experiences of business development.
The analytical chapters of the thesis comprise an in-depth look at the promotion or experience of rural tourism development at each scale of analysis. Through identifying inter-scale consistencies and emphasising the reciprocal basis of such consistency, I present ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process. Thus, I connect the national-scale targeting of the ‘interactive traveller’ to the promotion of Central Otago as a ‘World of Discovery’, before linking the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail to its regional context. I then investigate the nature of business development as intimately bound to the evolution of the Rail Trail, before finally tying these entrepreneurial creations to individual accounts of exhaustion and enjoyment that emerge from the operation of tourism businesses. The thesis ends by concluding that ‘rural restructuring’ can indeed be considered a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process, worked out simultaneously at wide-ranging but interconnected levels of change.

**Keywords:** Rural restructuring, multi-scalar, mutual constitution, tourism development, New Zealand, Central Otago, Otago Central Rail Trail, rural entrepreneurialism, rural lifestyles.
Acknowledgements

Thanks must especially go to my supervisor, Harvey Perkins. I genuinely feel that without your personal support, academic insight, and immutable enthusiasm, I would not have progressed beyond Middlemarch. Your guidance is fully appreciated. I leave you with the knowledge that I will continue to dispel ten irrational fears each day until such fears no longer exist. Thank you also to my associate supervisor, David Fisher, for your helpful advice regarding this thesis.

This study could not have been completed without the participation of Bill and Maureen Theyers, Ngaire Sutherland and Michelle Taylor, Shirley and Malcolm Hodge, Graeme Duncan, and Nikki and Ralph Milne. Your willingness to discuss business development along the Rail Trail not only provides the basis upon which this thesis stands but has also left me with a wonderful impression of the people of New Zealand. I thank you all for your assistance and hospitality.

Throughout the year, I have depended upon the financial support provided by Lincoln University. This took the form of regular endowments from the Scholarship Office. Thank you to Jane Edwards in particular. On this note, I would not have studied in New Zealand if it were not for the trust invested in me by the Selection Committee of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan. Thank you for this belief.

I would also like to thank the Environment, Society and Design Division for the research funding that was made available for this project. Douglas Broughton has been especially helpful in ensuring financial reimbursement.

Finally, my parents have, as ever, been inspiring figures throughout the last year. Despite having the whole world between us, your patience and understanding have ensured the completion of this thesis. I am eternally grateful for the immeasurable encouragement and motivation that you continue to provide.
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1. Introduction

Since the mid-80s it’s changed, New Zealand,
it’s certainly changed and we’ve had to change with it.

Graeme Duncan

1.1 ‘Rural Restructuring’

There are few in Central Otago that predicted the emergence of the Otago Central Rail Trail as an international tourist attraction. The region is one of New Zealand’s least populous areas and endures the country’s greatest climatic extremes. Furthermore, while its history is characterised by the 150-year dominance of mining and farming, the sporadic townships that line the route of the Rail Trail have suffered from years of social and economic decline. Graeme Duncan, a local resident and business owner, recalls the sceptical views of the local population when the idea was first explored 15 years ago: “It will never work” was a common local reply upon hearing about the proposed conversion of a disused railway line into a recreational trail; “But we have no history” was the widespread response to claims that tourists would be interested in the heritage of the trail and its broader area; “What would they want to do that for?” was asked on numerous occasions as the opportunity for tourists to walk, cycle or horse-ride the 150 km route was presented. That was prior to the official opening of the Otago Central Rail Trail in early 2000. Now, eight years on, up to 60,000 domestic and international visitors are using the trail each year, a statistic reflected in the Rail Trail’s position as one of New Zealand’s most popular tourist attractions. Indeed, the project has been officially hailed by New Zealand’s Minister of Tourism and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Damien O’Connor, as an exemplar for “the type of tourism product the high country can offer”. As such, the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail offers rich potential for investigating the complexity and dynamism of contemporary rural change.

‘Rural restructuring’ is a term that has been frequently used by scholars to signify such changes in the countryside. More specifically, the phrase has most often been presented to indicate fundamental economic and social flux in rural areas, grounded in varying levels of quantitative and qualitative evidence. Furthermore, ‘rural restructuring’ has been applied to insinuate the totality of change. Thus, Woods (2005; p.40) suggests that “from the domestic

1. Introduction

routines of rural families to the investment decisions of global agri-food corporations; from the ownership of rural property to the management of the rural environment”, change in the countryside is increasingly prominent. One aspect of restructuring that has been particularly focused upon is an apparently widespread shift in the relations between, and relative importance of, production-based and consumption-based activity in the countryside. Many scholars go as far as to argue that it is this transition which underlies the multi-dimensional nature of rural change. Much research has therefore centred on the restructuring of the agricultural industry while other studies have drawn on the notion of commodification in order to determine the particular processes by which the countryside is ‘sold’ to potential consumers. In both cases, there has been a common concern for the economic and social implications of such developments.

While ‘rural restructuring’ is useful in signifying the deep-seated nature of economic and social change, its use, to put it mildly, has been ‘loose’ (Woods 2005). Perhaps most notably, scholars have varied in the extent to which they approach ‘rural restructuring’ as a theoretical concept or as empirically-grounded. As Wilson (1995; p.418) suggests:

In practice it is impossible to achieve a balance between the local and the general, with most locality studies falling on one side or the other, with the more empirical locality studies hardly distinguishable from case studies.

It is, however, precisely this apparent ‘impossibility’ that I take issue with in this thesis. By positioning the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail as a focal point, and as indicative of the growing importance of consumption-based activity to economic and social development in many rural areas, I advance an alternative understanding of ‘rural restructuring’. In particular, the framework that I adopt holds potential for rural change to be considered in terms of both its broad generality and its specific localism. For ‘rural restructuring’ to maintain its conceptual validity, I argue, it should be approached as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process. The organisation of this argument, which comprises the crux of this thesis, is now outlined.
1. Introduction

1.2 Outline of Thesis

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the literature to which this thesis responds. ‘Rural restructuring’ is explored as a useful conceptual framework through which change in the countryside can be addressed. I argue, however, that scholars have approached rural change without adequately interrogating the links between the different spatial scales at which restructuring occurs. Section 2.2 therefore focuses on structural perspectives which consider ‘rural restructuring’ in relation to broad-scale capitalist processes. Section 2.3 provides an overview of place-based accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ which attempt to highlight the more specific nature of change. I then turn to so-called lifestyle analyses in Section 2.4. These further convey the heterogeneity of ‘rural restructuring’ by focusing on individual experiences of change. This section also addresses the agency implicated in ‘rural restructuring’ by introducing work that has been done on rural entrepreneurs. I conclude Chapter 2, however, by suggesting that the issue of scale can be resolved through applying the ideas of Massey (2004) to ‘rural restructuring’. Section 2.5 thus articulates an understanding of space and place as mutually constitutive. I then adapt this argument by presenting a model which conceptualises ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process.

Building on the arguments developed in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach used to apply the idea of ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive phenomenon. Section 3.1 thus outlines the aims and objectives which underpin the construction of this thesis. As well as highlighting the project’s focus upon rural tourism development as a component of ‘rural restructuring’, the section also introduces the Otago Central Rail Trail which comprises the empirical basis of this study. I am then able to illustrate more clearly the way in which the model of ‘rural restructuring’ will be applied. Section 3.2 outlines the research questions that I attempt to answer in the thesis before providing a brief overview of the qualitative methods used to collect the necessary data at each scale of analysis. I finish Section 3.2 by drawing on Law (2004) to justify the ‘messy’ nature of the research process. This ‘messiness’ becomes apparent in Section 3.3, where I provide a detailed chronological account of the research undertaken for this thesis. The section traces project development through the stages of ‘exploration’, ‘sharpening’, ‘interviewing’ and ‘inspection’.

Chapters 4 to 9 comprise the analytical chapters of the thesis. This begins, in Chapter 4, with an emphasis upon the mutually constitutive relationship between global-scale and national-
scale change before I focus in more detail upon ‘rural restructuring’ in New Zealand. I outline New Zealand’s transition from a ‘model of social democracy’ to an internationally competitive nation-state, and suggest that this has been reflected in the growing importance of consumption-based activity to rural development in the country. I then consider the particular features of the national tourism product that has been developed and argue that the nature of national-scale ‘rural restructuring’ reflects Tourism New Zealand’s targeting of the ‘interactive traveller’.

Chapter 5 builds on the arguments presented in Chapter 4 by linking regional-scale ‘rural restructuring’ to the restructuring of New Zealand more broadly. I thus consider the process by which Central Otago is increasingly linked to opportunities for rural-based consumption, a development which challenges the traditional hegemony of production-orientated activities in the region’s rural areas. By focusing upon the regional tourism product in more detail, however, I am also able to suggest that ‘rural restructuring’ in Central Otago has reflected Tourism Central Otago’s branding of the region as a ‘World of Difference’. I argue that the nature of this symbolic construction, and the restructuring of rurality that it entails, is reciprocally linked to restructuring at the national scale.

Chapter 6 further develops the notion of ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process. In this chapter, I outline the conversion of the Otago Central Railway into the Otago Central Rail Trail and argue that the development of this sub-regional tourism product comprises a more specific instance of the changing relations between production and consumption in the countryside. Furthermore, following a more critical interrogation of the Rail Trail and its association with three particular ‘appreciations’, I claim that the specific nature of ‘rural restructuring’ at this scale is in accordance with tourism development at the regional scale.

Chapter 7 provides an introductory overview of the five businesses and the individuals who participated in this study. Thus, in Chapter 8, I move to the business-scale of ‘rural restructuring’ by investigating the nature of business development along the Otago Central Rail Trail. Through analysing entrepreneurial provisions of ‘comfort’, ‘hospitable and informative hosts’, and ‘historical insight’, the chapter argues that ‘rural restructuring’ at this scale is dependent upon the mutually constitutive relationship that businesses have with the Rail Trail along which they are operating.
1. Introduction

The final analytical chapter, Chapter 9, takes a case-study approach and considers ‘rural restructuring’ at its most local level. In particular, I draw on material provided by the five entrepreneurs involved in this study to suggest that ‘rural restructuring’ is reflected in a change to people’s experiences of rurality. A concern for the mutually constitutive nature of ‘rural restructuring’ is maintained by linking these experiences to the businesses that entrepreneurs have created. This is accomplished by considering rurality in terms of its performance. Performances, I suggest, are both generative and experiential. Thus, while entrepreneurs are developing particular businesses, they are also experiencing rurality in new ways as a result of their involvement in business development.

I present, in Chapter 10, the conclusion to this thesis. I provide a brief recap of the theoretical and practical bases of this project before outlining the arguments that emerge from my analysis. In particular, I suggest that a consideration of ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process is justified by the findings of the study. This contention is firstly backed up with reference to a multi-scalar shift from production-based, towards consumption-based, rural development. Having focused especially upon the nature of rural tourism development at each scale, however, I am able to argue that the notion of ‘rural restructuring’ as mutually constitutive is reinforced by my identification of more specific multi-scalar consistencies. Chapter 10 ends with the outline of a number of issues that arose during the research and analysis. I dispel any potential problems that emerge from these, however, enabling me to conclude that a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive approach to ‘rural restructuring’ holds considerable potential for change in the countryside to be considered anew.
2. Three Approaches to ‘Rural Restructuring’

In response to the crisis of representation, new strategies have been developed in an effort to find a way which satisfies an individual researcher’s desires to reconcile concepts of structure and agency, difference and multiplicity, and yet does not negate their ability to advance an argument

Ateljevic and Doorne (2002; p. 650).

2.1 Introduction

I argue in this section that the emergence of ‘strategies’ to reconcile varying levels of commitment to the notions of structure and agency have not extended to studies on ‘rural restructuring’. Most often used to indicate a major quantitative and qualitative change from one form of social organisation to another (Hoggart and Paniagua 2001), ‘rural restructuring’ has thus been considered from a number of alternative perspectives. Indeed, while descriptors such as ‘dynamism’, ‘complexity’, and ‘heterogeneity’, are increasingly applied in post-modernist work focused on the countryside, there also remains a modernist perception that ‘rural restructuring’ can be considered a systematic phenomenon. In essence, research into rural change continues to be hindered by varying levels of emphasis upon the roles of structure and agency in such change.

In this section I highlight the disjuncture of conventional understandings of ‘rural restructuring’ by focusing on the different ways in which scholars have positioned structure and the agent. This is accomplished with an initial focus in Section 2.2 upon political-economic and structural approaches to ‘rural restructuring’ which tend to root their analyses in macro-scale shifts and trends. I then turn, through focusing on place-based accounts of rural change in Section 2.3, to the burgeoning research in the social sciences that attempts to highlight the diverse and contingent nature of rural change. Section 2.4 draws on developments in the literature on rural lifestyles and thereby considers individual experiences of, and agency in, ‘rural restructuring’. I end this chapter by suggesting in Section 2.5 that the issue of scale in analyses of rural change can best be resolved through adopting Massey’s (2004) conceptualisation of the space-place relationship. The section thus concludes with the outline of a multi-scalar model which can be applied in studies of ‘rural restructuring’.

See Phillips (2002) for an intriguing insight into the class-based aspects of this conceptual dualism in rural studies.
2. Three Approaches to ‘Rural Restructuring’

2.2 Structural Interpretations of ‘Rural Restructuring’

2.2.1 Political-Economy

By definition, political-economists frame their analyses of societal change with a focus upon macro-scale capitalist processes. In particular, they are concerned with identifying the changing relations between the state, civil society and the economy, and consider societal flux to emerge from the impact of aspatial capitalist forces (Cloke 1989). Consequentially, causes of spatial variation are to be found in the differentiation of global-scale and national-scale functions and activities (Cloke 1989; Cloke and Goodwin 1992), and are therefore generalisable.

From this standpoint, ‘rural restructuring’ is considered to be a structural process, emerging at the broad international and national scales. Analytical interest is therefore centred on the implications of macro-economic and -political change for rural space and society (Cloke 1989). According to Woods (2005), such an approach is characterised by a commitment to conceptualise socio-spatial change in the countryside as shaped and influenced by events, institutions and actors operating outside rurality, rather than as grounded in discrete and isolated rural spaces (also see Perkins 2006). As a result, the adoption of a political-economic perspective puts the distinctiveness of rurality into question as empirical instances of ‘rural restructuring’ are merely understood as localised manifestations of broad political-economic shifts (Cloke 1989; Cloke and Goodwin 1992).

Framing analyses at the structural scale led to a heightened interest in societal change in the latter stages of the 20th Century, when political-economic reforms were widely implemented and a post-Fordist regime of capital accumulation apparently emerged (Cloke and Goodwin 1992). To elaborate, the post-war era had been characterised by state commitments to ensure high levels of social equity and to play a highly interventionist role in national economic development. State regulation of socio-economic development took the form of considerable support for, investment in, and ownership of, sectors of the national economy. The development of these so-called welfare states in the advanced capitalist world thus led to national geographies of high employment rates, considerable levels of social support, and a stable and robust economy that benefited all of the nation-state’s constituent territories (Le Heron and Pawson 1996).
The 1970s and 1980s, however, were characterised by growing concerns regarding the emergence of an increasingly global economy. Attempting to respond most effectively to this development, many states implemented political-economic reforms that reflected neo-liberal principles (Drummond et al. 2000; Lyson 2006). Advocates of neo-liberalism consider economic development to be most effectively achieved through submission to the global market rather than through dependence upon a supportive state. As a result, political-economic restructuring has been typically characterised by a lessening of state commitments to social equity, the reduction of state intervention in, and support for, the national economy, and the associated privatisation of national industries (Le Heron and Pawson 1996). The resultant removal of tariffs, quotas, and other trade barriers has led to the opening up of national industries to the dynamism of a highly competitive global market.

### 2.2.2 From Productivism to Post-Productivism

For Murdoch (2006), rural areas in advanced capitalist societies were primarily characterised, in the post-war era, by a structural homogeneity reflecting the centralised or top-down political-economic regulation of development. The supportive role of the state ensured that the countryside, like elsewhere, was typified by high rates of employment in state-owned, or state-funded, industries and by the widespread availability of essential services (Le Heron and Pawson 1996). Furthermore, the provision of significant state support for farming (in terms of subsidies and price support schemes) led to the emergence of a *productivist* agricultural industry in which it was most profitable for farmers to produce as much as possible (Halfacree 1997; Ilbery and Bowler 1998; Drummond et al. 2000; Woods 2005). Not only did this political-economic era facilitate the growth of an agricultural industry based on capital-intensive technologies, an increasing range of farm inputs, processes and products, and the concentration of production in fewer and larger agricultural units (Commins 1990; Woods 2005). A state-led approach to rural development also ensured the influence of agriculture (as the hegemonic regime of capital accumulation) upon economic, political and socio-cultural relations in rural areas (Cloke and Goodwin 1992), and thereby led to the emergence of a productivist countryside more generally. Halfacree (2006) presents a similar understanding of post-war rurality, suggesting the maintenance of a widespread harmony between the material, representational and lived spheres of rural space that corresponded to the hegemony of farming.
More recently, and in line with the political-economic reforms outlined in Section 2.2.1, there has been an apparently significant shift in the ‘structured coherence’ of relations in rural areas (Cloke and Goodwin 1992). In particular, a plethora of scholarly work has appeared that contemplates the emergence of a post-productivist countryside (Argent 2002; Holmes 2002; Evans et al. 2002; Wilson and Rigg 2003; Mather et al. 2006). Again, the establishment of this conceptual framework has been rooted in the structural development of the agricultural industry (see, in particular, Commins (1990), Ilbery and Bowler (1998) and Drummond et al. (2000)). The widespread, although often partial, withdrawal of state support for agriculture is commonly seen to have initiated the development of alternative trends in farming practice. In essence, agriculture is no longer driven by financial rewards for producing as much as possible but has increasingly required adaptation to compete effectively in a global market. Woods (2005), for instance, suggests that evidence of an extensive departure from the productivist era is expressed in three broad tendencies; farms have become more specialised, the close ties between farmers and the local community have been weakened, and agriculture has become more vulnerable to economic forces operating at a global scale. The apparent emergence of a post-productivist agricultural industry is also indicated by declining levels of employment in agriculture (Roberts and Hall 2001) and a divergence in the fortunes of larger agricultural corporations and smaller farming units (Clark 1991).

Once again, however, the notion of post-productivism has been extended beyond the realms of agriculture to insinuate a more general restructuring of the social, economic, political and cultural spheres of rurality (Evans et al. 2002; Wilson and Rigg 2003; Murdoch 2006). In previously occupying a hegemonic position that defined the nature of relations in the countryside, the decline of productivist agriculture has correspondingly entailed the widespread reformulation of rural society. Cloke and Goodwin (1992) suggest that political-economic reform has therefore enabled the production-based ‘structured coherence’ of rurality to be increasingly challenged by the leverage of alternative regimes of capital accumulation in the countryside. Most notably, there has been growing scholarly interest in consumption-based activity in the countryside (Roberts and Hall 2001; Crouch 2006), and the associated commodification of rurality.³

³ ‘Commodification’ refers to the process by which the exchange value of an object becomes greater than its use value. It follows, then, that commodification involves the cultural construction of something (in this case, rurality) as valuable and meaningful (see Cloke 1994; Woods 2005; Perkins 2006).
2. Three Approaches to ‘Rural Restructuring’

2.2.3 Rurality and Consumption

To reiterate, structural accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ root the changing nature of rural society in broader political-economic processes of capitalist development which regulate the most effective regime of capital accumulation in the countryside. As the era of agricultural hegemony indicates, a shift in the dominant regime is likely to entail the multi-dimensional development of a new ‘structured coherence’ (Cloke and Goodwin 1992). Thus, from a political-economic perspective, the broad restructuring of rurality has not only been facilitated by the declining sustainability of productivist agriculture but also by the development of alternative and more profitable ways to regulate rural space and accumulate capital (Cloke 1989; Halfacree 1997).

In particular, it is commonly argued that macro-scale processes towards the end of the 20th Century have entailed a reconstitution of the relationship between, and relative importance of, production (based on agriculture) and consumption in the countryside (Cloke and Goodwin 1992; Halfacree 1997; Roberts and Hall 2001; Woods 2005). Indeed, increasing evidence of consumption in, and of, rural space has often been posited as a central component of the post-productivist countryside (Roberts and Hall 2001; Woods 2005) and as illustrative of rurality experiencing a functional transition. Such a transition has been reflected in a general commodification of rurality to the extent that Kneafsey (2001) claims that the countryside now exists as both a commodity itself and as a set of commodifiable signs and symbols. This symbolic reproduction of rurality for the purposes of consumption not only reflects the decline of productivist agriculture as the most profitable industry in the countryside however. The development of a consumption-based rurality has also depended upon the maturation of a globalised consumer culture that values rural space and society (Bell 2006). The emergence of rurality as an attraction for consumers includes its perceived potential to satisfy nostalgic longings for a simpler past, to provide a symbol of status, and to meet the desires of ecotourists (Müller and Jansson 2007).

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4 Although see Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) for a critique of this argument.
5 Such longings are commonly seen to emerge from the increasingly fluid and mobile nature of the world and a related desire to root oneself in time and space (Le Heron and Pawson 1996; Nuryanti 1996; Urry 2002). The association of rurality with satisfying a yearning for the past is well rehearsed but especially see Short (1991) and Bunce (1994) for comprehensive accounts of this development.
6 Richards (1996; p.266) suggests that, as the cultures of consumption mature in scope and extent, “there is a constant search for new experiences and sources of stimulation that help to distinguish particular social groups”.

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This valorisation of rural space and all things rural is evidenced in a number of processes that range from the development of new agricultural products to counter-urbanisation (Halfacree 1997; Swaffield and Fairweather 1998; Edensor 2006; Perkins 2006). The attachment of symbolic value to the countryside, however, is perhaps most apparent in the growth of rural tourism. Like agriculture, tourism, Müller and Jansson (2007) argue, is just another expression of a capitalist system of accumulation. Indeed, in potentially satisfying the touristic search for cultural capital, thrill and spectacle (Urry 2002), and unique, participatory and authentic tourism experiences (Richards 1996; Ringer 1998), the proliferation and success of rural tourism projects represents the potentially profitable re-incorporation of rurality into a global economy characterised by a steady increase in international tourist flows (Smith 2005). Developing rural tourism, however, is also commonly posited as fulfilling the need to remedy socio-economic decline in the countryside (Roberts and Hall 2001; Hall et al. 2003; Sharpley and Vaas 2006; Müller and Jansson 2007). As Ringer (1998) rightly asserts, tourism is a potent force culturally, economically, environmentally and socially. The emergence of a rural economy increasingly dependent upon tourism can thus be considered a central component of ‘rural restructuring’.

2.2.4 Masking Heterogeneity Part I

Structural accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ are useful in identifying a widespread functional transition in the countryside (i.e. from a ‘structured coherence’ based on agricultural hegemony to one increasingly based on the commodification of rurality for consumption (Cloke and Goodwin 1992)) and in linking such change to broad-scale political-economic shifts. They have an unfortunate tendency, however, to simplify the dynamic and diverse nature of rural development (see, in particular, Hoggart and Paniagua 2001; Argent 2002; Holmes 2002; Evans et al. 2002; Wilson and Rigg 2003). All-encompassing concepts, such as ‘post-productivism’, implicitly frame socio-economic changes in the countryside in terms of a fixity that corresponds to the evolution of macro-scale processes. As a result, the countryside is conceptualised as a passive arena of society, and any restructuring witnessed therein is theorised as solely attributable to the workings of abstract capitalist entities operating above and beyond rural space (Coombes and Campbell 1996). Perhaps most important, however, is the associated tendency for structural accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ to impose a superficial homogeneity upon rural development (Woods 2005). To elaborate, by accounting for spatial

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7 Although Woods (2005) suggests that tourism is best developed as a supplement to an already buoyant rural economy.
variation through analysing political-economic shifts and thereby situating the causes of rural change at the level of broad-scale capitalist development, at least some degree of uniformity to ‘rural restructuring’ is implicitly implied.\(^8\)

Such an approach was arguably sustainable in post-war rural development when, as outlined, rural areas were primarily organised in socio-economic terms by the state-sponsored tendency to maintain the dominance of agriculture in the countryside. As Murdoch (2006) argues, rural society and space, in this period, were *structured* by the political-economic orientation of the nation-state. With the decline of productivist agriculture and the growing importance of consumption in the countryside, however, the notion of rurality being characterised by an agriculturally grounded homogeneity has become unsustainable. Murdoch (2006), for instance, argues that rural space is now increasingly differentiated on the basis of its *networked* political, economic and social organisation\(^9\) (also see Goodwin et al. 1995 and Marini and Mooney 2006). In a similar vein, Halfacree (2006) claims an emergent heterogeneity in the spatiality of the countryside, suggesting that the material, representational, and practical spaces of rurality are now characterised more by contestation that congruence. Furthermore, the apparent emergence of empirical trends pointing to the differentiated nature of the countryside has been coupled with conceptual developments concerned with highlighting such multiplicity and heterogeneity.\(^10\)

In short, there have been growing concerns to move away from framing ‘rural restructuring’ at the macro-scale of political-economic reform and structural process and to instead draw attention to the contingent and localised nature of ‘rural restructuring’. I now turn to place-based accounts of rural change to document one way in which researchers have attempted to navigate the dynamic, complex and spatially heterogeneous nature of ‘rural restructuring’.

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\(^8\) There have, furthermore, been related claims that political-economic analyses are especially lacking a consideration for culture. This is considered particularly important with the development of sign-based economies in the contemporary era (see Gottdiener 2000 and Phillips 2002).

\(^9\) In apparent opposition to the claims of Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) that ‘rural restructuring’ has been used too frequently to indicate only a partial change to rural space, Murdoch (2006) argues that the transition from structure to network as a basis for rural organisation has been both widespread and multi-dimensional.

\(^10\) The emergence of such concerns is, in large part, associated with the impact of the Cultural Turn in the social sciences which developed in the 1980s and demanded recognition of the inherent instability and heterogeneity of cultural meaning.
2. Three Approaches to ‘Rural Restructuring’

2.3 ‘Rural Restructuring’ and Place Specificity

2.3.1 Accounting for Diverse Development Paths

The emphasis in Section 2.2 was very much on ‘rural restructuring’ signifying a significant and widespread re-organisation of rural space. Referring to space implies a broad and generalisable process. This structural perspective imposes, through the adoption of terms such as ‘post-productivism’, a degree of uniformity upon rural development. There is a more recent body of work, however, that has attempted to portray ‘rural restructuring’ as a partial, heterogeneous, and context-dependent process by emphasising the localised specificity of rural change. By focusing on place and particular place-based instances of ‘rural restructuring’, these accounts demonstrate that political-economic forces intersect with local, and therefore heterogeneous, contexts. In short, from these perspectives, ‘rural restructuring’, and the associated development of rural tourism, are processes manifest in the reproduction of particular places.

Such an approach has partly been encouraged by the influence of post-modernism in the social sciences which has heightened analytical concern to uncover plurality and multiplicity in contemporary society. Recognition of modernist macro-scale accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ as increasingly untenable, however, has also emerged as a result of a shift in rural policy. In particular, the post-war tendency for socio-economic relations in the countryside to reflect a state-led (and agriculturally-dominated) orientation towards rural development has been challenged by a political recognition of the spatially variable nature of rurality (Shortall 2004). This has been demonstrated in a widespread turn to the principles of community-led rural development (Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins 2004; Woods 2005) aimed at empowering rural communities and citizens (Welch 2002; Shortall 2004). As a result, the socio-economic development trajectories of different rural places have increasingly come to reflect the particular capacities and potentialities that the local context affords rather than the impact of sector-specific policies implemented by central government. Woods (2005) therefore sees the role of the state as having shifted from provider, to facilitator, of rural development.

11 Although Drummond et al. (2000) question the logic behind moving from agricultural (sector-specific) to territorial (community-based) rural policy.

12 In opposition, some scholars (e.g. see Jenkins et al. 1997 and Lyson 2006) suggest that the growing influence of the world economy and global forces means that rural communities are steadily losing control of local development paths.
Furthermore, recognition of the place-based differentiation of ‘rural restructuring’ has also been encouraged with the requirements that come with developing a successful consumption-based rural economy. In particular, operating in a neo-liberal political-economic environment sets rural areas in direct competition with one another. Places are therefore required to provide their own ‘niche’ of consumption that is most effective in appealing to touristic desires for novelty and difference (Marini and Mooney 2006). Indeed, Kearsley et al. (1997) suggest that the growth in tourists seeking authentic, unique and participatory experiences means that places are no longer considered a neutral backdrop to standardised and passive forms of consumption, but as a central component of the tourist product. This development becomes particularly apparent when the role of culture is considered in the restructuring of rural places.

2.3.2 The Notion of Culture-Economy

To succeed in a competitive consumption-based global market, places must be portrayed and promoted in a manner that is globally recognisable yet simultaneously emphasises local uniqueness (Schöllman 2003). As such, one way in which rural places have undergone restructuring is through the community-led reproduction of local culture for consumption, to the extent that local economies and cultures are increasingly inseparable (Richards 1996; Panelli et al. 2003). Ray’s (1998) notion of ‘culture economy’ has therefore proved especially fruitful in guiding place-based accounts of ‘rural restructuring’. Ray considers this approach to rural development to comprise an attempt by rural communities to localise economic autonomy and to re-valorise place through drawing on local culture. Understanding culture as local knowledge (ways of doing things and understanding the world), he suggests that such knowledge is used as a resource by the local community for constructing a territorial identity. If successfully engineered, this identity provides a powerful and profitable image both to the ‘outside’ world and to the local community itself. Local knowledge may thus be repositioned, reinserted, rediscovered or even reinvented, for the purposes of developing an identity that will appeal to both potential visitors and investors, and local residents and businesses. Furthermore, according to Ray (1998), rural areas have a number of advantages over non-rural areas in developing a successful and locally embedded culture-economy. These include the manner in which the manifestation of culture in rural landscapes is often more transparent than elsewhere, as well as the idea that local cultural systems are able to retain a presence more successfully in rural areas.
Many place-based accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ draw on the notion of a local culture economy.\textsuperscript{13} To offer one example, Panelli et al. (2003) explore the small town of Tirau in New Zealand. Following the broader decline of agriculture, and the restructuring of the public sector, they report that “by the end of the 1980s, Tirau was literally a ghost town of empty shops.” (p.385). By focusing on the landscape, however, they suggest that, from a place “symbolising local authority…, rural industry and services…”, Tirau has recovered from its downfall as a service centre “to become a reconstituted, consumption-focussed ‘destination’.” (Panelli et al. 2003; p.386). As Ray (1998) would suggest, this has depended upon the transformation of local culture into a resource and an associated reconstruction of the town’s identity and economy. The reproduction of ‘local knowledge’ for the purposes of developing a successful culture-economy in Tirau, is most clearly reflected in the construction of two buildings; one in the form of a sheep, which houses a wool and textile craft shop, and the other in the form of a dog, which contains the town’s information centre and public toilets. According to Panelli et al. (2003; p. 392), both structures “…acknowledge the farming history, yet their erection has had strategic cultural and economic functions that are aimed predominantly at creating a spectacle…”.

### 2.3.3 The Commodification of Place

As Panelli et al.’s (2003) work indicates, the restructuring of rural places and the development of a culture economy is manifest in changes to the material world. Ray’s (1998) attendance to the identity of place implies, however, that the successful development of a culture economy and the associated restructuring of rural places also involves a symbolic reproduction of the meanings associated with such places. Broadly, as outlined in Section 2.2.3, the restructuring of rural meaning has comprised a shift from rural space being associated with agriculture and other production-based industries to being associated with opportunities for consumption. More specifically, however, rural places are inscribed with consumptive meanings in particular ways depending on the process of commodification that the local context and culture allows. Floysand and Jakobsen (2007), for example, demonstrate how the restructuring of Sogndal, Norway, has been based upon the centrality of the local football club in the community. As such, through the valorisation of local culture, the image of Sogndal projected to both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ revolves around sport, creativity and youthfulness.

\textsuperscript{13} See Kneafsey (2001), for instance, who, basing her study in rural Brittany, couples Ray’s (1998) model of developing a culture economy with a concern for the interaction of historically layered and newer social relations.
As Irvine and Anderson (2007) point out, it is often a positive image of otherness, difference and exotic cultures that attracts tourists to rural places, for these descriptors are often associated with the pristine environments, authenticity and tradition that many tourists seek. Otherness and difference may also be considered in terms of repulsion, risk and alienation, however, so the development of a territorial identity requires careful management. Boyne et al. (2000) provide an illustrative example. Drawing on processes of service rationalisation and the restructuring of the tourism market, they suggest that economic decline in Bute, Scotland, has been driven by the island’s growing peripherality over the last 40 years. The meaning of peripherality has been carefully manipulated, however, in order to revitalise Bute as a tourist destination. In particular, the notions of uniqueness, adventure, and exotic difference have been emphasised to promote the island in a more positive light.

The notion of ‘adventure’ often plays a key role in portraying places as affording unique and participatory tourism experiences. Cloke and Perkins (1998), for instance, specifically discuss the growth of adventure tourism in New Zealand. They suggest that places offering such experiences are strategically imbued with meanings that revolve around excitement, thrill, youthfulness and freshness. As such, the proliferation of particular places that provide opportunities for adventure not only entails a commodification of the act of bungee-jumping or white-water-rafting, but also of the place in which these activities are available. Further light is shed upon the mechanisms of place commodification when the notion of authenticity is considered. According to Olsen (2002), a key motivation behind the provision of participatory tourism experiences is an increased touristic desire for authentic engagements with cultural and natural landscapes. While this may be the case, Cloke and Perkins (1998) correctly argue that rather than offering consumers an authentic encounter with the reality of local culture or nature, tourism development depends more upon providing tourists with experiences that authenticate hegemonic images. To demonstrate this point further, I turn to the study of Milne et al. (1998). In documenting how Inuit communities in Canada have turned to nature- and culture-based tourism, they report how local efforts have achieved limited success. They suggest that Inuit lifestyles are popularly associated with an image of romantic ‘otherness’ which is incongruent with the realities of everyday life in the Arctic region. Rather than appreciating the opportunity for an authentic insight into the Inuit’s culture, local tourism operators have found that tourists are more satisfied with their consumptive experience if their romantic views are confirmed. Thus, places are commodified as dominant discourses and images come to define the nature of place development.
2.3.4 Masking Heterogeneity Part II

Place-based accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ are useful in illustrating how broad-scale changes are manifest in heterogeneous development trajectories. Once again, however, there is a danger of such analyses imposing a degree of uniformity upon rurality. In particular, by considering ‘rural restructuring’ at the level of place, scholars risk presenting rural communities as homogeneous entities. Rural communities are fractured, however, and are comprised of diverse peoples, each with their own particular perceptions and experiences of place and ‘rural restructuring’. To return to the restructuring of place-meanings, for instance, the development of a place-image is a power-laden process of negotiation in which alternative meanings of place attempt to assert hegemony. O’Rourke (1999) provides an illustrative example in her study of human-land relations in the Aspre, Rousillon, where a departure from agricultural hegemony has revealed the attachment of heterogeneous meanings to the land. Traditional Catalan farmers, for instance, link the abandoned land to the past and their ancestors. Ex-urban residents of the region, in contrast, are keen for the land to be used to reconnect local culture with traditional agricultural practice. Finally, retired migrants and holiday home-owners generally view the region’s landscape as a source of aesthetic appreciation. Such a divergence in the meanings attached to rural places indicates a considerable level of incongruity in individual experiences of ‘rural restructuring’.

The limitation of place-based studies of ‘rural restructuring’ in accounting for the heterogeneous nature of rural communities is further highlighted by scholars who have interrogated the very concept of community-led development. While advocated in terms of participation, inclusion and involvement (Shortall 2004), this form of rural governance has been uncovered as a relatively undemocratic strategy of rural development. Verbole (2003), for instance, outlines the impact of a fractured community upon rural tourism development in Pišece, Slovenia, and suggests that unequal access to power has characterised the decision-making process (also see Herbert-Cheshire (2004) for an alternative insight into community-led development).

In short, analyses which consider ‘rural restructuring’ at the scale of place are helpful in revealing the particular ways in which a functional transition in the countryside entails a re-

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14 O’Rourke’s (1999) work echoes the arguments of Frouws (1998), who suggests that perceptions of the countryside in The Netherlands are characterised by the confrontation of three discourses: the agri-ruralist discourse, the utilitarian discourse, and the hedonist discourse.
organisation of rural society. In particular, the growing potential of consumption as a basis for capital accumulation is reflected in the development of place-based culture economies and the associated restructuring of place-meanings. In presenting rural communities as homogenous entities, however, place-based studies are unable to fully account for the diversity of individual experiences of ‘rural restructuring’. Furthermore, the restructuring of rural places is not a democratic community-led process but rooted in the hands of influential local agents and actors. I now develop these arguments further in Section 2.4.

2.4 Lifestyle Analyses of ‘Rural Restructuring’

2.4.1 Experience and Agency

There has been an increasing concern to account for the complexity of ‘rural restructuring’ through analysing the restructuring of rural lifestyles. As well as attending to plurality and multiplicity, this growing commitment also responds to the contention that ‘rural restructuring’ can only be useful as a conceptual device if its claims are backed up by significant changes to people’s lives and their experiences of rurality. Indeed, according to Woods (2005), it is through people’s personal narratives that the qualitative changes implied by ‘rural restructuring’ (Hoggart and Paniagua 2001) become most apparent.

In addition, while community-led rural development seemingly enables rural places to follow variable paths of development depending on the potential of local resources, the successful valorisation of such resources for the purposes of consumption largely depends on the ability of individual actors to exploit this potential. The portrayal of ‘rural restructuring’ as a relatively passive and homogenous process is thus challenged by a concern to identify the localised and individual instigation of rural development. From this perspective then, the restructuring of rural lifestyles not only constitutes individual responses to change (Woods 2005), but also entails the impact of the subjective human agent upon change. As Ringer (1998; p.2) rightly asserts:

…to conceive of the cultural destination as a stylised vignette of local history, rooted in time and space, and lacking the dynamic conditions necessary for change, is to render mute the actions, motivations and values of local participants in the ongoing social construction of their place.
Thus, in contrast to political-economic accounts, which tend to portray ‘rural restructuring’ as a determining process, studies that attend to the role of individual agents reposition ‘rural restructuring’ as a creative process. Before developing this argument further by approaching the literature on rural entrepreneurship, I address the restructuring of rural lifestyles by firstly focusing on changing farm-level engagements with rurality.

2.4.2 Farm-Level Diversification

The proliferation of studies that investigate ‘rural restructuring’ at the level of the individual is most apparent in the burgeoning work that considers changing farming practices. In these cases, concern has centred on the way in which individuals have responded to broader processes of agricultural restructuring. As Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) point out, farmers are not passive victims of broader trends of restructuring but resist and recreate change. Johnsen (2004) provides a case in point. She examines the changing nature of family farming in Waihemo, New Zealand, by revealing the diverse adjustment strategies adopted by farmers in the wake of financial hardship. Such responses range from a complete withdrawal from farming to a diversification into new agricultural commodities, and from a reduction in farming expenditure to becoming involved in off-farm employment (i.e. pluriactivity). The changes in farming practices, Johnsen (2004) adds, have altered the nature of family farming in the area structurally, socially and symbolically. In terms of individual farming experiences, however, the restructuring of rural lifestyles is characterised by a weakening of the traditional links between the farming enterprise, the household and property. The complexity and variability of farmers’ responses to restructuring is also highlighted in Johnsen’s (2003) earlier paper, which emphasises how agricultural experiences are “contingent upon the interface between farm unit, individual actor, and broader context.” (p.146). Other studies examining the changing nature of rural lifestyles through farm-based analyses have highlighted how women’s roles in decision-making and resource management have evolved (Rickson and Daniels 1999) and how the adoption of organic farming practices has constituted a challenge to conventional ideologies surrounding agricultural practice (Egoz et al. 2001).

From a lifestyles perspective, the restructuring brought about by shifting relations between rural production and consumption has been documented through analyses of farm-level diversification into new forms of capital accumulation. To elaborate, a common response of farmers to political-economic developments which threaten the sustainability of their
agricultural livelihoods has not only been to diversify into the production of new agricultural commodities, but also to develop non-farming income-generating initiatives. These have often taken the form of providing farm-based tourism experiences (Sharpley 2006). Coombes and Campbell (1996), for instance, find that 15 of the 28 farms that participated in their New Zealand-based study were involved in tourism-based, as well as farming-based, activities.

The development of, and subsequent involvement in, a tourism business is likely to entail a significant departure from the previous agriculture-dominated lifestyles of many farmers, for it represents a significant alteration in human engagement with rural space and society. As such, Coombes and Campbell (1996) highlight the ideological and cultural barriers that farmers face when attempting to diversify into tourism activities. While the hegemonic ideology of the agricultural community determines the appropriate level and type of development, however, Coombes and Campbell also argue that dominant cultural norms are continuously negotiated and contested by the decisions and actions of individual farmers. Bock (2004) further highlights the complex nature of ‘rural restructuring’ by investigating women’s experiences of farm-level diversification. While suggesting that the activities of women play an essential role in developing new income resources for the farm unit, Bock highlights how the women in her study link farm-level diversification to stress, a decline in ‘family time’ and the loss of a private life. Over time, however, Bock (2004) also documents the ways in which women come to cope with such problems by developing a professional identity, separating work from private life, and becoming independent from the influence of social and cultural pressures.

2.4.3 Entrepreneurs in the Countryside

According to Bock (2004), the hegemony of conventional agricultural ideology has been challenged to the extent that farmers are increasingly perceived positively as the new rural entrepreneurs. The emergence of diversification as a means of maintaining agricultural sustainability, as well as a concern to empirically evaluate the growing import of consumption-based activity in the countryside, has therefore encouraged a more focussed scholarly interest in rural entrepreneurship. The effects of pursuing an entrepreneurial lifestyle in the countryside upon individuals’ attitudes and experiences, for instance, have been well documented (see, for instance, Getz and Carlsen (2000), Merret and Gruidl (2000) and Duval (2004)).
These studies reflect the notion that the restructuring of rural lifestyles can be framed in terms of individual involvement in consumption-oriented entrepreneurial activity. They also satisfy the growing concern in the social sciences to root ‘rural restructuring’ in the actions of individual agents, however. Much contemporary work on entrepreneurial agency in the countryside rests upon the seminal findings of Bryant (1989). He defines an entrepreneur as “a decision-taker who can identify an opportunity, assemble the necessary factors of production and resources and transform an idea into a marketable product or service.” (p.340). He is mindful that:

Economic activities all function to greater or lesser degrees within a broader social, economic and political system or macro-environment system in which certain forces lie beyond the control of the individual firm or business (Bryant 1989; p.338).

While acknowledging that entrepreneurs may be both enabled and thwarted by the state of the broader environment, however, Bryant challenges those scholars who over-emphasise the influence of exogenous forces upon rural development. In contrast, Bryant focuses on the leading role that entrepreneurs can play in re-vitalising rural areas. He suggests that by identifying and acting upon opportunities that are grounded in a new consumption-based regime of capital accumulation, the decisions and activities of entrepreneurs may be influential in driving the development of the local community.

Bryant’s exploration of the relationship between entrepreneurs and their local context gains empirical credence in the work of Jack and Anderson (2002) who apply the notion of embeddedness to their work on entrepreneurship in the Highlands of Scotland. They suggest that entrepreneurship is not only an economic process but is also anchored in a social context that both enables and constrains entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurs in the study were therefore keen to become socially embedded in order to facilitate the development of their business ventures. Like Bryant, however, Jack and Anderson are also concerned with stressing how entrepreneurship is a cyclical process as the social context not only influences, but is also influenced by, entrepreneurial activity. Finally, Cawley et al. (2002) provide a further insight into the relations between rural agents and the broader environment by focusing on the need for localised entrepreneurs to link effectively with the global context. They illustrate how the local embeddedness of business-operators in the Republic of Ireland
must be coupled with a ‘global reach’. To elaborate, they draw on Ray’s (1998) notion of culture economy (see Section 2.3.2) to suggest that the entrepreneurial valorisation of local natural, cultural, economic, and social resources, can be considered ‘localisation’. In order for entrepreneurial activity to be a profitable endeavour, however, Cawley et al. (2002) argue that ‘glocalisation’, whereby local products are effectively marketed on an international stage, more aptly accounts for successful business development.

2.4.4 A Digression Too Far?
The growing number of scholars who approach rurality through the perceptions, experiences and influences of actors and agents in the countryside have highlighted the manner in which ‘rural restructuring’ is both an individually contingent, and a creative, process. In particular, I have outlined the findings of research on farm-level experiences of restructuring, and the role of entrepreneurial activity in driving rural change. There is a danger, however, for situated analyses such as these to limit their studies to a particular locality and to everyday lived experiences. A concern for the existence or not of more widespread trends and structural shifts is therefore sacrificed for the purposes of emphasising multiplicity and agency. Hoggart and Paniagua (2001), for instance, suggest that while reflecting a significant change to particular rural lifestyles, the impact of farm-level diversification upon economic change in the countryside has been minimal. Furthermore, they argue that farmers have diversified more into other production-based activities than into consumption services. In addition, despite the impact of work that emphasises the agency of rural actors, political-economists continue to argue that causes of rural change are rooted outside rural space, and that there is little evidence of significant change in the countryside that is distinctively rural (Hoggart and Paniagua 2001).

In essence, Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) suggest that single perspectives of ‘rural restructuring’ are limited in their potential to further understanding of change in the countryside. More specifically, to counter their claim that ‘restructuring’ has been overused in work on rurality, they argue that there should be a holism to ‘rural restructuring’, requiring identification through a number of different analytical lenses (e.g. from feminist, cultural and political-economic standpoints). The potential of lifestyle accounts to aid understanding of ‘rural restructuring’, however, should not be ignored. In particular, as the findings of Bryant (1989), Jack and Anderson (2002), and Cawley et al. (2002) suggest, much of the work on rural entrepreneurship has attempted to explore the relationship between entrepreneurs and the
context in which they are operating. For the purposes of this thesis, such studies are especially useful in highlighting how this relationship is a reciprocal one. The concept of ‘rural restructuring’ can benefit from such an approach and, by way of concluding this section, I develop this argument further by turning to the work of Massey (2004) in Section 2.5.

2.5 Conclusion

2.5.1 A Brief Recap

By way of concluding this section, I would like to suggest that ‘rural restructuring’ is a useful framework thorough which to analyse contemporary change in the countryside. In particular, its attendance to the shifting nature of production-based and consumption-based regimes of capital accumulation in rural areas provides an effective base from which the socio-spatial restructuring of rurality can be understood. Drawing on the relevant literature, I have offered three alternative insights into this process which each contribute in different ways to the potential robustness of ‘rural restructuring’ as an explanatory tool. I have also demonstrated, however, that each approach is limited in fully accounting for the complexity of change in the countryside. The principles of each perspective are now briefly recapped.

First, I concentrated on structural perspectives. These tend to address ‘rural restructuring’ through analyses of macro-scale processes. Most notably, the widespread political-economic turn towards neoliberal ideology has created a regulatory environment in which global competition, rather than state support, dictates rural development. In simple terms, it is generally argued that such a transition has entailed the declining sustainability of conventional agriculture and an accompanying restructuring of rural society. ‘Post-productivism’ has therefore been commonly used to indicate the advent of alternative agricultural practices as farm units come to operate in a competitive global market. Structural shifts, however, have also been posited as facilitating the emergence of an alternative regime of capital accumulation, characterised by a growing tendency to consider the rural environment as a resource for consumption. As a result, ‘post-productivism’ has also been used to imply the increasing leverage of consumption-based industry in underpinning the changing nature of rural society. By rooting analyses in the influence of structural shifts, however, ‘rural restructuring’ is conceptualised as a broad-scale and generalisable process leading to an implicit homogenisation of rural space and society. Moreover, this approach also entails a related tendency for scholars to consider agency as emerging, in some way, from the dynamics of abstract capitalist entities.
Second, then, I addressed the emergence of alternative accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ which consider place-based instances of societal flux. From this perspective, the restructuring of rural society and space is repositioned as a heterogeneous process, emerging from the intersection of unique localised contexts with more structural trends. By applying ideas that revolve around the place-based development of a culture-economy and place commodification, such situated accounts are better able to demonstrate the diverse ways in which rural places are restructured. Thus, different places may exhibit a similar transition (i.e. from being structured according to the hegemony of agriculture to being structured according to the increasing importance of consumption-based activity). The specific development trajectory of a place, however, emerges from the resources that the local context provides for such a place to tap into the opportunities afforded by the broader macro-scale environment. As such, a more fractured account of ‘rural restructuring’ is developed with the portrayal of heterogeneity emerging from the acknowledgement of places as harbouring a localised and context-dependent agency. Again, however, these more situated stories of ‘rural restructuring’ remain limited in their potential to account for agency and diversity in the countryside. In particular, places do not comprise homogenous and stable communities but are characterised by internal diversity and dynamism. As a result, the particular development trajectory that a place follows is a negotiated process in which alternative notions of development attempt to assert hegemony. This recognition points to the fact that the restructuring of rural places, rather than a collective and inevitable movement, lies in the decisions and actions of individual agents.

Finally, then, I turned to a conceptualisation of ‘rural restructuring’ that is characterised by its concern for individual narratives of change in the countryside. From this standpoint, the contemporary restructuring of rural lifestyles is uncovered through a focus upon diversification and the other ways in which farmers have attempted to maintain the sustainability of their farming enterprise. While these include the introduction of new farming methods and practices, they have also included more fundamental farm-level shifts, most clearly demonstrated by the tendency for farmers to develop tourism businesses as an alternative source of income. As such, at this individual-level of approach, important insights into ‘rural restructuring’ have been provided by scholars concerned with rural entrepreneurship. For the purposes of this thesis, such studies have highlighted the manner in which entrepreneurs are essential players in the restructuring of rural places and rurality more...
broadly. In particular, the notion of embeddedness has been used to illustrate the potential for entrepreneurial activity to both influence, and be influenced by, the local context. The need for ‘rural restructuring’ to be conceptualised as experienced at, and emerging from, the most local of levels is thus met by such lifestyle accounts. The main danger, however, is for such approaches to become too detached from the influence of the broader environment upon the experiences and actions of individuals. In essence, they tend to sacrifice acknowledgement of generality and structure for the purposes of uncovering and emphasising multiplicity and individual agency.

2.5.2 Re-Conceptualising Space and Place
While Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) argue that ‘rural restructuring’ should indicate a multi-dimensional holism to rural change, there also remains a lack of commitment to develop a multi-scalar understanding of ‘rural restructuring’. The term is essentially used to signify a fundamental shift in human engagement with rurality but the tendency for scholars to adhere to a particular scale of analysis, and thereby ascribe varying levels of importance to the roles of structure and agency, has limited its conceptual use. In essence, beyond a recognition of the growing importance of consumption-based activity, a more focused consideration of the links between structure and agency is currently missing.15 While each of the perspectives outlined offers important insights into contemporary rural change, the use of ‘rural restructuring’ as a conceptual framework can therefore be enhanced by drawing these disparate theorisations together. Only then can it be acknowledged that rural change is, at once, both widespread and spatially distinct.

The issue of scale in ‘rural restructuring’ can be resolved by turning to the arguments of Massey (2004), who considers the notions of space and place. She suggests that there has been a tendency for scholars to consider space and place as oppositional. In particular, space is commonly seen as abstract, situated above and beyond the level of immediate human influence and comprehension. Place, in contrast, has been posited as grounded, meaningful and embodied. Such a dichotomous understanding is untenable, Massey argues. Most notably,

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15 Attempts have certainly been made throughout the social sciences to overcome what has been termed the global-local nexus. Alger (1988), for instance, demanded that the links between human settlements and worldwide phenomena be recognised. More specifically, in the field of tourism development, Milne and Ateljevic (2001; p.369) argue that “a willingness to embrace complexity is essential if we are to unpack the ‘glocal’ nature of tourism development”. I maintain, however, that such studies rarely go beyond merely identifying this problem and that a concerted effort to interrogate such multi-scalar complexity is therefore currently missing in the literature on rural development.
it encourages a tendency for the local (place) to be simply considered as a product of abstract capitalist processes that comprise the global (space). As a result, agency is posited as lying beyond the realm of local groundedness. Thus:

What I am concerned with here is a persistent *exoneration of the local*. It takes the form not only of a blaming of all local discontents on external global forces, and a concomitant understanding of ‘local place’ in entirely positive terms, but also of understanding globalisation itself as always produced somewhere else (Massey 2004; p.14; emphasis in original).

In the current era, this has led to a theorisation of places as inevitably becoming the *victims* of globalisation. To combat this tendency, Massey (2004) advocates an alternative understanding of space and place that acknowledges their relational construction. As indicated in Massey’s concern for the “persistent exoneration of the local”, a starting point for this argument is the contention that global space is grounded too. Indeed:

…‘global space’ is no more than the sum of relations, connections, embodiments and practices. These things are utterly everyday and grounded at the same time as they may, when linked together, go around the world (Massey 2004; p.8).

Massey draws on Latour’s consideration of a railway to re-enforce this notion that space is, at once, both global *and* local. While the railway may go around the world and can therefore be considered global, it is also “everywhere local in the form of railway workers, signals, track, points, stations.” (p. 8). Such an example clearly demonstrates the manner in which the nature of space is dependent upon the nature of local places. The agency of place is thus also acknowledged in terms of globalisation:

In this view local places are not simply always the victims of the global; nor are they always politically defensible redoubts *against* the global. For places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated, produced. They are ‘agents’ in globalisation (Massey 2004; p.11; emphasis in original).
Adopting this conceptualisation of global space thus avoids “[t]he evocation of a placeless capitalism [that] can lead all too easily to an erasing from the imagination of the places in which capitalism (and thus globalisation) is very definitely embedded” (p.14). Places, however, do vary in terms of their leverage as agents upon global phenomena, for they are linked to global space in different ways and to different extents. Massey uses London as an example, suggesting that the dynamics of global finance are, in this case, highly dependent upon the city’s position as a financially elite city.

Developing a notion of space as relational, however, requires a consideration of space and place as mutually constitutive. The agency of local places in collectively constituting global space has been demonstrated. The agency of global space in producing local places, however, must also be addressed. Again, this can be done by turning to Massey’s (2004) consideration of London. In essence, London’s position as a financially elite city, and its relative centrality in influencing the dynamics of the global economy, is reinforced by the very process of globalisation. In this way, it is suggested that while global space is produced through the development of its constituent places, the nature and dynamism of the unending relations that comprise global space also drive the establishment and reproduction of particular places. Places, then, are networked sites of negotiation, existing as unbounded meeting points of disparate trajectories. The construction of places thus emerges from a multitude of spatially dispersed sources. As Massey (p.6) puts it:

…”a global sense of place’ means that any nation, region, city, as well as being internally multiple, is also a product of relations which spread out way beyond it.

In short, Massey articulates a relational understanding of space and place. This conceptualisation rests upon the premise that global space and local place are mutually constituted. As such, space comprises an infinite number of extensive political, economic, social and cultural relations that take their form and dynamic nature from locally grounded places and practices; i.e. global space is always local in that it inexorably arises from local places. Simultaneously, locally grounded places and practices emerge as a result of relations and connections which reach far beyond the immediate locality; i.e. local places are always global in that they are constructed through relations that extend through space more broadly. I would now like to reconcile the issue of scale in ‘rural restructuring’ by applying this argument.
2.5.3 Developing an Alternative Model of ‘Rural Restructuring’

The concept of ‘rural restructuring’, and its potential to explain rural change, has been hindered by the academic prioritisation and distinction of the different scales at which the process can be analysed. Studies have thus differed in terms of the extent to which ‘rural restructuring’ is considered either a deterministic process emerging from the structure of global and national space, or a creative process, emerging from the agency of local places. In short, conventional accounts of ‘rural restructuring’ continue to offer only limited and scale-specific understandings of rural change. In response, Massey’s consideration of the reciprocal relationship between space and place can be used to develop a multi-scalar understanding of ‘rural restructuring’, which is demonstrated in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural Change</td>
<td>National Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Change</td>
<td>Regional Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Change</td>
<td>Sub-Regional Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Change</td>
<td>Business Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Change</td>
<td>Individual Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: A Multi-Scalar Model of ‘Rural Restructuring’.

To elaborate, ‘rural restructuring’ is not only evident in changes to rural space at the global and national scales but also in the restructuring of more localised places. This is because such places, through comprising a part of broader space, both draw their character from, and generate the character of, macro-scale processes. As in other multi-scalar processes of change,

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16 The model can and should incorporate any number of different scales. The five chosen here merely reflect the direction of my research.
structure and agency are therefore inextricably and mutually linked in the restructuring of rurality. Ultimately, a more holistic picture of ‘rural restructuring’ emerges, gaining potency as a conceptual tool through its concern for all levels of change and the links between these.

It is important, however, that considerations of space and place do not divert attention from the essential role of the human individual. Indeed, Massey (2004) reminds us that places cannot seriously be considered agents. Rather, ‘rural restructuring’ begins and ends with the capacity of individuals to both affect and experience the world. Figure 1 accommodates this contention by extending the notion of a reciprocal space-place relationship to the interaction of the business and the individual. This extension builds on the concern of scholars to conceptualise business development in terms of the mutual constitution of entrepreneurial activity and the local context, as outlined in Section 2.4.3. Clearly, then, there are similarities between the reciprocity of space and place, and the relationship that individual entrepreneurs have with the place in which they are operating. Jack and Anderson’s (2002) consideration of rural entrepreneurialism is particularly indicative of this congruence:

Identifying entrepreneurial opportunities occurs within a specific context. However, to identify the opportunity and realise its potential, the entrepreneur needs to know and understand the context. To do so, the entrepreneur has to be socially embedded. Social embeddedness enables the entrepreneur to understand the specifics of the local structure and to achieve the entrepreneurial outcome. These actions form part of the entrepreneurial process because the entrepreneur is embedded in the context (i.e. it is the structure which shapes the context). In turn, the structure is changed by the entrepreneur which forms the raw material for the next round of entrepreneurial activity (Jack and Anderson 2002; p.482).

Jack and Anderson are essentially arguing that the entrepreneur both extracts value from, and returns value to, the local structure (e.g. a rural place). It follows then, that the local structure both influences, and is influenced by, entrepreneurial experience and activity. A significant modification of that local structure (e.g. ‘rural restructuring’) is therefore both created and experienced by the entrepreneur (or, in different ways and to varying extents, by any other individual). To reiterate the claims of Massey (2004), however, the local structure is also simultaneously positioned in a reciprocal relationship with the broader space that constitutes its own context.
When considered in this way (i.e. individuals, businesses and places as holding a mutually constitutive relationship with each other and with broader spaces), ‘rural restructuring’ emerges as a process that is both proactive (i.e. change at a particular scale influences the more holistic nature of ‘rural restructuring’) and reactive (i.e. change at a particular scale is influenced by the more holistic nature of ‘rural restructuring’). In order to advance this re-conceptualisation of ‘rural restructuring’, I now turn to my own work on rural tourism development in New Zealand.
3. Research Methodology

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The rationale for this thesis arises from the contention that ‘rural restructuring’ has been limited in its conceptual use by a tendency for scholars to adhere to a particular scale of analysis. In response, I suggest that ‘rural restructuring’ can be better understood in terms of the mutually constitutive relationship between space and place, as outlined in Section 2.5. I therefore aim, in this thesis:

- To explore the feasibility of developing a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive account of ‘rural restructuring’.

In order to accomplish this, I intend to apply the model of ‘rural restructuring’ (shown in Figure 1, Section 2.5.3) to rural change at five different scales in New Zealand. Reflecting widespread agreement that ‘rural restructuring’ comprises, in part, the shifting importance of production-based and consumption-based activity to rural development, I have chosen to focus especially upon the growth of rural tourism and upon the ways in which this constitutes a unique multi-scalar process of restructuring. In evidence at a number of scales, the development of rural tourism comprises one way in which changes to broader spatial contexts influence, and are influenced by, changes to more localised settings. The objectives of the thesis are thus:

- To analyse the development of rural tourism at five spatial scales in New Zealand.
- To examine the mutually constitutive links between the development of rural tourism at these scales.

As a clear example of recent rural tourism development, the Otago Central Rail Trail, on the South Island of New Zealand, offers rich potential as a focal point for assessing the validity and applicability of a multi-scalar model of ‘rural restructuring’. As analysed in greater detail in Section 6, the Rail Trail is a 150 km track for cyclists and walkers that follows the route of a disused railway line in Central Otago. Following its ‘rail to trail’ conversion, the track was opened for recreational use in 2000 and, while still in the early stages of operation, has
already emerged as a successful rural tourism project. The development of the Rail Trail as both contextualised and context provides fertile ground for exploring ‘rural restructuring’ as a multi-scalar process. The model presented in Figure 1 (Section 2.5.3) is therefore adapted for the purposes of this thesis in the way shown in Figure 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development of rural tourism</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>‘Rural Restructuring’ in New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of rural tourism</td>
<td>Central Otago</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of rural tourism</td>
<td>Otago Central Rail Trail</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of rural tourism</td>
<td>Five Business Case-Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of rural tourism</td>
<td>Five Entrepreneurial Case-Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: A Multi-Scalar Model of ‘Rural Restructuring’ in New Zealand.

In adopting Massey’s (2004) understanding of place and space, each scale of tourism development influences, and responds to, its broader spatial context. Simultaneously then, each scale of change also influences and responds to the more specific settings and practices for which it provides a context. The model’s (Figure 2) concern for ‘broad-scale’ (national and regional) tourism development is thus reflected in my consideration of the Otago Central Rail Trail as contextualised by Central Otago and New Zealand. My commitment to developing this alternative notion of ‘rural restructuring’ is also expressed, however, in considering the Rail Trail as a context for business development and entrepreneurial experiences. As Eyles (1989; p.109) suggests:
People shape their own lives and create their own identities, but not necessarily or overwhelmingly in conditions of their own choosing.

My interest in the business and entrepreneurial scales, however, also emerges from my recognition that processes of ‘rural restructuring’ are rooted in the hands of individual agents. The distinction between the business and entrepreneurial scales of ‘rural restructuring’ is important to grasp here. Similar to the mutual constitution of place and space, agents simultaneously affect (through business creations), and are affected by (through individual experiences), the broader contexts in which they act. This distinction is partly informed by recent work which has argued for the nature of space to be considered in terms of its performance and practice (Thrift and Dewsbury 2000; Harrison 2002; Cloke 2003; Wylie 2003; Lorimer 2005; Crouch 2006; Edensor 2006). Agent-based performances are creative in altering the world in which they are carried out (e.g. see Borden 2002; Dewsbury et al. 2002). Simultaneously, however, such performances entail a particular embodied experience for the agent (e.g. see Edensor 2000; Macnaghten and Urry 2000; Obrador-Pons 2003; Wylie 2003; Spinney 2006). In this thesis, performances of rural space are used as a gateway through which the mutual constitution of the business scale (the creativity of performance) and entrepreneurial scale can be explored (the experience of performance).

3.2 Research Questions

In order to meet the aims and objectives of this study, this thesis is guided by a number of research questions. Most notably:

- How can rurality at each scale of analysis be considered to have undergone a process of restructuring?
- How exactly has rural tourism been developed / promoted / performed / experienced at each scale?
- To what extent can consistencies be identified through the five scales of rural tourism development?
- What evidence is there of such consistencies emerging from the mutually constitutive relationship between scales of change?

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17 In this context, the work-based aspects of identity formation.
18 As briefly outlined in Section 2.3.3, I consider the circulation of a place image for the purposes of developing tourism to be inextricably woven with the development of that place. As Cloke and Perkins (1998) assert, this is because, for tourism to be a successful venture, places are required to provide to tourists experiential authentication of those images.
To develop and answer these questions, I used a number of flexible qualitative research methods. These included visits as a tourist to New Zealand, Central Otago, the Otago Central Rail Trail, and numerous Rail Trail businesses, interviewing entrepreneurs operating in the area of the Rail Trail, exploring media and political rhetoric, and analysing the promotion of rural tourism at different scales. Thus, while the primary concern of this thesis is to offer a multi-scalar account of ‘rural restructuring’, the research questions also reflect a need for the interconnectedness between scales of tourism development to be rooted in scale-specific analyses. A brief summary of the particular methods utilised to explore rural tourism development at each scale is provided in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of Analysis</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>Exploration of academic and policy literature relating to political-economic reform and change in New Zealand. Analysis of academic, policy and promotional data relating to the development of tourism in New Zealand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Exploration of academic and policy literature relating to rural change in Central Otago. Analysis of policy and promotional data relating to the development of tourism in Central Otago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-regional</td>
<td>Exploration of policy, media and promotional literature relating to the history, development and promotion of the Otago Central Rail Trail. Three visits as both tourist and researcher to the Rail Trail. Analysis of photographs of tourism development along the Rail Trail. Interviewing of five entrepreneurs regarding their perceptions of the Rail Trail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Visits as a consumer to five accommodation businesses along the Rail Trail. Analysis of photographs of the businesses. Interviewing of five entrepreneurs regarding the businesses they have developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Interviewing of five entrepreneurs regarding their individual experiences of business development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: An Overview of the Scale-Specific Research Methods.

Before turning in more detail to the methods used in this study, it is worth noting the flexible and unfolding approach I have taken to my research, as well as the transparent account that I attempt to give of this process. Openness in both of these terms arises from my adherence to a qualitative research approach developed since the 1920s in interpretative social science. The principles of this methodological standpoint have, more recently, been articulated by Law (2004). Essentially, in succumbing to the hegemony of conventional research methods that are
3. Research Methodology

committed to presenting the world as clear and coherent, Law suggests that researchers are unable to portray reality as it is – a fluid network of general unpredictability. In short, Law (2004; p.1) writes:

If this is an awful mess… then would something less messy make a mess of describing it?

In addition to the need for new methodologies that no longer seek the definite and repeatable, he also argues for accounts of method to highlight the inescapably “ragged ways in which knowledge is produced in research” (p.19). Through providing a transparent account of the relatively unstructured nature of the research process involved in this study, I therefore aim to respond to the calls of Law, and of others before him, and to highlight the disordered manner in which I have attempted to produce knowledge about a disordered world. It will become apparent in Section 3.3, for instance, that rather than initially identifying aims, objectives and research questions to guide my research, these have instead been progressively developed during the research process.

3.3 A Chronological Account of the Research Process

3.3.1 Exploring

This study is founded upon my own encounters with rural tourism development at all scales of analysis in New Zealand.19 Shortly after my journey from the United Kingdom to New Zealand in February 2007, I carried out a ten-day trip of the South Island as both a tourist and researcher in order to familiarise myself with potential research topics. The trip culminated with four days in Central Otago (see Figure 6, Section 5.2) following the advice of several other tourists I had met during my trip. I took the enchanting Taieri Gorge Railway journey from Dunedin to Middlemarch, before spending three days cycling along the Otago Central Rail Trail from Middlemarch to Clyde (see Figure 10, Section 6.1). After Blumer (1969), my initial engagement with this particular social world can be considered the ‘exploration’ stage of my research, during which I employed a flexible, rather than prescribed, procedure and adopted a broad focus, purposefully considering many alternative lines of inquiry. My own experiences of cycling the trail, staying in the places that line its route, and informally

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19 Amongst other aspects of my inescapable subjectivity, my status as a foreigner visiting New Zealand for the first time has been an influential factor in defining the direction and nature of my research.
speaking with local residents, business-operators, and other cyclists, stimulated an interest in the Rail Trail and its history that I developed further on my return to Lincoln University.

While maintaining a degree of detachment from any specific line of inquiry, I began to build a clear, contextually-informed picture of tourism development along the Rail Trail through immersing myself in academic, media, promotional and political literature and rhetoric relating to New Zealand, Central Otago and the Otago Central Rail Trail more specifically. The development of tourism at the national scale was primarily investigated through an examination of the web-based promotion of New Zealand by Tourism New Zealand, supplemented by an exploration of policy, academic, and media material. At the regional scale, I focused on the web- and brochure-based promotion of Central Otago by Tourism Central Otago, again utilising policy, academic, and media sources to further develop my understanding. In addition to the insight provided by my visit, knowledge of the Otago Central Rail Trail was built up by engaging with its web-based promotion by the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, and through studying a number of guide books relating to its history, development and functioning as a tourist destination.

3.3.2 Sharpening
I was increasingly keen, however, to ensure that my study of the Rail Trail became rooted in the experiences of those people most directly affected by, and involved in, its success as a rural tourist destination. Becoming interested in both the development of the Rail Trail and in the emergence of businesses in its vicinity, the focus of my interest was increasingly sharpened. In particular, I was edging towards a project that would analyse the relationship that local agents have with the broader context in which they act. Such a focus, I soon decided, would best be reflected in qualitative research methods aimed at eliciting “rich, detailed materials” (Lofland et al. 2006; p. 17) through the exploration of several business and entrepreneurial case-studies. Working from this broad base of interest, I decided, in April 2007, to send a letter (see Appendix I) and an information sheet (see Appendix II) to five business-operators along the Otago Central Rail Trail, the services of which I had either used myself or heard about from other tourists. As well as advising of the visit I was hoping to

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20 There is unfortunately little data available on the make-up of the local business environment or the number of businesses that operate in the area. To give some indication, the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust (2005; p.6) conducted a study on the area’s business environment in 2005. “[T]he survey was posted to 160 general businesses identified as having potential interest to users” of the Rail Trail. The majority of the 110 accommodation providers that it surveyed “were in communities on the trail corridor”. 

make to their business as a declared consumer/researcher, the letter also informed recipients of my desire for an interview at a later date, while the information sheet outlined the broad focus of the study. At this stage I wished the businesses to vary in the services that they offered. Three of the businesses contacted therefore primarily provided accommodation (in addition to other more specialised services) while the other two comprised one retail business and one railway information centre. While wanting to be involved in the world that I sought to explore and thereby avoid representative data collection (Lofland et al. 2006), the five businesses contacted were also chosen based on their geographical spread.

At the beginning of May 2007 I followed up the letters with a second trip to Central Otago. This was carried out with the intention of further developing my interest in the relationship between entrepreneurs, businesses and places, and of arranging some future interviews. My role on this occasion, as consumer/researcher, was reflected in my selective tackling of the Rail Trail. In order to take time to further identify potential issues to explore in the interviews and to assess the feasibility of including particular businesses in the study, I only cycled the section from Middlemarch to Oturehua (see Figure 10, Section 6.1). I completed this 90 km stretch over a period of four days, staying at, or visiting, those businesses that had been contacted. Without committing myself fully to the role of researcher at this stage, I was able to build from my experiences during this second trip and slightly alter the direction of my research. In particular, having been uninspired by my visits to the retail business and information centre,\(^\text{21}\) and developing a curiosity about two other accommodation providers,\(^\text{22}\) I decided to focus my interest in businesses along the Rail Trail solely upon those that offered accommodation. While I therefore partly withdrew my commitment to making the business case-studies functionally diverse, I nevertheless maintained a desire for the businesses to be geographically spread. During this second trip I therefore made direct contact, and successfully arranged interviews, with three of the business-operators that I had sent letters to. These were located in Middlemarch, Hyde and Wedderburn (see Figure 10, Section 6.1). Unfortunately, I was only able to make contact with the two newly considered businesses about my research upon my return to Lincoln University. Thankfully, both of these operators, based in Ranfurly and Lauder, were happy to participate and interviews were arranged.

\(^{21}\) More specifically, by this stage I was increasingly concerned to focus on the links between entrepreneurial activity and the Rail Trail. Having spoken to employees at both of these businesses, it became apparent that the influence of the Rail Trail upon business development was lacking in both cases.

\(^{22}\) I became interested in one of these businesses after staying there for a night during this journey, and chatting informally to the owner. My curiosity for the other was fuelled by the reports of two separate groups of cyclists who had stayed there, and whom I met on the Rail Trail.
3. Research Methodology

3.3.3 Interviewing
Towards the end of May 2007 I made my third trip to Central Otago and the Otago Central Rail Trail. By this time I had almost completely adopted the role of researcher only, perhaps most clearly reflected in my driving, rather than cycling, from business to business! This stage of the research represented the culmination of my empirical ‘exploration’ of the social world as I had identified the issues I was keen to explore with entrepreneurs and had five entrepreneurs willing to participate in the research. Interviews were conducted over five days during the trip. Having ensured that entrepreneurs had read the letter and information sheet, and were fully aware of my role as a researcher and of the aims of the study, they were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix III). These permitted me to digitally record the interviews and to use their content for the purposes of the research. The option for entrepreneurs to withdraw from the research at any time prior to the commencement of the write-up stage was also given while participant anonymity was offered and declined in all cases.

Interviews were conducted either in the home or the business of the entrepreneur and, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes, were in-depth and semi-structured in nature. All entrepreneurs were therefore asked a number of standard, but wide-ranging, questions which were enriched where appropriate with further probes specific to the experiences of each participant. Designing the interviews in this way reflects the exploratory aim of the study, affording entrepreneurs as much leeway as possible to take the interview in whichever direction was most suitable to their experiences (Lofland et al. 2006). Reflecting my desire to consider ‘rural restructuring’ at the business and individual scales in terms of agent-based performances of rurality, the interviews (see Appendix IV) were engineered to address both the creative and experiential sides of rural entrepreneurialism. Initial questions put to entrepreneurs therefore focused both on the businesses that had been developed (their history, atmosphere, facilities etc.) and upon the entrepreneurial experiences of business development (challenges, enjoyments, relationships etc.). I was also keen to gain a situated insight into the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail more generally so the interviews also invited entrepreneurs to articulate their own views of its history, conversion and success. The communication of such insights served to supplement my own knowledge of the Rail Trail derived from my experiences as a tourist and analyses of promotional, academic, media and political, literature and rhetoric. This proved especially fruitful as all entrepreneurs lived in, or at least had close connections with, the area prior to the development of the Rail Trail.
3. Research Methodology

### 3.3.4 Inspecting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneurs</th>
<th>Bill and Maureen Theyers</th>
<th>Ngaire Sutherland</th>
<th>Shirley and Malcolm Hodge</th>
<th>Graeme Duncan</th>
<th>Nikki and Ralph Milne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Middlemarch</td>
<td>Hyde</td>
<td>Ranfurly</td>
<td>Wedderburn</td>
<td>Lauder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business</strong></td>
<td>Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp</td>
<td>Otago Central Hotel</td>
<td>Old PO Backpackers</td>
<td>The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn</td>
<td>Railway School Bed &amp; Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodation type</strong></td>
<td>Holiday Park</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Backpackers</td>
<td>Self-contained and serviced</td>
<td>Guest and Hosted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main accommodation offered</strong></td>
<td>Motels, cabins, camp-sites</td>
<td>Private single and double bedrooms</td>
<td>Dormitories</td>
<td>Self-contained units</td>
<td>Double bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other on-site services</strong></td>
<td>Rail Trail package (Rail Trail Services)</td>
<td>Cafe</td>
<td>Laundry and video-hire</td>
<td>Visitors Centre (Red Barn) and golf course</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Off-site employment</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Development of Hyde’s school as a function venue</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Farming</td>
<td>Farming (R) and nursing (N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motives</strong></td>
<td>To promote the local area and capitalise on the potential of the Rail Trail</td>
<td>To capitalise on the service void along the Trail between Middlemarch and Ranfurly</td>
<td>To satisfy their need for a summer income and benefit from the success of the Rail Trail</td>
<td>To diversify from farming, develop their interest in tourism and benefit from the success of the Rail Trail</td>
<td>To diversify from farming, prepare for their semi-retirement and benefit from the success of the Rail Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior occupation</strong></td>
<td>Withheld</td>
<td>Ran a B&amp;B in Mosgiel, near Dunedin</td>
<td>Ran laundry and video-hire business in another part of town</td>
<td>Farming in the local area</td>
<td>Farming (R) and nursing (N) in the local area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: An Outline of the Entrepreneurs and Businesses Investigated.

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23 All entrepreneurs were given the option of anonymity in the writing up of this research. All declined.
24 Tourism Central Otago (2007a) identifies six umbrella accommodation categories from which these types are drawn.
Following the completion of my third journey to the Otago Central Rail Trail I returned to Lincoln University and immediately commenced transcribing the five interviews. While a more detailed outline of the participants in this study is provided in Section 7, a summary of the entrepreneurs and the businesses that they own and operate is provided in Table 2.

With the development of a clear theoretical grounding for my study remaining somewhat elusive, the transcription stage proved to be especially enlightening. In recognition of Lofland et al.’s (2006, p.107) suggestion that “this is a period in which analytical insights are most likely to occur”, I used this phase of research to contemplate the feasibility of different critical approaches to the data. Indeed, it was upon finishing the transcriptions, and the identification of a number of potential foci, that I settled on the specific argument pursued in this thesis.

This development clearly entailed a move from empirical ‘exploration’ to empirical ‘inspection’ of the social world. As Blumer (1969) outlines, ‘inspection’ requires an increasingly theoretical-based analysis of the social world that has been engaged with and therefore comprises linking ‘analytical elements’ to ‘empirical instances’. Returning to the literature with the insight provided by the interviews, coupled with an understanding of entrepreneurs’ broader context, thus inspired a consideration of ways in which my empirical evidence could lead to an alternative account of ‘rural restructuring’. From this point on, the research process was characterised by the ongoing, but ‘messy’, (re)coding and (re)grouping of primary and secondary data in line with the guidance provided by Cope (2003). Eventually, I developed an argument based on the ways in which ‘rural restructuring’, through all scales of consideration, is, to an extent, consistent in its nature.

Ultimately, based on a flexible, but increasingly sharpened, collection and analysis of both primary and secondary material, an exploration of rural tourism development in New Zealand has led to a specific understanding of ‘rural restructuring’; an understanding which is, at once, both structure- and agent-oriented. The following sections draw upon the evidence that I have collected to develop this argument. While these analytical chapters are organised around different scales of development, this reflects the methodological and presentational need to approach research and findings in an ordered manner rather than a commitment to consider scale-based instances of ‘rural restructuring’ in isolation. Indeed, such a commitment would work against the aim of this thesis.
4. The National Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

New Zealand

....the impact on the overall prosperity of most New Zealanders of those reforms initiated by my political opponents in 1984 and carried on by my government colleagues in the 1990s has been spectacular


4.1 Introduction: Linking the Global and National Scales

While Baragwanath et al. (2003) question the extent to which ‘globalisation’ can be seen as a novel development for New Zealand, Le Heron and Pawson (1996) suggest that globalisation has meant responding to the global, adjusting nationally, and retaining elements of the local. In the last two decades it has become clear that concerns about the increasing openness of the global economy have led to significant political-economic changes at the national scale. In this way, the changing nature of its spatial context has influenced the development of New Zealand more specifically. The ‘place’ of New Zealand, however, comprises an active part of this context and must therefore be seen, through its own processes of national-scale change, as simultaneously influencing broader spatial trends. The nature of both the global ‘space’ and the national ‘place’ are therefore dependent upon this reciprocal interplay between structure and agency.

As is suggested in this section, national-scale restructuring has been characterised by a repositioning of the roles of the state and the market in driving the country’s economic development. The political-economic orientation of New Zealand has thus been brought more in line with, and simultaneously influenced, international trends towards neo-liberal political ideology and free-market capitalism. I argue, furthermore, that, as witnessed in other advanced capitalist countries, this transition has been reflected in the shifting importance of production-based and consumption-based activities to New Zealand’s position in the world. This is most clearly evident in the development of a national-scale tourism product in partial replacement of state commitments to agriculture and other extraction-based industries. The evolution of New Zealand in this way is indicative of the manner in which global processes at

25 While a comprehensive analysis of the global scale lies beyond the scope of this thesis, ‘rural restructuring’ at the national scale cannot be addressed without recognising the mutually constitutive links between the place of New Zealand and its broader contextual space.
once both influence, and are influenced by, the specificity of more localised place-based change.

It is clear, moreover, that rural areas occupy a central position in national-scale processes of restructuring. As stated, the changing nature of New Zealand’s links to its global context has been partly characterised by the shifting importance of agriculture and tourism, both of which are intimately linked to the development of rurality more generally. Thus, the advancement of a national economy based upon the increasing significance of consumption-based industries, and relative decline in the importance of production-based industries, is most evident in the symbolic and functional restructuring of rurality in New Zealand.

This section begins with an outline of the structural reforms implemented in New Zealand and also suggests the ways that these have encompassed a national-scale shift in the importance of productive and consumptive activities. I then extend this argument by focusing in more detail upon the particular tourism product that has been promoted for New Zealand before linking, more explicitly, the development of tourism to a national-scale process of ‘rural restructuring’.

4.2 Structural Reform in New Zealand

Characterised by full employment, a gendered work culture and a stable and robust economy, the post-war era in New Zealand has often been termed the 'long boom'. Throughout this period, strong state intervention was geared towards maintaining the productivity of national industries and ensuring high levels of social welfare (Conradson and Pawson 1997). As Le Heron and Pawson (1996) point out, New Zealand became internationally recognised as a model of modern social democracy through which high levels of social equity were ensured. This was founded upon a close relationship between the national economy and the state, demonstrated, for instance, in state support for agriculture (Woods 2005) and state ownership of many industries and services (Le Heron and Pawson 1996).

At this time, the nature of New Zealand’s inward-looking political-economy - and therefore its position in, and relations with, its global context - was largely characterised by its dependence on agriculture (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002). It follows then, that the socio-economic organisation of the country’s extensive rural areas came to offer locally manifested reflections of this stable period of national-scale economic and political organisation.
Conradson and Pawson (1997) clearly demonstrate this in their study on the small town of Reefton on the west coast of New Zealand. Reefton, during the country’s post-war ‘long boom’, was dominated by a number of extractive and service industries which were either directly supported or owned by the state, and which provided the vast majority of employment positions in the local area. In addition to having this robust economic base, Reefton was also the centre of local governance, and was characterised by strong unionisation, a gendered division of labour and a cultural adherence to a protestant work ethic. In short, the rural town of Reefton can clearly be seen as exhibiting a ‘structured coherence’ (Cloke and Goodwin 1992). As such, the economic, political, social and cultural spheres were in a stable state of harmony, reflecting state commitments to a national-scale pattern of social welfare and government-funded economic development.

As Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) succinctly argue, low unemployment rates, a protected agricultural economy, privileged access to the British market, and considerable industry assistance from the government, provided a strong basis for a successful welfare state in New Zealand’s ‘long boom’ era. In a similar manner to progressions in other developed nations however, New Zealand has been forced to respond to the declining economic performance of its social democracy in an increasingly open and competitive global context. In particular, this downturn emerged from the inflation of global oil commodity prices and the protectionist agricultural policies of the European Union which meant, for New Zealand, a decrease in British interest in the country’s primary produce (Le Heron and Pawson 1996). These national challenges coupled with the emergence of an international ideology that re-positioned the roles of the state and the market in guiding economic development, suggested that significant national-scale change, and a reconstitution of New Zealand’s relationship with the global economy, was imminent.

The coming to power of the Labour Party in 1984 was the major catalyst for political-economic reform in New Zealand and the newly elected Government aggressively brought into action a period of structural reform. These reforms largely reflected the neo-liberalist argument that economic development in an era of globalisation is most effective through opening up the national economy to the opportunities offered by the international free market and reducing the direct role of the state in the national economy. State intervention in New Zealand’s national economy was thus considerably reduced throughout the 1980s and 1990s, manifest in the withdrawal of state support for particular sectors of the economy and the
4. The National Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

corporatisation and privatisation of many state-owned enterprises. This process of state re-regulation (see Le Heron and Pawson (1996) on the problems of de-regulation) reflected a shifting political stance with which economic profitability in a global arena became the guiding principle, and social welfare a secondary concern. In essence, the emergence of this political ideology and its resultant reforms ensured that market-led ‘competition’, rather than state intervention, became the key tenet for national-scale development. In a recent address to Koc Univeristy, Istanbul, for instance, the Minister of Trade reported:

> We recognise that in order to succeed in the global economy we need to have domestic policy settings in place that are conducive to allowing firms to be internationally competitive. New Zealand is now one of the most open and business-friendly economies in the world (Honourable Phil Goff 2006).  

The shift from being an international model of social democracy to “one of the most open and business-friendly economies in the world” has entailed distinct, geographical implications within New Zealand. In addition to the withdrawal of services to more central and profitable locations which enable businesses to serve a wider market and increase their economic competitiveness, this has largely meant for rural areas a significant reduction in state support for agriculture. At the national-scale this may mean that “[t]he New Zealand farming sector has emerged as a dynamic, diverse, responsive and internationally competitive one” (Goff 2006) but many analysts are less enthusiastic about the success of agricultural reform. Drummond et al. (2000), for instance, contend that the turn to neo-liberalism in New Zealand has *heightened the agricultural crisis*, leading, for example, to declines in farm income, an increase in interest rates, a fall in land values and reports of ill health and stress (also see Johnsen 2004).

Le Heron and Pawson (1996), moreover, suggest that structural reform has led to *a new era of uneven development* as places vary in the extent to which they can advantageously respond to the competitive bases of global and national capital. For instance, to return briefly to the case of Reefton, from 1987 the geography of the small rural township was considerably reworked, with the corporatisation and subsequent downsizing or withdrawal of state agencies. Conradson and Pawson (1997) document how this has led to considerable out-migration from

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26 [http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0612/S00313.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0612/S00313.htm)

Reefton and the negative impacts that this has had upon the local service industry. In contrast to political rhetoric which emphasises the benefits of neo-liberalism for local innovation and self-help, they find little evidence of individual initiative sparking a revival of the town. In essence, Conradson and Pawson (1997) conclude, the meaning ascribed to such places, which were once characterised by perceptions of security, citizenship, and cultural values, have been eroded by the forces of neo-liberal political-economic ideology.

Implications for the economic, social, political and cultural spheres of rurality brought about by structural reform not only depend on the restructuring of the production-based sector and service provision, however. National-scale reforms have also encompassed a commitment to increase the value of tourism to the economy and to tap into the potential of a growing global consumer culture. The National Party embarked in the 1990s upon a tourism development programme with the aim of making international tourism the leading industry in New Zealand’s economic development (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002), thereby giving tourism a prominent position in the international marketing of New Zealand. While the number of tourists visiting the country was relatively low until developments in the aviation industry in the 1960s, tourist arrivals doubled in the mid-1980s (Perkins and Thorns 2001). More recently, as part of the reforms, the government aimed to attract three million visitors annually by 2000. While this target proved to be unachievable, the importance of tourism to New Zealand’s economy is staggering. As outlined in the Draft New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 (Ministry of Tourism et al. 2007), international visitor arrivals reached 2.42 million in 2006 and a four per cent annual growth of this figure is forecast for the next seven years. Tourism is now New Zealand’s largest export industry, accounting for 18.7 per cent of all exports and contributing nine per cent to national Gross Domestic Product. One tenth of the national workforce is employed in the tourism sector and there are estimated to be more than 11,000 individual enterprises throughout the country (Ministry of Tourism et al. 2007).

These national-scale commitments to tourism, and the increasingly significant contribution that the tourism industry makes to the national economy, have been dependent on a national-scale re-imagining of the role that rural space can play in economic development. The perceived potential of rurality to comprise an especially significant and attractive component of New Zealand’s tourism product has thus entailed a symbolic reproduction of such space for the purposes of consumption, partially breaking from the more traditional association of rural areas with farming practices and other production-based industries. In essence, the role and
function of rurality in the development of the national economy has been re-defined in order for New Zealand to compete effectively in the global arena and to tap into the potential of a global tourism market. While farming and other production-based industries continue to contribute significantly to both the national economy and to rural development, their hegemonic position in both of these terms has been radically challenged by alternative imaginings of the economic potential of rural space. I now turn to developments in New Zealand’s tourism industry in more detail to suggest the ways in which national-scale ‘rural restructuring’ has been characterised by a new, albeit partial, valorisation, re-presentation, and functioning of rural space for the purposes of consumption.

4.3 Constructing a National Tourism Product

4.3.1 The ‘Interactive Traveller’

The growing importance of consumption-based industry to New Zealand’s development has been reflected in the increasingly widespread imagining of the country as a potential holiday destination, and in the rising contribution of tourism to the national economy. Correspondingly, Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) suggest that there has been an institutionalisation and professionalisation of New Zealand’s tourism industry. As such, the sector’s commitments to national-scale policy advice and marketing activities were decoupled in the 1990s with the Ministry of Tourism developed to handle the former function and the New Zealand Tourism Board assigned responsibility for the latter (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002). Promotion is now largely managed by Tourism New Zealand, a public-private international marketing agency with a duty to “showcase the beauty and uniqueness of New Zealand’s landscapes, culture and people” (Tourism New Zealand 2007a). The off-shore marketing activities of Tourism New Zealand have been effective in ensuring that New Zealand is regarded as one of the most popular long-haul destinations in the world and in the last eight years the country has frequently come in the top three destinations in many prestigious travel polls (Ministry of Tourism et al. 2007).

Perhaps most important in the national-scale development of a successful tourism product has been the decision to market New Zealand as a niche destination, especially in light of its geographical isolation which means that the majority of potential visitors are required to make considerable time and money commitments. In this way, the national-scale restructuring of

New Zealand has been characterised by a concern to portray the country as a destination especially well-suited to certain consumer groups, and as offering unique, rather than standardised, opportunities for touristic consumption. Ateljevic and Doorne (2002; p.661) neatly sum up the type of promises made to consumers regarding the experiences on offer in New Zealand:

…awe-inspiring, stunning, unusual, dramatic, pure and clean, awesome, majestic, breath-taking, astonishing, extremely diverse, a backdrop against which tourists are promised rejuvenating, energetic, adventurous, exciting, adrenalin-pumping, and the ultimate in thrilling activities.

Reflecting wishes to develop a tourism industry in New Zealand that is sustainable but delivers maximum benefit, and a belief that “[w]orld-class experiences are distinctive, environmentally friendly, authentic, and deliver unique stories and superb service to our customers” (Ministry of Tourism et al. 2007; p.19), Tourism New Zealand has, in its marketing activities, targeted the ‘interactive traveller’. Defined by the Ministry of Tourism et al. (2007; p.55) as “…regular, interactive travellers who consume a wide range of tourism products and services... [and] who seek out new experiences that involve engagement and interaction”, commitments to attract the ‘interactive traveller’ comprise an attempt to align a promise of quality with a promotional focus on the type of visitor which that promise will most satisfy. To develop a more articulate understanding of ‘interactive travellers’ in relation to New Zealand, they are those tourists who seek and value interactive and authentic encounters with New Zealand’s unique and distinctive natural and cultural landscapes, and who will therefore reduce the potentially destructive impact of tourism on these landscapes.29

The emphasis on authenticity and uniqueness is especially demonstrated in Tourism New Zealand’s ‘100% Pure New Zealand’ marketing campaign which was launched in 1999 and, at the time of writing, presents New Zealand as ‘the youngest country on earth’ (Tourism New Zealand 2007c).

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29 The Draft New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 (Ministry of Tourism et al. 2007) reports that the ‘interactive traveller’, moreover, has higher satisfaction levels (Tourism New Zealand (2007b), for instance, finds that 96 per cent of ‘interactive travellers’ were either extremely or very satisfied with their holiday experience in New Zealand), stays longer, participates in more activities and more readily recommends New Zealand to others than other consumer-types, while also delivering on the need for tourism to be spread seasonally and regionally.
4.3.2 New Zealand as Energising

As implied by Ateljevic and Doorne (2002), the tourism development in New Zealand largely draws from the contention that the ‘interactive traveller’ considers the energising aspects of travel as particularly important (Tourism New Zealand 2007b). The offer of an energising experience in New Zealand is most commonly demonstrated with reference to the country’s diverse natural landscapes which range from mountain chains to spectacular coastlines, and from indigenous forests to thermal pools (Devlin and Booth 1998). The portrayal of such opportunities builds on a long-standing and popular domestic flight from urban areas to the country for recreational activity (Perkins and Thorns 2001), and on the public ownership of over 30 per cent of New Zealand’s natural estate (Devlin and Booth 1998). It is, however, not only the chance to appreciate New Zealand’s unique natural landscapes that is presented to potential visitors, but also the interactive ways in which these can be encountered (Figure 3).

The promotion of New Zealand’s natural environment is enhanced through Tourism New Zealand’s emphasis on the ways in which the ‘interactive traveller’ can actively engage with this environment (source: Tourism New Zealand 2007a).

As such, there has been a burgeoning scholarly interest in the popular association of New Zealand with nature-based recreation and adventure tourism (Jenkins et al. 1997; Kearsley 1997; Kearsley et al. 1997; Cloke and Perkins 1998, 2002; Devlin and Booth 1998; Perkins and Thorns 2001; Cater and Smith 2003). For Cloke and Perkins (1998; 2002), the growth in

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30 New Zealand’s natural environment is reported in the Draft New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 (Ministry of Tourism et al. 2007) to comprise the primary motivation for potential visitors.
soft and hard adventure activities ranging from horse trekking, climbing and mountain-biking to white water rafting, bungee jumping, and sky diving, have led to promotions and expectations of New Zealand which revolve around notions of excitement, thrill, youthfulness and freshness. The growth in such activities, and the increasingly popular association of New Zealand with these meanings, together re-enforce the marketing of New Zealand as a destination where the desires of the ‘interactive traveller’ for energising and unique travel experiences can be satisfied.

4.3.3 Learning in New Zealand

Tourism New Zealand (2007b) suggests that, as well as valuing the energising aspects of travel that are most notably offered to tourists in New Zealand through the promotion and provision of nature-based adventure, the ‘interactive traveller’ is also characterised by a desire for travel to be a learning experience. The attempts of Tourism New Zealand to meet this demand of their target consumer group are perhaps most demonstrable in the national-scale valorisation of New Zealand’s cultural environment. Indeed, Tourism New Zealand (2007b) finds that after the natural landscape, New Zealand’s culture and history are the second most important attractions for 50 per cent of ‘interactive travellers’.

In developing opportunities for cultural experiences in New Zealand, the themes of interaction, authenticity and uniqueness are again apparent. In terms of the last of these, Tourism New Zealand (2007c) claims:

Their place in the South Pacific, and their love of the outdoors, sport, and the arts, make New Zealanders and their culture unique in the world.31

Desires to learn about the national culture during travel in New Zealand are catered for through the attraction of local cuisine, heritage sites, arts and crafts (Figure 4), public gardens, historic buildings, museums and Maori performances (Tourism New Zealand 2007b). Tourism New Zealand (2007b) also finds, however, that rates of tourist participation in such activities are much lower than those for nature-based activities. While this pattern is largely traceable to the dominant touristic association of New Zealand with adventure tourism and New Zealand’s short history of European settlement (Perkins and Thorns 2001), it may also

31 http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/culture/culture-home.cfm
be that the desire for **authentic** and **unique** interactions with the national culture leads the ‘interactive traveller’ to seek such learning experiences at a more subtle level. Tucker and Keen (2005), in their study on the Bed & Breakfast and Homestay sector, for instance, suggest that ‘interactive travellers’ are keen to interact and mix with ‘local’ people, an assertion that clearly echoes the contention of the Honourable Mark Burton (Minister of Tourism, 2000) that “increasingly our international visitors want to interact with ‘real’ New Zealanders”.\(^{32}\) The desire for authentic interaction with New Zealand’s culture may therefore simply be met through encountering its people on an informal and less commercialised basis.

![Image removed - permission for use not obtainable](image)

**Figure 4: Maori ‘Poupou Post’**.

*While tangible displays of culture are provided for visitors to New Zealand, the desire of ‘interactive travellers’ to authentically engage with national culture may be satisfied in less commercialised and more interactive ways* (source: Tourism New Zealand 2007c).

### 4.3.4 The Development of Rural Tourism

As has been hinted at, the national-scale development of a tourism product for the ‘interactive traveller’ encompasses a particular emphasis on the opportunities for unique, interactive, and authentic encounters *with rurality*. While Ateljevic and Doorne (2002) emphasise the ways in which the off-shore marketing of New Zealand subtly varies depending on the national culture of the consumer group targeted, for instance, they also indicate that a promotional focus upon

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the attraction of rural New Zealand is mobilised in all campaigns. Thus, to the same extent that the national-scale representation and functioning of rurality reflected the dominance of production-based industry in the ‘long boom’, rural space remains, through a valorisation of its consumption-based potential, an important component in the re-orientation of development (Figure 5).

![Image removed - permission for use not obtainable](Image removed - permission for use not obtainable)

Figure 5: Thermal Pool.

Natural, rural landscapes play an important role in the promotion of New Zealand as a tourist destination (source: Tourism New Zealand 2007a).

This is most clear in terms of the centrality of ‘adventure’ and nature-based activities to New Zealand’s tourism product, which are most often promoted with reference to their spectacular natural surroundings. In terms of walking and trekking, for instance:

If you’re keen to enjoy New Zealand’s beautiful landscapes and explore our vast wilderness areas, pack a selection of walking shoes and boots (Tourism New Zealand 2007c).\(^\text{33}\)

The importance of rurality to the promotion of New Zealand’s culture for the ‘interactive traveller’ is less obvious, however, as many of the cultural attractions promoted by Tourism New Zealand are located in New Zealand’s urban centres. However, coupled with the primary motivation of the majority of New Zealand’s visitors to engage with its natural landscapes,

the desire of the ‘interactive traveller’ for authentic, interactive and unique experiences will often lead these tourists to rural areas where the possibility of encountering real New Zealand, and real New Zealanders, is popularly imagined to be available. In short, rural areas are well placed to meet the desires of the ‘interactive traveller’ for travel experiences that comprise both energising and learning components, and are therefore essential to the national-scale development of a successful tourism product.

4.4 Conclusion
With the state committed to playing a significant and active role in economic development, and to ensuring high levels of social welfare, New Zealand was often heralded as the international model of social democracy in the post-war era. The national economy was thus characterised by high levels of state support for, and ownership of, national industries. For rural areas, the subsidisation of the agricultural industry and state support for other production-based industries ensured an era of social and economic security and stability.

The central role of the agricultural industry to both New Zealand’s position in the global arena and to the representation and functioning of New Zealand’s rural areas has, however, been significantly challenged by the state’s implementation of political-economic reforms from 1984. Reflecting its aim to increase New Zealand’s competitiveness on the global stage and its attendant adoption of neo-liberalist ideology, the effects of the reforms were partly signified by the withdrawal of state support for agriculture and other rural-based industries which opened rural areas up to the tenets of free market competition. Political-economic reform, however, was also reflected in a commitment to ensure that tourism became the leading industry in New Zealand’s economic development (Ateljevic and Doorne 2002). While this has maintained the centrality of rurality to New Zealand’s position in the global arena, it is a centrality that is increasingly dependent upon the consumption-based, rather than production-based, potential of the countryside. ‘Rural restructuring’ has therefore comprised a functional transition, leading to a national-scale commodification of rurality designed to increase the contribution of tourism to New Zealand’s economy.

National-scale ‘rural restructuring’ has, furthermore, encompassed a very particular commodification of rurality for the purposes of consumption. To elaborate, Tourism New Zealand has focussed on developing a sustainable niche tourism product, reflected in its attempts to meet the desires of the ‘interactive traveller’. Attracting such a target group has
been accomplished through highlighting the *unique*, *interactive*, and *authentic* experiences that tourists can find in New Zealand. The restructuring of rurality has thus been reflected in its promotional representation as harbouring opportunities for such encounters, with both natural and cultural landscapes and activities in the countryside being valorised in ways that draw upon the notions of uniqueness, interaction, and authenticity. The symbolic reproduction of rural nature and culture, moreover, is geared towards satisfying the value that ‘interactive travellers’ associate with the energising and learning aspects of travel.

In short, the mutually constitutive relationship between the ‘place’ of New Zealand and the ‘space’ of its global context has gone through a period of significant change in the last two decades, reflected in New Zealand’s transition from being an international model of social democracy to “one of the most open and business-friendly economies in the world” (Goff 2006). This evolving relationship, furthermore, has been indicated in a restructuring of rurality in New Zealand. National-scale ‘rural restructuring’ has been characterised by the increasing leverage of consumption-based activity in the countryside, and has, more specifically, been reflected in a commodification of rurality that is in line with the desires of the ‘interactive traveller’. I now turn to the regional-scale of ‘rural restructuring’ in order to address the reciprocal links that changes in Central Otago have with the development of New Zealand more broadly.

34 http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0612/S00313.htm
5. The Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

Central Otago

There hasn’t been greater change in inland Otago since settlement began. That’s now a given. No-one that I know needs to be convinced

Malcolm Macpherson, Mayor of Central Otago (2004; p.15).

5.1 Introduction: Linking the National and Regional Scales

The manner in which Central Otago has developed in the contemporary era is indicative of the mutually constitutive relationship that this regional ‘place’ holds with its broader spatial context. ‘Rural restructuring’ at the regional scale has thus been characterised by a shift in the nature and importance of production-based and consumption-based activities in the countryside, a process which replicates rural development at the national scale. Modern-day Central Otago has emerged from a rich gold-mining heritage, harbours production of some of the world’s most valued wool, and comprises the world’s most southerly wine-producing region. Add to this the region’s diverse, spectacular natural landscapes and its hostile climate, and Central Otago constitutes an intriguing regional-scale component of New Zealand’s broader national tourism product.

More specifically, Central Otago is well positioned in terms of both its cultural and natural environment to develop a regional tourism product that resonates with the national-scale emphasis upon unique and authentic tourist interactions with an inimitable rural world. As Tourism Central Otago (2007a; p.1) puts it:

Here you will experience a world of difference. This golden heartland is an expansive dry land of continental climatic extremes, dramatic landscapes, breathtaking colour, abundant flavours, and pioneer-spirited people.

Thus, in opening up the region’s rural areas for the purposes of consumption, the emphases of Tourism Central Otago – the regional body responsible for developing, managing and promoting tourism in the region – simultaneously reinforce and reproduce those stressed in the promotion of a national-scale tourism product, only in more specific terms. For instance, the opportunity for ‘interactive travellers’ to be energised by, and to learn about, New Zealand, is available through the provision of historical sites, trails and architecture, orchard
stalls and vineyards, numerous sporting activities, and more leisurely ways to appreciate the natural and cultural landscapes which comprise Central Otago (Tourism Central Otago 2007a). In essence, the relationship between the national and regional scales of ‘rural restructuring’ is not only characterised by a transition in production-consumption relations, but also by the implicit assertion that the promise of unique, authentic and interactive engagements with New Zealand can be met, and perhaps even surpassed, through a visit to Central Otago’s ‘World of Difference’.

I begin this section by outlining the development of Central Otago as a production-based region, before suggesting the more recent emergence of tourism as a key industry in the area. I then analyse, in more detail, the nature of the rural tourism product developed in Central Otago, focusing in particular upon Tourism Central Otago’s promotion of the region as a ‘World of Difference’. By interrogating the themes that run through this promotion, I am able to show that the relationship between tourism product development at the national and regional scales is one of mutual constitution.

5.2 Central Otago and its Development

The Central Otago District stretches from inland of the City of Dunedin on the east coast of New Zealand’s South Island towards Queenstown-Lakes District in the west (Figure 6). The region comprises five jurisdictional ‘Community Boards’; Cromwell, Alexandra/Clyde, Manuherikia, Roxburgh and Maniototo (Welch 2002). In all, it covers an area of 10,000 km² and has fewer than 17,000 permanent residents. Characterised by the sporadic location of small towns, Central Otago’s population density of 1.5 people per km² is the lowest in the country (Tourism Central Otago 2007b).

In terms of its physical geography, the region comprises “…an upland basin surrounded by several ranges of mountains…. This basin is in turn divided roughly north to south by other, lower ranges of hills…” leading to the landscape mainly comprising “…open tussock land, grassland, [and] schist rock outcrops…” (Cunningham 2005; pp.10-11). Situated in the rain shadow of the Southern Alps and Fiordland, high altitude drylands dominate in Central Otago with an average annual rainfall of only 300 mm (Cunningham 2005). The region thus endures a continental climate in which the hottest summers (up to 40°C) and coldest winters (down to -10°C) in New Zealand are often experienced. Central Otago is also drained by four main rivers – the Clutha, the Kawarau, the Manuherikia and the Taieri – the gorges and plains of
which complement the hilly, rocky areas of the region. Perhaps most prominent, the broad flat Maniototo plain, which lies between the Taieri River and the Manuherikia River, occupies much of the central northern area of Central Otago.

In terms of its development, although it was the opportunity for irrigation-assisted agriculture on the fertile plains of the Taieri River that led to initial European settlement of the region in the 1850s, much of modern-day Central Otago dates from the 1860s when Gabriel Read discovered commercially viable deposits of gold (Cunningham 2005). As a result, the City of Dunedin and the province of Otago were soon the most wealthy, and fastest growing, parts of New Zealand (Cunningham 2003). The attraction of a region rich in alluvial gold led to the arrival of fortune seekers from across the world and the establishment of several settler communities. Many migrants, however, were not prepared for the harsh climate of Central Otago and, as Cunningham (2005) reports, 500 prospectors lost their lives in 1863 due to
regional flooding and blizzards. Once the alluvial gold was exhausted by 1866, the region’s settlers began to sluice, and then mine, for gold and it was these methods that led to the establishment of many of Central Otago’s settlements today. The gold-rush of the 19th Century is now considered a significant part of Central Otago’s history,\(^{35}\) not only for its importance in encouraging the settlement of the area but also in defining the pioneering nature of the people of Central Otago who:

…endured searing summers and freezing winters; and lost lives and limbs amid the dangerous, back-breaking rush for Central Otago gold (Tourism Central Otago 2007a; p.3).

While gold-mining constituted the main industry of the area until 1908 (Tourism Central Otago 2007b), pastoral farming, horticulture and viticulture have all played an increasingly important role in Central Otago’s social and economic development. Comprising the most southerly wine-producing region in the world, for example, Central Otago has become internationally renowned for the quality of its wine and now accounts for 0.3 per cent of the global wine market (Macpherson 2004). Furthermore, in much the same way as the early European settlers of Central Otago have been glorified in their ability to successfully mine and farm the land, the success with which the wine-growing industry has emerged in the midst of a harsh and unforgiving landscape and climate is often attributed to the pioneering character of its developers. As outlined by Oram (2004), in his book *Pinot Pioneers: tales of determination and perseverance from Central Otago*, producers of wine in the region have not only had to overcome the extremities of the climate and landscape but also the discouraging advice of ‘experts’ in the wine industry.

Today’s rapidly growing pinot noir industry in the region is a testament to their ingenuity, their improvisation, their determination and perseverance and just sheer hard work (Oram 2004; back cover).

\(^{35}\) Although see Frost (2005) who argues for ‘edgier’ interpretations of historical gold rushes which focus on “marginal peoples and unsettling issues” (p. 237) rather than simply economic and engineering progress. Frost challenges conventional understandings of the past which distinguish between ‘history’, as objective and factual, and ‘heritage’, as selective and subjective re-creation, through an exploration of Mount Alexander Diggings in Australia and the Central Otago Heritage Trail.
As well as the strong association of gold-mining and wine-production with Central Otago, the region is also characterised by the dominance of pastoral farming. As such, it is “the world’s largest producer and exporter of crossbred wool fibre” (Tourism Central Otago 2007a; p.4), with its Merino sheep wool particularly valued. However, in addition to new methods of farming developed in response to rabbit problems since their introduction in 1857 (see Cunningham 2005), and ongoing water supply problems which lead Tourism Central Otago (2007b) to suggest that water is now the region’s most valuable resource, farming in the region has, more recently, been affected by broad processes of agricultural restructuring. As a result, Central Otago, like elsewhere in New Zealand, experienced declining economic returns from agriculture in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to a reduction in farm employment and trend to amalgamate farm units into larger farming enterprises (Cunningham 2005). Thus, for Welch (2002; p.448), Central Otago “has experienced significant economic change in the last two decades that has involved both diversification and intensification of rural-based production and pressure to subdivide land for lifestyle blocks which are marginal as economic production units.”

Although located on the east coast of Otago, and therefore outside the Central Otago District, Johnson’s (2004) study of Waihemo is indicative of the changes that have occurred in the region’s farming industry. She reports the weakening of traditional links between farm enterprise, household and property, as short-term and long-term strategies have been adopted by farmers to combat the adverse consequences of agricultural restructuring (altering farm type, expenditure and practice being the most widespread changes made). As well as leading to a growing heterogeneity of farm structure in the area, she suggests that farm-level responses have also comprised a challenge to prevailing farming ideologies, thereby leading through their mobilisation to the emergence of a new local culture which allows for ‘new ways of doing things’ (Johnsen 2004; also see Johnsen 2003). Moreover, in addition, and related, to the direct impact of agricultural restructuring upon farming in the broader region, social and economic development more generally have also been adversely affected. This has been reflected in considerable rural depopulation, the privatisation and rationalisation of service provision (Cunningham 2005), and an amalgamation and centralisation of local government units (Welch 2002).

In building on the foundations laid during the gold-mining era, the maturation of the agricultural, wine-producing and horticultural industries throughout the 20th Century have
5. The Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

provided important economic and social bases for the regional development of Central Otago. In the era of free-market capitalism and neo-liberalist ideology however, agricultural restructuring has reduced the potential of farming to drive the region’s economy to the levels of development witnessed elsewhere. In line with the national drive to increase tourism’s contribution to the economy, and in response to economic and social decline in the region’s rural areas, Central Otago has therefore also been characterised by an increase in the use of the countryside for consumptive, rather than agriculturally productive, purposes. Basing his study on the Queenstown Lakes District of Otago, for instance, Hall (2006) suggests that growing desires and capacities to access the ‘amenity values’ offered by the countryside have led to increasingly high rates of second-home and retirement migration to the area. Such ‘amenity values’ conventionally associated with rural regions include the attractiveness of the rural environment and landscape, the opportunities for leisure and recreation, safe communities, low costs of living and a ‘cultural richness’ (Hall 2006).

Indeed, the development of Central Otago’s rural areas as a commodity for consumption leads Malcolm Macpherson, Mayor of Central Otago, to suggest:

People are no longer buying farms in Otago, not even farmers. They are buying prospective capital gain, recreation, quiet enjoyment, views – especially of water and Grahame Sydney landscapes –, heritage, tourism prospects, almost anything except production (2007; p.15).

In terms of tourism specifically, there were 615,000 visits made by international and domestic visitors to the region in 2005, while annual tourism expenditure is estimated to be around $77 million and projected to increase to $94 million by 2012 (Tourism Central Otago 2007c). This significant increase will be largely fuelled by a 31 per cent increase in international visitor nights. These successful efforts at increasing the value of tourism to the regional economy have led to the establishment of 370 small-medium sized tourism operations in the area, each providing different types of accommodation, activities and services (Tourism Central Otago 2007c).
5. The Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

5.3 A ‘World of Difference’

5.3.1 The Branding of Central Otago

To develop Central Otago as a region to be desired for consumptive purposes, Tourism Central Otago has had to create an effective brand to ensure that potential visitors, migrants and investors associate the area with a particular and attractive symbolic value. The production of such a regional identity must also resonate with the values of local residents, however. In reflection of this, and of the negative effects that high rates of migration may have on the amenity landscapes that migrants seek (Hall 2006), the emphasis of Tourism Central Otago (2007c; p.9), like Tourism New Zealand more broadly, is on developing and maintaining a sustainable regional tourism product. Such a product has been designed to ensure that tourism in the region:

- is profitable and delivers benefits to Central Otago as a whole.
- is a satisfying experience for visitors.
- safeguards Central Otago’s natural and historic resources.
- is supported by the Central Otago community.

To achieve this sustainable but profitable regional vision, Tourism Central Otago’s marketing activities centre on its promotion of the region as ‘A World of Difference’ (Figure 7). This branding of Central Otago as a “great place to live, work and play” (Tourism Central Otago 2007c; p.37) commenced in 2005 and has been driven by the competitive need to succinctly identify the features most valued by the regional community, and to project these values to the outside world in order to emphasise Central Otago’s uniqueness from its inter-regional competitors.

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36 The Central Otago Draft Tourism Strategy 2007-2012 (Tourism Central Otago 2007c) identifies a number of issues facing the development of tourism in the region. These extend beyond the need to balance the potentially destructive impact of commercial exploitation with the need to protect those regional features that are valued by tourists and residents alike. For instance Tourism Central Otago (2007c) also highlights the requirement to find the most effective balance between emphasising quietness/solitude and the provision of infrastructure and services, to tackle the clear seasonality which characterises tourism in the region (see Duval 2004 for an entrepreneurial-scale analysis of this problem in Central Otago), and to ensure consistency in the standard of service provision throughout the region.
Tourism Central Otago brands the region as ‘A World of Difference’. The symbol of the cloud and the falcon are used to signify a “noble natured people, strength, bravery, ingenuity and high spirits, evoking freedom and pride as it soars above the golden, contoured land.”

(source: Tourism Central Otago 2007b).

Tourism Central Otago’s branding of Central Otago is, however, also sub-divided into three components reflecting the various group interests which it is committed to catering for. ‘A World of Discovery’, ‘A World of Lifestyle’ and ‘A World of Enterprise’ are thus geared towards the interests of prospective tourists, migrants and business investors respectively (Tourism Central Otago 2007b). In a similar vein to Tourism New Zealand’s emphasis on the uniqueness of the national-scale tourism product, the common thread operating through the promotion of these three ‘Worlds’ is, again, the uniqueness that can be found in the region. Thus, while the analytical focus now concentrates more specifically on the promotion of ‘A World of Discovery’ for potential visitors, it should be remembered that this is part of a multi-dimensional regional branding in which ‘difference’ comprises the underlying rationale for Central Otago’s promotion.

5.3.2 The Power of Nature

In stressing difference and, more specifically, discovery, the tourist-oriented promotion of Central Otago draws from and reinforces the wider promotion and marketing of New Zealand. This is particularly apparent in the portrayal of the natural beauty that can be engaged with in the region.

37 To add value to their products, the symbol is available for use by business operators in the region providing they ascribe to some principles outlined by Tourism Central Otago. These principles range from ‘Making a Sustainable Difference’ to ‘Protecting our Rich Heritage’ (Tourism Central Otago 2007b).
First time visitors are silenced and energised by this tumble of mountain, river, rock and tussock. See the grandeur of breathtaking vistas and be moved by their surging natural power. Central’s clear light brings mountains within an arm’s reach and displays a star-studded night sky. It is a place of extraordinary contrasts, our middle earth (Tourism Central Otago 2007b).

Much of the emphasis of Tourism Central Otago is on the attractions of the natural environment. These features range from Central Otago’s distinctive seasons to its ‘iconic’ schist geology, from its air and light to its silence, and from its flora and fauna to its night skies (Tourism Central Otago 2007c). Beyond the simple notion of aesthetic appeal, implicit in the promotion of the natural environment is the assertion that the area harbours an ‘energy’ and ‘power’ that is untainted by the effects of human culture and that will revitalise and refresh all those that engage with it. This ‘power’ is deemed to arise not only from the naturalness of Central Otago’s landscapes but also from the agelessness of these landscapes.

Central Otago is a living museum, scattered with historic features preserved by a dry climate. This peaceful, powerful place of physical challenge and seasonal contrast has barely changed over centuries (Tourism Central Otago 2007b).

The promotion of the region in this way clearly resonates with the energising aspects of travel that ‘interactive travellers’ especially value (see Section 4.3.2). Furthermore, the association of Central Otago with a natural power is reinforced by the works of a number of artists and writers that have taken inspiration from the area. Timeless Land, for instance, comprises a collaboration of the paintings, poems and writings of Grahame Sydney, Brian Turner and Owen Marshall respectively, which clearly attempt to portray the essential and unchanging character of the region’s natural environment (Sydney et al. 1995). Through their cultural productions, these artists have inevitably raised the profile of the region in the tourism market, simultaneously ensuring the increasingly popular association of Central Otago with the symbolic values that they have inscribed through their works upon the area’s landscapes.

38 http://www.centralotagonz.com/index.cfm/film
39 http://www.centralotagonz.com/
Here was an environment which made human pettiness and the lust for power seem piffling, contemptible. Here was an environment which helped dissolve and wither the worst of me, gave me a better sense of what’s enduring (Turner 1995, quoted in Sydney et al. (1995); p.159).

Moreover, throughout its promotion of Central Otago’s natural environment, the emphasis of Tourism Central Otago is on the ways in which tourists can actively engage with it (Figure 8). Walking, cycling, horse-riding, skiing, fishing and water-based recreational activities are just some of the ways in which ‘interactive travellers’ can ‘partake’ in these landscapes (Tourism Central Otago 2007a), and thereby most effectively tap into the region’s natural energy and acquire unique travel experiences.

Figure 8: Cyclist in Central Otago.

In line with broader tourism product development at the national scale, Tourism Central Otago promotes Central Otago as a unique and inspiring place where tourists can experience the natural component of rurality at its most authentic and powerful (source: Tourism Central Otago 2007b).
5.3.3 The Valorisation of Culture

The promotion of Central Otago as offering the most authentic and untainted of rural experiences, and as providing for the tourist the opportunity to “[e]xperience true solitude and get close to nature in an inspiring and timeless land” (Tourism Central Otago 2007b),\(^{40}\) is balanced by a complementary emphasis on the cultural component of rurality.\(^{41}\) Essential in creating a real rural experience for the ‘interactive traveller’, which Tourism New Zealand more broadly has focussed upon targeting, has been the portrayal of Central Otago as harbouring the opportunity for a learning experience (see Section 4.3.3) which can be acquired through authentic and interactive engagements with the region’s unique rural culture.

For Central Otago, rural culture comprises a number of aspects that emerge from both historical and more contemporary lifestyles. These are imbued by Tourism Central Otago with a symbolic value that visitors are invited to acquire as part of their rural experience. Most notably, Tourism Central Otago (2007a) points to the productive farmlands, vineyards of international standing, and a pioneer-spirited people and their goldfield heritage, in order to entice the tourist to visit and experience the cultural side of this ‘World of Discovery’. Again, tourists are encouraged to actively engage with such culture through the promotion of a number of activities and places (Figure 9).

Visitors are, for instance, invited to learn about and appreciate the region’s wine industry by taking the Cromwell and Bannockburn Wine Trail in the west of Central Otago.\(^{42}\) There is also the opportunity to “[r]etrace the gold rush” through taking the Goldfields Heritage Trail and visiting the region’s museums, information centres and historical gold-mining sites (Tourism Central Otago 2007a; p.3). Gabriel’s Gully, for example, where gold was first discovered by Gabriel Read, is today retained as a heritage park (Cunningham 2005).

\(^{40}\) [http://www.centralotagonz.com/index.cfm/film](http://www.centralotagonz.com/index.cfm/film)

\(^{41}\) Tourism New Zealand (2007b), in a national report on ‘Cultural Demand’, finds that, for international visitors, the five most popular cultural products in Central Otago are local cuisine, wine tasting/visiting a vineyard, shopping for souvenirs, visiting sites important to New Zealand’s history and the attraction of historic buildings.

\(^{42}\) Interestingly, Welch (2002; p.451) suggests that “as the predominant demand during the last decade has been for vineyard and winery sites, which commonly have a symbiotic relationship with tourism”, the need for local government units to manage the tension between tourism/recreation and maintaining the rural environment as a quasi-agricultural space has not been too much of an issue for Central Otago. Indeed, this notion can be applied to other ‘productive’ industries in Central Otago which have also been reproduced as key components of the region’s tourism product.
5. The Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

5.3.4 A Unique Rural Mix

The attractions of nature and culture in Central Otago are, however, most often promoted in tandem, with particular cultural activities in the region usually promoted with reference to the spectacular natural settings in which such activities are undertaken. For example, the vineyards are “set amongst stunning alpine scenery 200-450 metres above sea level” and the Wine Trail leads tourists “along the spectacular Kawarau Gorge and Lake Dunstan” (Tourism Central Otago 2007a; p.8). This promotional coupling of culture with nature, however, extends beyond the highlighting of their physical juxtaposition to also illustrate the uniqueness of their interplay. To elaborate, the picture drawn by Tourism Central Otago is one that also stresses the ways in which the people of Central Otago are actively involved in making the natural environment a productive one. As Tourism Central Otago (2007b) portrays this regional interaction of culture and nature for the purposes of tourism; “[f]rom the harshest climates comes the finest produce... It is distinctive in everything it is and does.”

http://www.centralotagonz.com/index.cfm/economic/
Moreover, in outlining the challenges that the region’s climate and landscapes present to modern-day inhabitants attempting to make a successful living out of the land, Tourism Central Otago ascribes to them a pioneer-spirited character and thereby implicitly links the contemporary culture of Central Otago to the pioneers that first settled the region in the mid-19th Century. The links made between the cultures of historical and present-day Central Otago are often much clearer however. As well as emphasising the unchanging and enduring form of the region’s natural landscapes, there is the suggestion that the culture of Central Otago is also characterised by a traditional way of doing things.

…teams of drovers on horseback take their dogs and head off to muster the traditional way. For three days they range across the mountains shepherding some 18,000 sheep down onto lower pastures (Tourism Central Otago 2007a; p.4).

The overall sense of natural and cultural timelessness and tradition provoked by Tourism Central Otago is an essential strategy in promoting Central Otago as an area in which the ‘interactive traveller’s’ desire for authentic and unique engagements with rurality can be met. In short, instilling the present-day character of the region’s natural landscapes and culture with a historically enriched symbolic value adds credit to the notion that real rural experiences are found in Central Otago’s ‘World of Discovery’. The appeal that Grahame Sydney attaches to Central Otago as a painter is therefore indicative of the manner in which Tourism Central Otago portrays the region in order to attract visitors:

…the emptiness, the disturbing solitude and sense of past lives, the eerie and emphatic agelessness of the open basins…. Something so humbling there (Sydney 2000; p.16).

5.4 Conclusion
Largely founded upon the discovery of gold in the area in the mid-19th Century, the economic and social development of Central Otago has, more recently, depended on the production-based industries of pastoral farming, viticulture and horticulture. With the advent of broad-scale structural reform, however, and the attendant economic and social implications that have come with agricultural restructuring and service privatisation, the growth of tourism in the region has become an essential requirement for the further development of Central Otago. As at the national scale, Central Otago has thus been partially converted from a region of rural production to a region of rural consumption.
The symbolic valorisation of rurality at the regional scale has, in part, been driven by the national-scale adoption of neo-liberal ideology and the associated state advocacy of inter-regional competition as a basis for regional-scale economic development. The branding of Central Otago as a ‘World of Difference’, however, demonstrates other ties between national-scale and regional-scale ‘rural restructuring’. The particular nature of rural commodification for the purposes of consumption in Central Otago is indicated by Tourism Central Otago’s more specific promotion of the region as a ‘World of Discovery’. It is through the construction of this identity that the reciprocal links between ‘rural restructuring’ at the national and regional scales become especially apparent. The projection of Central Otago as offering opportunities for unique, authentic, and interactive engagements with rurality clearly echoes the promises made to travellers at the national scale of tourism development. ‘Rural restructuring’ in Central Otago can therefore be seen as both reinforcing and reflecting national scale ‘rural restructuring’ through the development of a regional tourism product geared towards the desires of the ‘interactive traveller’.

This contention gains further credence when the symbolic valorisation of Central Otago’s natural and cultural landscapes are considered more specifically. To elaborate, ‘rural restructuring’, and the development of a regional tourism product, has been reflected in a romanticisation of the natural landscape. Tourism New Zealand’s attempts at highlighting the energising aspects of travel that the ‘interactive traveller’ can experience in New Zealand, are reproduced in the promotional emphases of Tourism Central Otago, which suggest that the timeless and unchanging character of the region’s natural environment give it a revitalising power. The commodification of rurality in Central Otago has, furthermore, involved a valorisation of the region’s culture. Thus, the national-scale construction of New Zealand as harbouring opportunities for ‘interactive travellers’ to learn while they travel, is reproduced at the regional scale. Most notably, this has involved a promotion of Central Otago’s gold-mining heritage, farming activities and wine-producing industry. Finally, the uniqueness of Central Otago’s ‘World of Discovery’ is not only emphasised through the juxtaposition of the region’s intriguing natural and cultural environments, but is reinforced through promotion of the interactions between these two environments. This promotional ploy can only encourage the association of the region’s countryside with the opportunity for interaction, uniqueness and authenticity that ‘interactive travellers’ to New Zealand are promised. The next section looks at the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail which comprises a central feature of this regional ‘World of Discovery’.
6. The Sub-Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

The Otago Central Rail Trail

_That’s what it is, a real rural experience, as well as a ride on a bike_
Graeme Duncan (The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn).

6.1 Introduction: Linking the Regional and Sub-Regional Scales

The Otago Central Rail Trail is a public reserve for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders; its length of 150 km taking between three and four days for the average cyclist to complete. Commencing in 1994, the conversion of a disused railway route into a Rail Trail was the first of its kind in New Zealand but was modelled on ‘rails to trails’ projects elsewhere in the world (Graham 2004). Officially opening in February 2000, it has proved to be a largely successful rural development project, simultaneously offering tourists an active, physical challenge, an opportunity to engage with regional and sub-regional heritage and culture, and a chance to appreciate the area’s diverse physical landscape. Jointly developed and managed by the Government’s Department of Conservation and a local community trust, the recreational facility forbids motorised access, is open all year round and, while the option to give donations is available, is a free resource for visitors’ use. As illustrated in Figure 10, the trail runs from Middlemarch on the Strath Taieri Plain, through the upper Taieri Gorge, across the Maniototo Plain in north-eastern Central Otago, over the northern shoulder of Rough Ridge and down into the valley of Idaburn. The Poolburn Gorge then leads the trail into the Manuherikia Valley before it reaches its end in Clyde. The Otago Central Rail Trail may also be experienced in conjunction with the train journeys operated by _Taieri Gorge Limited_ from Dunedin to Middlemarch. Indeed, the broader, regional development of efficient and regular connection services to Queenstown in the west and Dunedin in the east have been important factors in the successful development of the Rail Trail.

The conversion of the Otago Central Railway into the Otago Central Rail Trail comprises an indicative sub-regional transition that has stimulated, and reflected, changes to the broader-scale regional context of which this tourist attraction is a part. The nature of this sub-regional tourism product and the historical trajectory from which it has emerged, thus, in many ways, mirror the wider restructuring of Central Otago. As such, the railway played an instrumental role in Central Otago’s productive era, ensuring the economic viability of the area’s agricultural industry through providing a way in which farming produce could be transported
to Dunedin. The railway, however, was also constructed as a result of the region’s production-based requirements and therefore took its route and operation from these demands.

![Figure 10: The Route of the Otago Central Rail Trail, Central Otago (source: adapted from The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn (2007)).](http://www.wedderburn.net.nz/how-to-get-here.html)

Now, in constituting a tourist magnet for Central Otago, the Otago Central Rail Trail fulfils an alternative function and thereby influences, and is influenced by, the development of its broader regional context in new ways. In this section, I investigate the changing nature of this mutually constitutive relationship through firstly documenting the construction of the railway and its more recent conversion into the Rail Trail. I then turn in more detail to the nature of this tourism product in order to highlight the more particular links between ‘rural restructuring’ at the regional and sub-regional scales.

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6. Developing the Otago Central Rail Trail

The Otago Central Rail Trail has its roots in the construction of the Otago Central Railway which commenced in 1879. As outlined by Dangerfield and Emerson (1967), there had emerged at this time a demand for the broader region of Central Otago to be more effectively linked to the regional centre of Dunedin on the east coast of Otago. It was believed that access to the goldfields and agricultural produce of the inland region was vital in opening up the isolated, but richly resourced, area to trading opportunities in Dunedin, and thus to the development of the region and New Zealand more broadly. The railway would also offer the opportunity for supplies from Dunedin to be delivered to the settlements in the backcountry.

In light of the potential economic benefits that a railway would bring to the communities of Central Otago, seven potential routes for its construction were put forward in 1877. In September of that year, a route was decided upon by the Select Committee, largely influenced by the lobbying activities of the region’s Member of Parliament, Vincent Pyke. The Committee reported that the proposed route from North Taieri to Cromwell, via Strath Taieri, “...commands the largest quantity of Crown Lands, presents the fewest engineering difficulties and is the most direct route from the interior to Dunedin. It would open up 1,200,000 acres of Crown Lands and gives communication to 1,650,000 acres beyond Cromwell” (Report of the Select Committee 1877, quoted in Dangerfield and Emerson 1967; p.6).

While the urgency of developing the line was continuously stressed by the Committee, there remained constant debate over the route and construction of the railway. Even after work began in 1879 at Wingatui, on the outskirts of Dunedin, the project aim to reach Lake Wanaka by 1884 was soon unattainable with the impact of the economic depression of the 1880s. By 1891, when the railway reached Middlemarch, the average construction rate was only three miles per annum, partly a result of the lack of money but also due to the engineering feats which construction required (Dangerfield and Emerson 1967). As the railway reached Hyde in 1891 and Ranfurly in 1898, the fortunes of these places followed a pattern of fluctuation as worker camps, and businesses providing for the workers, moved forward with the construction process. The rate of construction improved as investment capital became more readily available and the railway arrived at Wedderburn in 1900, Chatto Creek in 1906, and Clyde in 1907. While the gold-rush was largely over, advocates of the railway outlined the importance of its continued construction to Cromwell, in the interests of irrigation, fruit
growth and agriculture (Dangerfield and Emerson 1967). The Otago Central Railway was finally completed in 1921 when it reached Cromwell in the west of Central Otago.

It appears that the railway initially served its purpose well. A. E. McQueen, for example, suggested:

> The Central Otago railway has played a major part in the economic development of the areas. The carriage of gold miners’ stores, dredge parts, and later livestock, wool, fertilisers and fruit, as well as general supplies for farm and township, has brought to the railway over the years the very proper image of a lifeline between an area of extensive farming and orcharding and the regional marketing and distribution centre – Dunedin (Quoted in Dangerfield and Emerson 1967; p. 46).

As Graham (2004) outlines, however, this continued role as a lifeline was largely ensured through state protectionism which forbade the carriage of goods by truck for distances of over 48 km and required that “...any business or person operating within 70 km of a railway station in New Zealand to use the railways to move freight” (Cunningham 2003; p.19). In an emerging economic climate of rationalisation and growing dissatisfaction with the efficiency of New Zealand’s railways, restrictions on the carriage of goods were steadily relaxed from 1961 until 1983 when state protection for the railway was completely removed (Graham 2004). This process reflects well the more widespread shift in Government policy as state-owned businesses and public institutions were increasingly opened up to the competitive market and state protectionism was disbanded. The railway line may well have come to its end then if it had not been for its use in relation to the construction of the Clyde Dam. Indeed, the removal of the railway had already begun with the uplifting of the line between Clyde and Cromwell to enable the building of the dam (Graham 2004). Inevitably, after dam construction was completed in 1989, the railway was no longer deemed a necessary feature of the Central Otago landscape and the tracks were removed from Middlemarch to Clyde.

The new opportunities for regional development that the disbanded railway route could potentially provide in the emerging era of neo-liberalism were already evident, however. In 1987, the Dunedin City Council, in financial collaboration with the communities of Central Otago, bought the scenic stretch of rail between Wingatui and Middlemarch. This line is now used by Taieri Gorge Limited to offer tourists train excursions from Dunedin through the
Taieri Gorge (Figure 11). In providing access to the rich and spectacular scenery and the engineering feats that line the route, the Taieri Gorge Railway is now considered as offering a train journey of international standing, and is one of the region’s main tourist attractions.

Figure 11: Taieri Gorge Train Journey.

Taieri Gorge Limited offers a train ride along part of the route of the Otago Central Railway. Comprising carriages that echo the style of those used in the historical era, the journey takes tourists from Dunedin to Middlemarch, where the Rail Trail begins its course (source: author 2007).

The remainder of the railway route - from Middlemarch to Clyde - was bought by the Department of Conservation in 1993. With this line (150 km in length), and in a public-private partnership typical of political-economic restructuring in New Zealand, the Department and the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust began construction of the Rail Trail in 1994 to give cyclists, walkers, and horse-riders the opportunity to engage with the natural and cultural landscapes that the railway once passed through. As stated by the Department of Conservation (1994), this conversion of a railway route into a recreational resource was conducted under the guidance of three Management Directions:

- to give priority to the maintenance and enhancement of these recreational opportunities.
- to meet the concerns of the farming community wherever possible, subject to the maintenance and enhancement of the recreational opportunities.
• to preserve, and enhance where possible the historic and heritage attributes of the trail.

With funding and administrative support provided by the Rail Trail Trust, the Department of Conservation spent six years and over NZ $850,000 on making the track appropriate for its intended purpose, which included strengthening and modifying the old rail bridges, viaducts and tunnels, and erecting information boards along the trail (Graham 2004). In February 2000, the full length of the Rail Trail was opened up to visitors.

The conversion, management and promotion of the Rail Trail have been effective in developing the trail as a tourist attraction. In 2007, for instance, the Automobile Association asked over 20,000 New Zealanders to identify the places most worth visiting in the country (New Zealand Automobile Association 2007). The Otago Central Rail Trail came sixteenth in the final list. Tourism Central Otago (2007c), furthermore, estimates that around 10,000 visitors annually complete the trail and that between 40,000 and 60,000 visitors tackle parts of the trail, while the Department of Conservation reported that up to 100,000 people movements were recorded over the various sections in 2004 (Otago Central Rail Trail Trust 2005). As these figures are largely made up of domestic visits, the annual rates are forecast to increase as the Rail Trail’s international profile is raised. While there is a lack of existing data on the backgrounds of tourists that use the Rail Trail, the Rail Trail Trust’s survey of businesses along the Rail Trail in 2005 does present some interesting findings about visitor patterns. Respondents to the survey suggested, for instance, that one third of visitors are from within New Zealand, a proportion which has decreased significantly in a short space of time. In terms of the attractions of the Rail Trail, the report suggests that visitors most value the challenge, the peace/solitude, the landscape/scenery, and the history provided by the Rail Trail. Based on the survey, the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust also finds that a significant majority of visitors are aged 50 or over, that ‘word-of-mouth’ comprises by far the most effective means of Rail Trail promotion, and that the overwhelming majority of tourists use the Rail Trail between October and April.

With increasing tourist usage of the Otago Central Rail Trail comes increasing pressure to enhance the quality of the broader regional tourism product. Tourism Central Otago (2007c)

45 http://www.aatravel.co.nz/101-must-dos-for-kiwis/
thus suggests that further development of the region’s infrastructure and service provision is essential to the sustainable growth of the Rail Trail as a tourist attraction. Other challenges identified by Tourism Central Otago include the need to control numbers on the trail at peak times, the lack of income for the Rail Trail Trust which is needed for the maintenance and enhancement of the trail, the problems of seasonality for local businesses, and the inconsistency of the quality of service provision with the quality of the overall product. One recommendation geared towards meeting these requirements thus stresses the need to develop a strategic alliance between the Department of Conservation, Tourism Central Otago, the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust and the Rail Operator Group (comprising business operators along the Rail Trail) (Tourism Central Otago 2007c). This collaboration, Tourism Central Otago argues, would help to ensure that the overall Rail Trail product is successfully aligned with visitor expectations. In relation to this thesis, such collaboration would clearly indicate a recognition that the Rail Trail is both part of a much broader tourism product, and also closely linked with the local businesses that service its visitors. In essence, the recommendation demands that the intimate and reciprocal links between tourism products at the national, regional, sub-regional and business scales be acknowledged for rural tourism in New Zealand to be successfully developed in a consistent manner.

While the Rail Trail is predominantly located within the region of Central Otago, however, there have also been suggestions that the jurisdictional boundary between Dunedin City and Central Otago District - which the Rail Trail crosses - has impacted negatively upon the sub-regional tourism product. Such sentiments were, for instance, expressed by participants in this study (refer to Figures 6 and 10):

So Tourism Central have controlled all the advertising of the Rail Trail but Tourism Central stops at Waipiata... the Rail Trail stops at Waipiata as far as they’re concerned because... at Daisybank, that’s the boundary of Dunedin City and Central Otago and so they... they don’t want to know this end of the Rail Trail [from Middlemarch to Waipiata] and, at the same time, Tourism Dunedin couldn’t care less about this end of the Rail Trail so it sorta stops there.... So consequentially, they’re spending all the money and that on the trail at the other end and if there’s any left they’ll do it down this end but where that’s silly is they
6. The Sub-Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

should be doing the whole trail because people wanna experience the whole trail. They should get this thing out of it, of different areas. It should be the Rail Trail as one complete unit, not segmented (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).

Reflecting its predominant location within the boundaries of Central Otago, it appears that the sub-regional Rail Trail product is overwhelmingly associated with the regional product of Central Otago. At the same time, a small but significant section of the Rail Trail lies outside the area of responsibility for Tourism Central Otago, the upkeep of which seems to be of little concern to Tourism Dunedin. The existence of this ‘grey area’, where different parts of a sub-regional tourism product fall within the areas of responsibility for two different regional bodies, clearly highlights the potentially negative impact that can come with being reciprocally linked to a broader context. In essence, the potential for the Rail Trail to be managed and promoted successfully as one complete unit (in line with the expectations of visitors) depends, in part, upon regional scale developments with which this sub-regional tourism product holds a mutually constitutive relationship.

6.3 The Promotion of Three Appreciations

6.3.1 The Rail Trail Trust

While the development and maintenance of the Rail Trail have largely been the responsibility of the Department of Conservation, its administration and promotion comprise the primary roles of the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust. This body is a charitable organisation that was set up in 1994 to support the Department in developing the Otago Central Rail Trail project. More recently, its responsibilities have focused on enhancing tourists’ experience of the Rail Trail. While its promotion of the Rail Trail therefore plays an essential role in ensuring that tourists are attracted to the area, the images that they present must be authenticated by the experiences that the Rail Trail provides in order to ensure high visitor satisfaction levels. As part of their commitments, the Trust commissioned in 2004 the production of a guidebook which outlines the history and attractions of the Rail Trail. The book, entitled From Steam Trains to Pedal Power: the story of the Otago Central Rail Trail (Graham 2004), offers an intriguing insight into the consumptive desires that the Rail Trail is posited as satisfying. This promotion of the Otago Central Rail Trail draws on a number of themes. Consistent with the wider promotion of Central Otago as a ‘World of Discovery’ by Tourism Central Otago, the overall theme promoted for the Rail Trail rests on the suggestion that each visitor takes away
“something different to treasure in their memories” (Graham 2004; p.3). More specifically, building on the fundamental uniqueness of the ‘rail to trail’ conversion project in New Zealand, the attraction of the Rail Trail for the visitor is presented as resting on three main appreciations.

6.3.2 Appreciating Authentic Culture and Heritage
Firstly, a journey along the Rail Trail is promoted as leading to the appreciation of “a tough and adventurous Otago history” (Graham 2004; p.3). The tourist is thus invited to engage with, and learn about the cultural heritage of Central Otago. In addition to the obvious links to the past that the Taieri Gorge railway journey offers, opportunities for such encounters range from visiting gold mines along the trail to admiring the engineering feats involved in the construction of the railway (Figure 12), and from relaxing in the numerous traditional, country pubs to visiting the Railway Display Centre (Figure 13).

Figure 12: Bridge on the Rail Trail.

The engineering feats involved in producing several large viaducts during the construction of the Otago Central Railway are described on information boards along the Rail Trail (source: author 2007).
6. The Sub-Regional Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

The old railway station at Ranfurly now partly operates as a Railway Display Centre, providing tourists with information regarding the railway-based heritage of the area (source: author 2007).

In line with the official promotion of the Rail Trail, the centrality of local pubs to the sub-regional tourism product was also suggested by respondents in this study.

I say to people it’s like stepping back in time, going to the Lauder pub, because they have not changed a thing in how long? I don’t know how long. ...but people really enjoy it... the Aucklanders [residents of New Zealand’s largest city] just can’t believe that… (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder)

It is not only the historical ambience of the pubs that is deemed to intrigue tourists however. As will be explored in greater detail in Section 8.3, participants in this research also suggested that local pubs are valued because visitors are always keen to meet local rural people. Thus, in addition to drawing on the area’s rich cultural heritage, contemporary culture is also used to entice visitors to the Rail Trail. Furthermore, interaction with contemporary rural culture is not only offered through pub-based encounters with local residents but also through the agricultural surroundings of much of the Rail Trail (Figure 14) as “the rural working landscape outside the corridor appeals to people used to city life” (Tourism Central Otago 2007c; p.79; emphasis in original).
While farming continues to be an important industry in the area, its physical manifestation is re-positioned as a source of aesthetic and cultural appreciation with the development of the Rail Trail tourism product (source: author 2007).

6.3.3 Appreciating Unique Natural Landscapes

The attraction of river landscapes and seasonal colours are central features offered in the rural tourism product of the Rail Trail (source: author 2007).

Secondly, in the promotion of the Otago Central Rail Trail, there is the apparently inescapable opportunity to appreciate “the wild, natural surroundings” (Graham 2004; p.3). The Rail Trail, in this case, is presented in light of the opportunity for tourists to journey through an
array of diverse natural landscapes, including the Rock and Pillar Range, the Taieri Ridge, the Maniototo Basin, the Ida Valley, and the Poolburn Gorge. This variation in landscape form is complemented by a promotional emphasis on the effects of the seasons and Central Otago’s vast skies on the aesthetics of the surroundings, as well as on the abundance of fauna and flora that can be seen along the route. In apparent opposition to the appreciation of the area’s culture and heritage, this discursive re-positioning of the Otago Central Rail Trail attempts to convey the existence of a natural wilderness with which tourists can engage (Figures 15 and 16).

Figure 16: Hills between Middlemarch and Hyde.

_The ‘big’ skies and hilly backdrops are also key elements of the Rail Trail’s physical environment offered to tourists_ (source: author 2007).

Again, the centrality of the natural surroundings to the Rail Trail product was also stressed by the entrepreneurs in this study. Reinforced by the prohibition of motorised access to the Rail Trail, it is through this appreciation that the reciprocal links between the promotion of the Rail Trail and the broader regional promotion of Central Otago as a unique ‘World of Discovery’ become most apparent.

So it’s unique and people living in Auckland and those areas never knew it existed. So they find a totally new experience, it’s an undiscovered land through here, the hills and the… the big skies and the unique climate here, the dry and the heat and all those… the four… four very distinct seasons of Central Otago, very
distinct and this is what’s unique about it (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

6.3.4 Appreciating Challenging Interaction

Finally, a journey along the Rail Trail may instil, in the tourist, an appreciation of “finding out you could bike further than you ever guessed or beating the challenge of a dusty head wind” (Graham 2004; p.3). This appreciation emerges from the psychological satisfaction gained from partaking in, and ultimately overcoming, an activity that may be physically challenging. Given the extremity of the region’s seasons and the notoriously strong winds that sweep through some areas of the trail, the Rail Trail can, at times, constitute a hostile landscape for recreational activity. The representation of the trail as physically challenging enough to imbue in the tourist a sense of satisfaction upon completion is accompanied by a counter-discourse, however. Drawing on the shallow gradient of the trail which arises from the historical requirements of the steam train, and on the trail’s gravel surface (Figure 17), this discourse stresses that the completion of the trail is a possible feat regardless of age and level of fitness. In order to accommodate this apparent contradiction as well as to encourage visitors to remain longer in the area, the temporal flexibility which comes with tackling the trail is positioned as a key attribute in the promotion of the Rail Trail (Tourism Central Otago 2007c).

Figure 17: Cyclist on the Rail Trail.

*The attraction of the physical challenge of cycling the Rail Trail is balanced by a promotional emphasis upon the smooth gravel surface of the track and the shallow gradients which were required by steam trains* (source: author 2007).
In articulating the reasons that they believe to lie behind the popularity of the Rail Trail, participants in this study again reiterated the promotional emphases, stressing that while the trail is a challenging attraction which can satisfy consumptive desires for recreational activity, it is one that anyone can conquer.

Ah it’s the lifestyle of people now. They want to be at the outdoor thing, keeping fit and getting out. And then you get on that Rail Trail and people just love it, they’re exhilarated when they come in. And then you get the older ones and, you know, it’s a great sense of achievement for them (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).

6.4 Conclusion

The conversion of a historic railway line into a recreational ‘rail trail’ provides an intriguing component of multi-scalar ‘rural restructuring’. The operation of the Otago Central Railway throughout much of the 20th Century clearly reflected, and reinforced, the functioning of rural Central Otago as an arena for production-based activity. In providing a means by which agricultural produce could be transported, the railway comprised an important regional feature which enhanced the potential of the area to develop in this production-oriented manner. The recent development of the Otago Central Rail Trail in place of the Railway, however, is intimately and reciprocally tied to Central Otago’s broader development as a region increasingly associated with consumption-based activity. In offering visitors the opportunity to experience Central Otago as consumers, the ‘rail-to-trail’ conversion thus constitutes a more localised instance of the symbolic and functional transition of rurality outlined at the national and regional scales.

Again, however, the development of the Rail Trail demonstrates a more specific reciprocal relationship between the regional and sub-regional scales of ‘rural restructuring’. Thus, Central Otago’s promotion as a ‘World of Discovery’ has encouraged, and is enhanced by, the manner in which the Rail Trail has emerged as a successful sub-regional tourism product. More specifically, the management and promotion of the Rail Trail has centred on providing to visitors a certain experience of rurality. I have suggested that this experience of rural discovery is portrayed as resting on three main appreciations; namely, appreciations of authentic culture, unique nature and interactive challenge. A regional ‘World of Discovery’ is thus offered at this sub-regional scale through the opportunity for tourists to engage with local
people and heritage, to access spectacular landscapes and environments, and to be physically active. Again, the notions of interaction, uniqueness, and authenticity are clear while the potential for ‘interactive travellers’ to learn and be energised is also implicitly suggested. As such, the development and management of the Otago Central Rail Trail clearly constitutes a sub-regional case of ‘rural restructuring’ that is in keeping with the broader commodification of rurality. This is particularly apparent in terms of the reproduction of rurality for the purposes of satisfying the consumptive desires of the ‘interactive traveller’.

The portrayal of the Otago Central Rail Trail as an example of ‘rural restructuring’ has been strengthened, furthermore, by a popular tendency to consider its development as the saviour of the settlements in the vicinity of its route (see, for instance, Cunningham 2003, 2005; Otago Central Rail Trail Trust 2005).\(^{46}\) Benson (2005), for instance, suggests that the popularity of the Rail Trail is restoring the area’s townships to how they were 100 years ago, in terms of their community spirit and economic buoyancy. Such sentiments were also repeatedly echoed by participants in this study. It is most commonly through the development and vibrancy of the local business environment that celebrations of place revitalisation are framed. As Shirley Hodge indicates, however, the business environment is only growing and contributing to the restructuring of local places in partial and particular ways which reflect its new role in servicing visitors on the Rail Trail.

The only places that are booming are… the hotel basically…. As many people point out, the Rail Trail only benefits the accommodation places, basically, and the hotels and eating places (Shirley Hodge, Old PO Backpackers, Ranfurly).

I soon turn, therefore, to the business scale of ‘rural restructuring’ to explore in more detail the links that businesses in the area have with their sub-regional context. To provide some context, however, I first introduce the businesses and entrepreneurs involved in this study.

\(^{46}\) This is particularly the case given the state of decline which characterised many of these places following the closure of the railway and other processes emerging from political-economic reform (most notably, agricultural restructuring and service rationalisation).
7. An Outline of the Business-Scale and Individual-Scale Case Studies

7.1 Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp – Bill and Maureen Theyers

Middlemarch has a population of 165 (Statistics New Zealand 2006)\(^{47}\) and is located on the western jurisdictional boundary of the City of Dunedin.\(^{48}\) Locally born and having previously run a shearing business in the area and been president of the local Lions Club, Bill Theyers and his wife, Maureen, were asked to return to the town by the local community who wanted Bill to take control of the promotion of tourism in the area. In 1997 the couple bought the only house for sale in the town. This residence had previously housed the manager of the camping ground next-door although the ground had been largely stripped of its assets when the Theyers moved in. Immediately approached by the Department of Conservation regarding the possibility of their accommodating some of the workers who were developing the Rail Trail, the Theyers soon set about re-constructing the camping ground. Located little more than 200 metres from the beginning of the trail, this initial development has been expanded over the years and Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp now comprises extensive tent space, caravan and camper van sites, several cabins, and, more recently, self-contained motels (Figure 18). The Holiday Camp also provides a playground, barbecue, common room and laundry facilities, as well as a “unique, restored and fully equipped rail carriage kitchen” (Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp 2007).\(^{49}\)

From their house and office in Middlemarch, the couple also operate Rail Trail Services, providing the option for visitors to have their travel, accommodation, cycle, and luggage transfer requirements for the Rail Trail organised by the business. Rail Trail Services, Bill claims, was the first business of this kind to operate in relation to the Otago Central Rail Trail. Indeed, rather than the accommodation they offer, it is this part of their business that occupies the majority of Bill and Maureen’s time. In addition to the casual cleaners that the couple employ to look after the accommodation side of things, Bill and Maureen also have two permanent office staff to assist with the operation of Rail Trail Services. Despite continuing to upgrade the accommodation on offer and constructing four new motels and a new office, Bill plans to sell the business in the near future.

\(^{48}\) While Middlemarch is therefore not part of Central Otago, its location at the beginning of the Otago Central Rail Trail is the important issue in relation to this study.
\(^{49}\) http://www.middlemarch-motels.co.nz/index.html
7. An Outline of the Business-Scale and Individual-Scale Case Studies

Figure 18: A Self-Contained Motel at Blind Billy's Holiday Camp.

Bill and Maureen Theyers provide several of these in addition to camping grounds, caravan sites and cabins (source: author 2007).

7.2 Otago Central Hotel – Ngaire Sutherland

Located right next to the Rail Trail, and part of a community which is home to just 60 residents (Statistics New Zealand 2006), the Otago Central Hotel (Figure 19) is a prominent feature of Hyde. With a fluctuant history that reaches back over 100 years, it is now owned by Ngaire Sutherland and managed by a family relation, Michelle Taylor, who lives on-site with her family. Ngaire bought the hotel in 2004, following numerous unsuccessful attempts to buy Hyde’s disused school (which she has now succeeded in doing), and a spontaneous visit to the hotel’s previous owner. She managed to convince the authorities, through her inheritance of two bookings, that the hotel was operating prior to her purchasing it, which enabled her to develop the business on its existing resource consent. The hotel, however, was certainly not fully functional, was largely in a state of ruin, and primarily operated as a house for its owner, before Ngaire’s take-over.

Having previously run a boutique Bed and Breakfast in Mosgiel, on the outskirts of Dunedin, Ngaire has developed the hotel as an accommodation option for cyclists to fill the void between Middlemarch and Ranfurly, a distance of 60 km. The hotel can now accommodate around 30 people in rooms which range from boutique Bed and Breakfast style rooms, to

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more backpacker-oriented rooms. Guests are served breakfast by Michelle and also have the option of paying extra for an evening meal. The hotel is also run in conjunction with a cafe that adjoins the hotel and has been progressively expanded by Ngaire, reflecting its high usage. In the peak season, the cafe is open from late morning until mid-afternoon on a daily basis so the 14 workers employed by Ngaire and Michelle are thus used flexibly in both parts of the business. In addition to the development of the hotel and cafe, Ngaire has also now purchased the old school site and is, at the time of writing, in the process of converting this into a function venue which, she hopes, will generate custom for the hotel.

Figure 19: Otago Central Hotel.

*Ngare Sutherland’s Otago Central Hotel is located in Hyde, at the crossroads of the Rail Trail and State Highway 87* (source: author 2007).

### 7.3 Old PO Backpackers – Shirley and Malcolm Hodge

Shirley and Malcolm Hodge’s business, the Old PO Backpackers, is located off the main street of Ranfurly which, with a population of 711 (Statistics New Zealand 2006), is the largest of the five settlements under study. As reflected in the name, the Backpackers once operated as the Post Office for Ranfurly, before being converted into a rural traders store. Seven years ago, from running a laundry and video-hire business in another part of town, Shirley and Malcolm bought the place and, mainly inspired by the growth of the Rail Trail

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and their need to develop an alternative income for the summer period, quickly decided to convert the building into a backpackers. This conversion required the development of one large room into two dormitories. Two years later, in 2002, their new business was up and running but they have only just finished meeting the various and evolving compliance requirements of the District Council. These requirements have come with the new changes made to the accommodation including its separation into more dormitories and rooms in response to the feedback of visitors. Having met the compliance requirements, Shirley and Malcolm have now put the Backpackers up for sale, partly reflecting their desire to do something different and move closer to their family.

Mainly providing dormitories that accommodate eight guests, and offering beds for between $20 - $40 per night, Shirley and Malcolm primarily cater for tourist groups who are travelling on a low budget and who are on the Rail Trail, often comprising family and school groups. They also receive, however, many guests off the highways that meet in Ranfurly and as a result of Ranfurly’s annual Art Deco weekend at the end of February and Oturehua’s Brass Monkey weekend in June. In addition to the dormitories and several more private rooms, the Backpackers comprises a lounge, toilet and bathroom facilities, and a communal kitchen. Shirley has also been introducing the option for guests to purchase a continental breakfast.

Until three years ago, Shirley and Malcolm lived in a part of what now constitutes the Backpackers but they now reside in their own quarters situated above the accommodation for guests. In remaining on-site, Shirley and Malcolm also operate their laundry and video-hire businesses from here, which are located in an annex of the building behind the Backpackers. In order to maintain their turnover, however, they do not generally employ anyone to assist with their business although, when it becomes particularly busy during the peak season, they do bring someone in to help with cleaning. While the video-hire business is predominantly used by local residents and the laundry service by other businesses along the Rail Trail, these facilities feed into the provisions of the accommodation with guests being supplied free video-hire and bed-linen.

7.4 The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn – Graeme Duncan
Situated just a few metres from the route of the Rail Trail, more-or-less halfway along it and close to its altitudinal peak, and offering open views down and across the Maniototo Plains and Hawkdun Range, the Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn occupy an advantageous position
in attracting custom off the Rail Trail. Indeed, Graeme Duncan, part-owner of the enterprise, suggests that 98 per cent of their business comes off the Rail Trail.

The Duncan family has developed this business in extension of their farming in the region which dates back to the 1850s. They bought the small block of land, which harboured a rundown farm and lay adjacent to their own farmland, in 1996. Largely unaware of, and uninspired by, the impending opening and success of the Rail Trail, they turned the farmhouse into an accommodation option for visitors to the region. With no initial plan to develop their newly purchased land further, the Duncans decided to change their stance following the opening of the Rail Trail in 2000 and their monitoring of its subsequent success, realising that it could perhaps satisfy their perceived need to diversify from farming and their interest in tourism. Further development was initially manifest in the installation of two self-contained cottages in 2004. In 2006, the Duncans erected two more cottages and the Red Barn visitors centre (Figure 20).

Figure 20: Cottages and the Red Barn at Wedderburn.

Graeme Duncan provides these four self-contained cottages to accommodate visitors in addition to their farm lodge. The Red Barn Visitors Centre is in the background (source: author 2007).

Geared towards the middle to upper echelons of the tourism market, beds in six self-contained cottages (each sleeping between two and four people) are provided to guests for $75 per night. Accommodation in the 1928 farm lodge is also provided on a more communal basis for ten
people at a cost of $50 per person per night. A continental breakfast is available for guests, while Wedderburn’s local tavern is situated just a short walk away.

While work relating to the business is primarily carried out by the various members of the Duncan family who also have considerable commitments to their farm, the family’s entrepreneurial development not only comprises the provision of accommodation to visitors. They also own and manage a nine-hole golf course which is located at the other end of this block of land, adjacent to the State Highway which passes through Wedderburn. Graeme Duncan also provides sporadic farm-tours to interested parties. Perhaps most prominent however, is the Red Barn which is the closest part of the Duncan’s business to the Rail Trail. Inspired by the lack of a stop-off point on this part of the trail and in its potential to provide positive spin-offs for their accommodation, the Red Barn has been developed as a multi-functional and free-to-enter visitors centre, providing toilets, refreshments, an extensive display of information and images relating to the local area and its history, and the opportunity to purchase railway and Rail Trail memorabilia, and farming produce.

7.5 Railway School Bed & Breakfast – Nikki and Ralph Milne

Following their take-over in January 2007, Nikki and Ralph Milne now own and manage the Railway School Bed & Breakfast in Lauder. Again, this is situated just a few hundred metres from the route of the Rail Trail and 99 per cent of its custom is attributed by Nikki and Ralph to visitors coming off the trail. They thus also consider their location one third of the way along the Rail Trail from Clyde as particularly advantageous in attracting guests. Their business comprises two houses in Lauder which can together accommodate 12 guests, a number that Nikki and Ralph attach importance to for it means they can accommodate the many tour groups which pass through the township and which often comprise 12 people. One of the buildings has resource consent as travellers’ accommodation which means that Nikki and Ralph need not stay on-site while guests are there. The other house (Figure 21), built in 1906, is the main component of the Bed & Breakfast and, as suggested by the name, used to operate as Lauder’s primary school before its closure in 1986. The school building only has consent to operate as a Bed & Breakfast which requires Nikki and Ralph to stay on-site when they are hosting guests there.

The Bed & Breakfast was operating as such prior to Nikki and Ralph’s take-over. The school was actually developed to accommodate visitors three years prior to the opening of the Rail
Trail while the other building was bought by the Bed & Breakfast’s previous owners once the popularity of the trail became apparent. Nikki and Ralph Milne were inspired to buy the Bed & Breakfast primarily by the attraction of the school as a place for them to live. Indeed, while they knew it was operating as a Bed & Breakfast, the school was actually sold to them as a three-bedroom house. They envisage their son taking over the farm which they currently own and manage elsewhere in Lauder and were keen to buy a house to cater for their semi-retirement and associated move away from the farmhouse that they currently call home. They also consider the purchase to constitute a diversification from the farming industry, however, so were always intending to continue the school’s operation as a Bed & Breakfast, which, they predicted, would become increasingly profitable with the success of the Rail Trail. Since taking over, Nikki and Ralph have upgraded some elements of the business including the beds and carpets and, at the time of writing, were installing en-suite bathrooms for their guests. In addition to developing and managing the accommodation business, Ralph is heavily involved, with the assistance of his son, in meeting the requirements of their farming operation. Nikki, meanwhile, continues to work three days per week as a nurse at a hospital in nearby Omakau.

Figure 21: Railway School Bed & Breakfast.

*Ralph and Nikki Milne own and manage the Railway School Bed & Breakfast in Lauder. Guests are accommodated in a 100-year old building that once operated as the township’s primary school* (source: author 2007).
8. The Business Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

The Provision of Comfort, Hosts and Historical Insight

*I usually say to everyone that it’s a cute little old school, comfy beds, friendly people and just a great place to stay on the three-day run…*

Nikki Milne (Railway School Bed & Breakfast).

8.1 Introduction: Linking the Sub-Regional and Business Scales

‘Rural restructuring’ at the sub-regional scale is intimately and reciprocally tied to the restructuring of the local business environment. Thus, the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail as a successful rural tourism product is dependent upon the emergence of businesses that provide services to its users. The notion that businesses (local business places) situated along the Rail Trail are constituent parts of this sub-regional tourism product (the broader space) is most clearly expressed by Graeme Duncan:

> We all benefit off one another, giving them a good experience, having good facilities and so on. …we’ve got to be working together, right through the whole Rail Trail. And not just Maniototo… there’s no boundaries when you’re a tourist. …there shouldn’t be boundaries, we’ve gotta be one big group, right through to Queenstown really because the number of people that fly into Queenstown, do the Queenstown thing, come on down and do the grapes around Cromwell area, go on the trail at Clyde and then do the Taieri Gorge out through to Dunedin (Graeme Duncan, Lodge and Cottages at Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

Clearly then, the existence of a sufficient business infrastructure to service and accommodate cyclists and walkers is essential to the development of the broader Rail Trail tourism product. Furthermore, three of the entrepreneurs involved in this study suggested that the historical pubs in the area comprise a particularly appealing aspect of the Rail Trail for many visitors, while promotional material for the Otago Central Rail Trail also posits the quaint rural settlements and local businesses as central features of the sub-regional tourism product. The capacity of individual businesses to impact upon a broader-scale tourism product is, however, perhaps best illustrated by Ngaire Sutherland, who suggests that her own business development has been significant in driving the development of the Rail Trail more broadly.
...one of the biggest changes as I see it from when the trail started was most people, unless you are very experienced cyclists, could not travel, cycle, 60 km a day. So until I came here in that 60 km void, I think because there’s a stopping stop here, this has opened it up to all these Joe Bloggs who couldn’t travel that distance. It’s only experienced people that used to do it because they had to go right through (Ngaire Sutherland, Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

On the other hand, the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail, and its subsequent popularity, has also significantly impacted upon the business case-studies. Most revealingly, all entrepreneurs interviewed suggested that their businesses would not exist if it were not for the trail. Indeed, all entrepreneurs reported that 80 per cent or more of their custom was dependent on the Rail Trail. This finding supports the report of the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust (2005) that over half of the businesses operating in the area of the Rail Trail attribute more than 60 per cent of their annual turnover to the trail. Furthermore, four of the entrepreneurs in this study suggested that the location of their business in relation to the Rail Trail was important to business success.

Well we think we’re the best one for the three-day bike because we’re at the fifty… fifty, fifty, fifty, like it’s a third, so Lauder is a third of the trail (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

The businesses involved in this study are implicated in a mutually constitutive relationship with the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail. Thus, ‘rural restructuring’ at the business scale not only reflects a shift from production-based activity towards consumption-based activity in the countryside, but is also likely to demonstrate more specific links with the restructuring of its broader spatial context. To offer a brief example, the Rail Trail is often associated with providing a ‘real rural experience’ of New Zealand.

…it’s real rural New Zealand that a lot of people haven’t had the experience of staying in so it’s creating that as well, it’s a point of difference to a lot of other areas, that it is outback New Zealand, and it’s a rural setting, a rural scene here, and they love it (Graeme Duncan, Lodge and Cottages at Wedderburn, Wedderburn).
It is unclear from Graeme Duncan’s account, however, whether he is referring more to the Otago Central Rail Trail in general, or his business in particular. This ambiguity neatly draws attention to the fact that, in simultaneously influencing, and being influenced by, the nature of the sub-regional tourism product, entrepreneurs are developing businesses that are in accordance with aspects of the Rail Trail identified in Section 6. This section reinforces such a contention by focusing on three ‘provisions’ that entrepreneurs have made available to guests through business development; namely, the provision of comfort, the provision of hospitable and informative hosts, and the provision of historical insight.

8.2 The Provision of Comfort

_It never ceases to amaze me, you want this outdoor experience but you only want it for two and a half to three hours a day and you want to come to all the home comforts at night…_

Ngaire Sutherland (Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

Entrepreneurs along the Rail Trail are simultaneously adding their businesses’ character to, and extracting their businesses’ character from, the sub-regional tourism product in terms of the type and level of comfort that they offer to guests. Bill Theyers, Graeme Duncan and Ngaire Sutherland all recalled believing that budget backpacker-type travellers would be typical tourists along the trail when they first investigated business development in the area. If this were the case, the character of the Rail Trail tourism product and the nature of the businesses in the area would be quite different. As it is, and in reflection of broad trends that characterise visitors to the trail, all businesses, except the Old PO Backpackers, mainly attract guests who are from New Zealand (often Auckland), are aged over 45, are sometimes unfit and are often relatively wealthy. Consequentially, business operators reported a consumer demand for relatively upmarket accommodation which they were attempting to satisfy.

When the Rail Trail first started there were mainly overseas people, backpackers… wanting budget accommodation and that. But now there’s more and more middle-aged kiwis doing it and they want a bit of comfort and they’re wanting… en-suited rooms and things like that (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).
I think there is a demand for en-suites and things because the people are older… and they don’t mind paying for it (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

…the main market we felt, was in self-contained accommodation, because the people doing this… I think the average age is somewhere about 52-54 that are doing it, so those people have done the backpacker thing and… and are ready for, you know, their own comforts (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages at Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

In providing for tourists who are on the Otago Central Rail Trail, interviewees repeatedly emphasised the comfort that their accommodation offered. As suggested by these accounts, most entrepreneurs have constructed a level of comfort that is in line with the demands of the dominant visitors to the trail. Shirley and Malcolm Hodge have, in contrast, often found that the image of their backpacker business is not associated with the level of comfort desired by the typical Rail Trail cyclist.

*Shirley:* There’s a lot of people that don’t come here because they… They think I’m not staying at a backpackers.

*Malcolm:* Yeah because backpackers are normally crap… you know, the name ‘backpackers’ is kinda, in a lot of people’s… perhaps when you get to the sort of mid-30s they begin to think “Oh, I’m not staying there.” That’s the way it’s going (Shirley and Malcolm Hodge, Old PO Backpackers, Ranfurly).

As indicated by Ngaire at the beginning of this sub-section, however, there was an entrepreneurial perception that visitors’ desire for comfort was not only magnified by their wealth and age, but also by the fact that they were partaking in the physical challenge provided by the Rail Trail. Regardless of the particular social group that entrepreneurs were catering for, there was agreement amongst the interviewees that visitors who were doing the trail required accommodation that offered comfort, relaxation and renewal, and a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. As Shirley Hodge suggests, in reference to the lounge of the Old PO Backpackers:
Kind of really wanna give that homely feel. You know, they can basically just come along here and treat it like their house, like their own home (Shirley Hodge, Old PO Backpackers, Ranfurly).

Comfort, therefore, was not only offered to guests through self-contained accommodation and en-suite bathrooms. To make their guests’ stay a comfortable one, entrepreneurs were also attempting to create a homely atmosphere (Figure 22), often reflected in the provision of a lounge, a roaring fire, a television and quality bed linen. Other entrepreneurial methods geared towards this aim included the free provision of wine and allowing large groups the accommodation all to themselves.

As the Otago Central Hotel demonstrates, comfort is offered through the provision of a ‘homely’ environment (source: author 2007).

Such services and features offered by entrepreneurs to visitors cannot be seen as specific to entrepreneurs operating along the Rail Trail, however. Accommodation businesses are usually expected to offer comfort and relaxation wherever they are, and these are commonly achieved through the provision of good heating and a television. The fact that entrepreneurs were operating along the Rail Trail, and primarily accommodating people doing the trail, was therefore not always immediately apparent.
The fact that entrepreneurs’ business creations are part of a broader sub-regional tourism product, and are therefore reciprocally tied to the Otago Central Rail Trail in terms of their provisions, is demonstrable in other ways, however. In attending to the needs of tourists involved in a multi-day physical challenge, a number of features were identified by entrepreneurs that may not have been provided if their businesses were located elsewhere. Such features therefore comprised additions to the standardised services more widely recognised as essential to ensuring visitor comfort. The most common facility which clearly reflects the businesses’ location along the Rail Trail was the provision of a bike-shed. Nikki and Ralph Milne, moreover, provide muffins and a cup of tea to visitors upon their arrival.

Having recently cycled some of the trail themselves, Nikki also reported that she offers anti-inflammatory cream to cyclists on a regular basis! Likewise, in constructing a free visitor centre in juxtaposition to the accommodation that the Duncan family offers, the Red Barn in Wedderburn also offers particular facilities, the perceived value of these arising from their servicing of tourists on the Rail Trail. As Graeme asserts:

...first and foremost it’s somewhere that they can rest, have a coffee, fill up their water bottles... Toilets were another thing that was badly needed so we’ve got toilets, public toilets, at the back of the Red Barn here (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

Partly enabled by the other services that they operate, Shirley and Malcolm Hodge provide free bed linen which is not a standard provision at many backpackers. They realised that it would mean that cyclists could carry less with them along the Rail Trail, although the usefulness of this was compromised by tour operators recommending that tourists take their own sleeping gear when cycling the trail. They also offer free tea and coffee to visitors as well as free video hire. The appreciation attached to such provisions by visitors to the Rail Trail is clearly demonstrated by Shirley:

...there was a couple of guys heading back the other way and they said "Oh, you’ve gotta go and stay at the backpackers in Ranfurly cos you get a fire and you’re allowed to watch free videos and there’s free tea and coffee.". These guys rocked up, didn’t they, and went "Where’s your free tea?! (Shirley Hodge, Old PO Backpackers, Ranfurly).
Perhaps the most illustrative example of business provisions of comfort reflecting the sub-regional Otago Central Rail Trail tourism product is to be found with Bill and Maureen Theyers. The provision of comfort to visitors on the trail is not only achieved at Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp through the motels and cabins which the Theyers have erected but also through their Rail Trail tour business, Rail Trail Services. In arranging transport links, cycle hire, baggage transfer, and accommodation through the length of the trail, Bill Theyers is able to provide comfort to tourists in an alternative way. He suggests that such a service is in particularly high demand given the number of tourists that visit the area from Auckland and other cities in New Zealand.

And it’s worked out pretty good cos people coming from out of the area, they don’t know the area and just, you know… how they’re gonna do it and everything. So we just take all the hassle out of it (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).

The businesses created by entrepreneurs, however, not only arise from the demands that entrepreneurs believe to be emerging from the Rail Trail but also from the personal preferences of the entrepreneur. For instance, three of the entrepreneurs have experienced living themselves in the accommodation that they offer to consumers, thereby conditioning the particular style that has been developed.

...I upped the anti on it because I’m accustomed to a style of living and this was my home. So consequently I upmarketed it more. I did boutique bed and breakfast before I came here and I probably never got beyond it (Ngaire Sutherland, Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

While Ngaire’s provision of comfort partly reflected her own demands, the influence of personal circumstances upon the features of accommodation offered to guests may also work in other ways. The Milnes, for instance, suggest that as well as upgrading the beds and bathrooms of their business, they have been able to offer greater levels of comfort and relaxation to visitors because, in contrast to the previous owners, they have their own home away from the business.
Because they were living there, that was their home, they didn’t encourage people to come inside. Whereas we want to operate the dead opposite and have it as an open home, you know… Yeah, well people are more relaxed that way (Ralph Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

8.3 The Provision of Hospitable and Informative Hosts

...it’s part of the rural way of life. It’s the hands-on, you know, and knowing that they are experiencing it with real Maniototo people, the local people, it’s… yeah, I think they appreciate that

Graeme Duncan (The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

Service providers are often an essential part of the product offered to consumers in the tourism industry, especially in the accommodation sector. This may be even more the case for business operators along the Otago Central Rail Trail in light of its promotion as a product particularly suited to the ‘interactive traveller’ seeking authentic encounters with rural culture. Entrepreneurs thus repeatedly pointed to the importance of providing a personalised, rather than standardised, service to consumers.

We think you need to be there too; we always try and be there to meet them because I think you don’t want to take the personalities out of it (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

Well they’ve [employees] gotta be ‘people’ people. They’ve gotta be able to talk to people and communicate and just take that extra bit of time to discuss things with people… (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).

The entrepreneurial mediation of social relations with guests is an essential process in the reproduction of rural space for consumption along the Rail Trail and one that is also used to reinforce the overall business environment of comfort and relaxation. As such, in providing a personalised service to guests, the standards of business service extend beyond the physical environments and facilities offered by businesses to include the ways in which entrepreneurs present themselves and relate to consumers. Entrepreneurs are therefore active, and often self-
reflexive, agents in the mediation of particular interactions with tourists. As Malcolm Hodge suggests:

As soon as you stop thinking about people then you may as well get out of it. As soon as you start being nasty to people then it’s time to go (Malcolm Hodge, Old PO Backpackers, Ranfurly).

As an essential component of the service industry, this thinking about people that Malcolm refers to is deemed to be reflected in the ways that entrepreneurs:

...look after them while they’re here... ...be nice to them, be kind to them, send them on their merry way, be as helpful as hell and they can’t ask for much more than that (Malcolm Hodge, Old PO Backpackers, Ranfurly).

As a result, in the interviews there was a tendency for entrepreneurs, when demonstrating how they would promote their business to potential guests, to emphasise their own importance as ‘friendly’ or ‘hospitable’ hosts. Nikki Milne, for example, reports how she encourages potential guests to come and stay if they are undecided.

...over the phone I can usually get them by just.. you know.. especially ones that are undecided about where they are going to stay, and some say "Ahh, you’re so nice, in fact we’ll come and stay"... yeah you can get them anyway just through being nice and friendly to them (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

In promoting their business in this way, Nikki and Ralph are then required to meet the expectations which guests will hold. In creating favourable social relations with guests, entrepreneurs are involved in the close monitoring of their self-presentation. As expressed by Nikki, this may result in the entrepreneurial preparation for social interaction or the adoption of strategies to maintain positive relations with guests.

...especially if I’m tired after a busy day at work and I’ve gotta keep... keep being nice. ...Ralph usually takes over a bit on those days... and I just go away for a wee
while, have a wee chill-out (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

For Ngaire Sutherland, the maintenance of positive host-guest relations at the Otago Central Hotel is ensured by leaving her manager to communicate with guests. This partly emerges from Ngaire’s belief that social relations are best managed through the consistent provision of just one host to consumers. Through a process of self-reflection, however, she has also ascertained that, given her exhaustion, it may be better to leave social interaction with guests to someone else.

In creating a successful business, entrepreneurs not only stressed the importance of engineering standard social interactions reflected in their friendliness and hospitality, which, they commonly believed, came naturally to them in any case. To provide a personalised service, entrepreneurs also deemed it necessary to present themselves in ways that would resonate with the social positions and demands of their guests. In other words, as Ngaire clearly demonstrates, for consumers to leave with a positive impression of the business, entrepreneurs are often required to quickly read and adapt to the visitors in their company.

Well we don’t put on the airs and graces, only if they go towards us and... and actually we are quite good at putting on the airs and graces as well if we have to do that (Ngaire Sutherland, Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

Again, there has so far been little indication of a demonstrable link between the Otago Central Rail Trail context and the particular social interactions that entrepreneurs offer to guests. This requirement to adapt to the guests that hosts are accommodating, however, suggests that such ties between the businesses and their sub-regional context are in existence. These links are most evident in the ways that entrepreneurs stressed their role in satisfying the desires of their guests for authentic interactions with local rural people. This requirement of the entrepreneur must, at least in part, emerge from their location along the Rail Trail which uses local rural culture and heritage as key foci in its promotion. While this desire for local authenticity was perceived to be partly achieved through directing guests to the local pubs for a drink or evening meal and a chat with local residents, entrepreneurs also recognised their own role in meeting these expectations.
I think the hands-on approach, you know, that they’re actually meeting us and dealing with us who own the business, own the farm and own the country all around it. I think that’s impressive for them, that they are meeting the locals and it’s not some façade that’s out there, you know (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

As Graeme’s account implies, the appreciation of being able to interact with local people may partly stem from the consumer’s belief that they are experiencing an authentic encounter with the area’s rural inhabitants, especially if visitors are from urban centres or other countries. It may also hinge, however, on the consumer’s demand for information about the local area.

...being born locally and knowing the area so well makes it easier for us. ...they all want to know about food, where they can get food and can’t get food. Just knowing where they are open (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).

I tell them all about this place and about the heritage of it and I share with them a poem… called the Rail Trail Tale, it’s my party piece, so we do a little bit of entertainment as well (Ngaire Sutherland, Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

Two entrepreneurs even suggested that ‘information’ was included in the services that their businesses supplied so this exchange may, therefore, commonly characterise host-guest interactions. Indeed, in Bill Theyers’ opinion, local knowledge has become such an important part of providing a quality service to guests in the context of the Otago Central Rail Trail that now everyone’s an expert on the Rail Trail. In ensuring consumer satisfaction with the information they provide however, entrepreneurs may also consider it necessary to be more inventive in their interactions with guests.

...they’re all pretty keen to find out a bit of history about the area and that and because we’re born and bred locals, well we can... we can tell them most things and what we don’t know, well, we can just make up (Ralph Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).
It is perhaps tempting to suggest, from this analysis, that relations between host and guests are always highly interactive, especially given the entrepreneurial perception that their roles as hosts are often central components to the tourism product which their guests desire. The entrepreneurial reading and understanding of consumers’ social desires, however, may also lead entrepreneurs to step back a little from social interaction. This strategy may be employed, for instance, if they perceive visitors to appreciate more the opportunity for peace, solitude and tranquillity provided by a real rural experience.

...some people don’t wanna talk too much either and I think we can gauge that can’t we? We can detect that, that they just want to do their own thing and that’s fine, yeah (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

...and you can very quickly pick up the ones that want to talk and the ones that want to be left to themselves and it’s just... you know... you make yourself available (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

Entrepreneurs, furthermore, not only reduce levels of social interaction in response to their understandings of their guests’ desires but may themselves reject the opportunity for close interaction with visitors. This often reflects the type of accommodation that entrepreneurs are offering. Running the backpackers, for example, leads Shirley and Malcolm Hodge to interact much less with their guests than the levels of host-guest interaction offered by Nikki and Ralph Milne in operating their Bed & Breakfast. Lower levels of host interaction with their guests, however, may also emerge from the personal circumstances and preferences of the entrepreneurs. The lack of time to interact with guests, for instance, was a problem referred to by all entrepreneurs. As a part of the broader context, entrepreneurs that are not offering guests the levels of interaction that they desire or expect from engaging with the Rail Trail tourism product may, however, be subtly undermining the authority of the sub-regional product to promote itself as a real rural experience. Thus, while suggesting that guests enjoy their hosts going down in the evening and having... a glass of wine and listening to their stories..., Bill Theyers reports that:

...we just don’t have the time now. And quite frankly after a while you get bloody sick of people. You know, we put through in excess of 1,000 people in April (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).
In such cases, entrepreneurs may not be satisfying the expectations and desires of the ‘interactive traveller’ along the Rail Trail as a result of the effect that excessive social interaction has on entrepreneurs. The lack of social interaction with guests, however, may also be managed as such to ensure the smooth operation of the business.

At the same time, in the morning, after they’ve had breakfast, it’s nice to have a bit of a yarn to them over breakfast, but then you might say to them "Ohh, it’s gonna get windy shortly", so that you get them off the place so that you can start doing the washing and... and then we do the meet and greet thing again and we start again with the next ones... (Ralph Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

Such sentiments indicate the entrepreneurial requirement to simultaneously provide the social interaction that consumers demand and to manage host-guest relations in ways that will not compromise the entrepreneurial preparation necessary for the reception of the next guests. In essence, while entrepreneurs realise the necessity of creating and maintaining relations with guests that are considered genuine and authentic by consumers, and therefore resonate with, and enforce, the attractions of the sub-regional tourism product, they are simultaneously committed to maintaining the standards of other components of their business. As Ralph’s account suggests, entrepreneurs have learnt, and employ, particular strategies to deal with these potential conflicts.

8.4 The Provision of Historical Insight

There’s something about old buildings on a heritage trail like that, that probably go hand in hand a wee bit

Ralph Milne (Railway School Bed & Breakfast).

As was suggested in Section 8.3, the business-scale provision of informative hosts partly emerges from the desire of visitors to the Otago Central Rail Trail to interact and engage with authentic rural culture. The business-scale provision of historical insight however, most clearly demonstrates the reciprocal relationship that businesses hold with their Rail Trail context. Thus, consumptive desires to engage with authentic rural culture are also catered for
with an entrepreneurial re-production of local history which, again, is both stimulated by, and re-enforces, the Rail Trail as a heritage attraction.

In essence, entrepreneurs, in their role as entrepreneurs along the trail, are making available to consumers certain aspects of the area’s past that they deem to be significant, or at least to be of interest to visitors to the region. This entrepreneurial perception is partly drawn from operating in the context of the Rail Trail which itself makes available for consumption the railway heritage upon which the sub-regional tourism product stands. There are, for instance, numerous information boards along the trail that outline the history of the places, tunnels and bridges through, and across, which cyclists and walkers pass. Visitors to the Rail Trail are thus invited to relate with, and learn about, its history, and it may be this opportunity that comprises the primary attraction for visitors. In conforming to and reinforcing the broader attraction of the Rail Trail as a heritage-based tourism product, entrepreneurs are also appropriating the past and local heritage as a business tool in the present. This entrepreneurial valorisation and re-production of the past adds value to the context by strengthening the area’s ties with its history and thereby reinforcing the symbolic and cultural value of the Otago Central Rail Trail for potential and actual visitors. This is done in various ways which are explored in this sub-section.

Perhaps the most ubiquitous manner in which historical insight is provided to consumers through an entrepreneurial valorisation of the past is demonstrated by some of the buildings that businesses along the Rail Trail are operated in, and the significance that entrepreneurs, through the promotion of their businesses, attach to these. Shirley and Malcolm Hodge’s backpackers, for instance is located in the old post office of Ranfurly hence the name, Old PO Backpackers, that they have given to it. This link to Ranfurly’s past is deemed to attract potential visitors and therefore drawn upon as a point of difference in the business’ promotional material. In a similar vein, Nikki and Ralph Milne’s Bed and Breakfast is partly housed in Lauder’s old primary school. Again, they attach to this a symbolic importance which, they perceive, is in accordance with the historical attraction of the broader Rail Trail and the interests of typical tourist groups that visit the area.

There’s something about old buildings on a heritage trail like this that probably... that go hand in hand a wee bit... Plus the age of the group... the age-group of the
people that are doing it can relate to what old schools were like, you know (Ralph Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

Nikki and Ralph also have plans to make more use of Lauder’s old railway station which is currently standing on their land in a state of disrepair.

...we’ve actually got the old railway station on our land as well so we see that as... In the state it’s in at the moment it’s... it’s quite dilapidated but not too bad... but we’re going to say on our website, "Stay at the school and you can have a look at the... at the railway station!" (Nikki Milne, Railway School Bed & Breakfast, Lauder).

As well as Bill and Maureen Theyers providing an informal outdoor display of old railway signs, railway sleepers and a railway gate, an old railway carriage has been converted into a kitchen for guests to use at Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp (Figure 23).

So we thought it quite unique to keep it there and add a bit of character to the place. ...To have a bit of a theme for the Rail Trail. Just to... to try and savour something of it around the place (Bill Theyers, Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, Middlemarch).

Figure 23: Railway Carriage Kitchen.

The centrality of the area’s heritage to the Rail Trail tourism product is often reproduced at the level of the business. This old railway carriage is used as a kitchen by guests at Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp (source: author 2007).
The centrality of historical buildings and artefacts to businesses along the Rail Trail has often literally meant an entrepreneurial re-evaluation of local heritage in the light of its potential value to consumers. Bill’s railway carriage and other rail-related artefacts were, prior to his intervention, just stuff that was left lying rotten around the place which people just didn’t bother about. Likewise, in addition to the clear need to physically bring their railway station out of its current phase of perceived uselessness, Nikki and Ralph report a similar story of entrepreneurial valorisation in relation to their display of old bikes, tools and separators.

...there was stuff in the sheds here that dad collected up over the years... and we decided we’d have a bit of a clean out of these sheds... we had to get a digger in to bury it... within a fortnight to three weeks later we ended up... paying for this stuff that we’d just buried... (Ralph Milne, Railway School Bed and Breakfast, Lauder).

Again, for Ralph, these historical artefacts add potential value to the business, and thereby the sub-regional ‘space’ of which the Milne’s business ‘place’ is a part, mainly because the age of the people doing it [the Rail Trail] can relate to the era that those sorts of things were being used.

For four of the five entrepreneurs interviewed, however, the re-production of history appears to be pursued only as a secondary aspect of their business. Thus, while recognised as adding character or a theme to their business which could stimulate the interest of potential and actual visitors and which draws from, and adds to, the broader heritage-related attraction of the Rail Trail, their business and its success was not perceived by entrepreneurs to depend in too large a part upon this symbolic and material re-production of history. The same cannot be said, however, of Graeme Duncan and one particular part of his business. Indeed, the local history that the Duncans make available to visitors in the Red Barn extends well beyond the realm of railway-associated heritage. The Red Barn is, as Graeme refers to it, a visitor centre, conveniently situated halfway along the Rail Trail, which comprises an addition to the accommodation and golf-course that Graeme’s business offers. It was introduced in Section 8.2 as providing to consumers the opportunity for rest and renewal. It is clear, however, that this is not the sole function of the Red Barn for it also constitutes an extensive display of history. While it does not cost visitors to enter the Red Barn and engage with the history of the area, Graeme considers the visitors centre to offer potential for significant business spin-offs as far as the accommodation is concerned. Having a farming-based history in the area...
that stretches back into the mid-19th Century, Graeme suggests that his family are in an advantageous position to satisfy and develop consumer demands to engage authentically with local rural culture and heritage along the Rail Trail. As Graeme outlines:

> We’ve got a bit of history in here, a bit of our history, a bit of the farm history, our family’s been in the area here for about 112 years so we’ve got a bit of that around, and of course we’ve got a big DVD there that plays... gives a history of the trail, history of Otago and the railway line as it originally came through, and DOC [the Department of Conservation] taking it over and turning it in into a Rail Trail... And Wedderburn itself of course had the Wedderburn goods shed which has been made quite famous by the painting of Graham Sydney... so we’ve brought it back and we’ve... on video we’ve got the shift of that too... (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

In addition to the imposing television screen which plays four different film productions that document aspects of the region’s past, access to various aspects of local history are offered through the display of books and information sheets, and photos and artefacts. In a vein similar to the aforementioned entrepreneurial valorisation of historical artefacts, Graeme reports that ...

>a lot of this old stuff was in a shed at the back that my wife was going to take to the dump many times. This old stuff predominantly relates to the farming industry in which the Duncan family is involved and includes a mangle, some lanterns, rabbit traps, urns, butter churns and a cream can. While there is a lack of information accompanying these symbols of farming in a bygone era, Graeme suggests that they are aiming to provide some interpretation in the near future.

The access to history provided by Graeme Duncan for visitors, furthermore, extends beyond the provisions of the Red Barn. Reflecting Graeme’s perception that urban-based tourists on the Rail Trail are fascinated by rural culture and heritage, he conducts farm tours. In addition to offering visitors an insight into the way that farms are operated, Graeme highlights how the tours provide to visitors encounters with rurality that are enriched with a vocal account of the region’s past.

> I pick them up here, I do a history of Wedderburn, the Maniototo, and the whole Rail Trail. And the same on our farm, give them a history of how it was settled
and when it was settled, you know, how it came to be... a bit like that sheep there, it’s got a bit of history on it there (Graeme Duncan, The Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn, Wedderburn).

It is clear that to various extents, and in various ways, entrepreneurs along the Rail Trail are involved in the valorisation and re-production of history for touristic consumption. Through this valorisation of the past entrepreneurs are linking local places and broader spaces to the historical context from which they have emerged. This business-scale provision of historical insight is largely fuelled by the sub-regional context which is centred on the promotion of the Otago Central Rail Trail’s as a heritage attraction. Entrepreneurs therefore deem the attraction and success of their businesses to be enhanced through providing business-scale touristic opportunities for education, fascination or nostalgic reminiscence that are in keeping with the broader tourism product in which they are embedded. At the same time, in providing opportunities for guests to appreciate rural heritage, businesses are also strengthening the image of the Rail Trail as a destination where desires to engage with rural culture and heritage can be satisfied.

8.5 Conclusion
Business development along the Rail Trail at once both adds to, and draws from, the sub-regional context of which local businesses are a part. In the simplest of terms, the growth in consumption-oriented businesses in the area reflects a broader transition in the countryside whereby rurality is increasingly constructed as a commodity to be consumed by tourists. Thus, the successful conversion of the production-based Otago Central Railway into the consumption-based Otago Central Rail Trail is replicated in a restructuring of the local business environment which is characterised by a proliferation of local businesses that offer services to tourists on the Rail Trail. The reciprocal nature of ‘rural restructuring’ at the sub-regional and business scales is thus clarified; on the one hand, the accommodation and servicing of tourists is an essential ingredient in the successful development of the Otago Central Rail Trail as a sub-regional tourism product; on the other hand, many of these businesses would not be in operation if it were not for the development of the Rail Trail.

Once again, however, the mutual constitution of ‘rural restructuring’ at these scales can be seen in more specific terms. Most notably, the Otago Central Rail Trail is popularly associated with offering unique and authentic interactions with rurality; in essence, as offering
8. The Business Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

a ‘real rural experience’ which provides both the energising and learning aspects of travel that ‘interactive travellers’ value. The nature of business development in the area both stimulates, and draws from, the association of the Rail Trail with such experiences. Thus, unique and authentic interactions with rural culture are offered by businesses through an entrepreneurial reproduction of local and regional history. This valorisation of rural heritage invites visitors to continue their appreciation of “a tough and adventurous Otago history” (Graham 2004; p.3) at the business scale, but simultaneously strengthens the construction of the Rail Trail as a heritage trail. An authentic experience of rural culture, however, is also available to consumers through the relationships that they forge with their hosts. Indeed, in addition to friendliness and hospitality, entrepreneurs placed high value on the local knowledge and information that they could provide to guests. The value that ‘interactive travellers’ attach to the learning aspects of travel is clearly catered for by entrepreneurs, ensuring that tourism development at the business scale is congruent with broader scale developments.

This multi-scalar model of ‘rural restructuring’, however, comprises another ingredient which becomes apparent in the interplay of the sub-regional and business scales. That is, the comfort offered to guests at accommodation businesses partly reflects the physical challenge involved in tackling the Rail Trail. In particular, entrepreneurs saw their role as ensuring that guests were revitalised and refreshed during their stay so that they could continue on their journey with renewed enthusiasm. Businesses are therefore developed in accordance with the nature of the sub-regional tourism product, but simultaneously reinforce the image of the Rail Trail as constituting a leisurely and achievable form of physical activity. Furthermore, the Otago Central Rail Trail primarily attracts older, and relatively affluent, ‘interactive travellers’. The level and style of comfort offered by businesses is therefore geared towards the preferences of such travellers but also adds weight to the image of the Rail Trail as an attraction for older, wealthy visitors who want a physical challenge to be balanced by a sufficient level of comfort.

In short, ‘rural restructuring’ at the business scale is intimately and reciprocally tied to the nature of tourism development at the sub-regional scale. Entrepreneurs therefore provide services that resonate with the image of the Otago Central Rail Trail as a ‘real rural experience’ and that satisfy the needs and desires of tourists who are on the trail. Business provisions of comfort, host-guest interaction, and historical insight, however, simultaneously reinforce the Otago Central Rail Trail as a ‘real rural experience’ while also ensuring that the
Rail Trail retains its image as a challenging, but achievable, trip for older and affluent ‘interactive travellers’. I will now move on to the final scale of ‘rural restructuring’ by addressing the particular experiences that business development entails for entrepreneurs.
9. The Individual Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

Five Entrepreneurial Case-Studies

You’d be running yourself totally ragged which means you don’t do justice to either yourself, your presentation, or the standards

Ngaire Sutherland (Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

9.1 Introduction: Linking the Business and Individual Scales

To bring to an end my application of a mutually constitutive model of ‘rural restructuring’ to New Zealand, I would now like to consider the individual scale of developing a rural tourism product. This comprises the most local scale but is as important to the holistic process of ‘rural restructuring’ as the development of rurality at the national scale. Indeed, this section satisfies the need for ‘rural restructuring’ to signify a fundamental change to people’s experiences of rurality. Thus, the shifting importance of production and consumption in the countryside is grounded in shifting rural lifestyles.

Like the more conventional notions of place and space addressed in the preceding sections, the business scale and the individual scale are mutually constituted. As will become apparent, however, the links between these scales are reciprocal to the extent that attempts to maintain some distinction between the individual (the local entrepreneurial ‘place’) and the context (the broader business ‘space’) are even more difficult. Consequentially, it is at the individual scale that the mutually constitutive nature of ‘rural restructuring’ becomes most clear.

To illustrate this, the reciprocal links between the business scale and the individual scale are perhaps best addressed through returning to the notion of performance. In comprising a widespread shift towards consumption-based activity in the countryside, ‘rural restructuring’ is expressed in particular performances of rurality or ways of living through rural space. As addressed in Section 3.1, such performances are both generative (in adding value to the broader spatial context of such performances) and experiential (in harbouring a particular individual experience of ‘rural restructuring’ that comes with carrying out such performances). Thus, in relation to this study, new performances of rurality simultaneously lead to the entrepreneurial creation of a rural business and to an entrepreneurial experience of developing a rural business. To elaborate, I draw on Ngaire Sutherland who offers an indicative insight into the business-individual relationship.
Like “Oh, you’ve got a lovely place here” and you think well, yeah… I don’t quite see it that way. Cos you don’t just see the bedrooms, there’s a huge amount of work. And you do tend to see the workload in behind the bedrooms I think (Ngaire Sutherland, Otago Central Hotel, Hyde).

Ngaire’s way of living through rural space involves entrepreneurial work practices geared towards catering for the needs of tourists on the Rail Trail, in this case demonstrated in her provision of comfort to the hotel’s guests. In contributing to business-scale ‘rural restructuring’, however, Ngaire simultaneously experiences developing her tourism product. The huge amount of work which characterises Ngaire’s performance of rurality is therefore not only generative in affecting the nature of her business, but also experiential in harbouring an experience of ‘rural restructuring’ for Ngaire.

The following sub-sections of analysis take a case-study format. In a similar vein to the preceding sections, the main focus is on how the development of a rural tourism product at the business scale (in terms of both its creation and its maintenance) leads to entrepreneurial experiences of ‘rural restructuring’ (i.e. how space impacts upon place in the ‘rural restructuring’ process). I trust, however, that it will also frequently become apparent to the reader that performances of rurality, from which these experiences emerge, simultaneously impact upon the business scale of ‘rural restructuring’ through, for instance, the provision of comfort, hospitable and informative hosts, or historical insight.

9.2 Bill and Maureen Theyers

We haven’t had time to do anything… We haven’t spent as much time with them as we’d like to… I haven’t had the time.

The development of Blind Billy’s Holiday Camp, and their tour business, Rail Trail Services, has led to Bill and Maureen living through rural space in a particular way. The purchasing of their house in Middlemarch led to an immediate engagement with the Rail Trail as Bill and Maureen were required to accommodate Department of Conservation workers on their first evening of house ownership. They then developed their businesses from here, beginning with the building of the camping ground. They never, however, expected the Rail Trail and their
business to be as successful as they have been. This has led to a particular entrepreneurial experience of ‘rural restructuring’, in which Bill and Maureen have taken on more work than they were expecting.

*Bill:* I didn’t imagine it would get to this. I thought I could, you know, do it on my own. Like I say, I done it on my own up until last year.

*Interviewer:* You didn’t have anyone employed here at all?

*Bill:* Not in doing the office work and that. Maureen and I done it all ourselves.

While the Holiday Camp and Rail Trail Services are now in positions where they require maintenance rather than development, and while Bill and Maureen have employed cleaning and office staff to ease their workload, the Theyers’ management of their business is demanding and their time remains largely spent in the office.

*Bill:* The phone starts at 7am with enquiries for the Rail Trail, and bookings and that finish about… anything from 930, 10 pm at night.

This performance, as expressed at the individual scale of ‘rural restructuring’, is strongly influenced by the business scale, in that Bill and Maureen’s daily experience of rurality emerges from the tour business that they operate. Their living through rural space in this time-filled way, however, also impacts upon the services offered to visitors. In the case of Bill and Maureen, through dealing with bookings and enquiries, they are attempting to maintain the successful functioning of their business. The influence of their performance on the business is perhaps most evident, however, in their provision of hospitality to tourists. For example:

*Bill:* But of lately, like through March and April, we’ve just… we haven’t had time to do anything, you know… just a matter of keeping people moving, keeping people happy. We haven’t spent as much time with them as we’d like to but… well at the start you spend as much as I can and that but you just… I haven’t had the time.

As is suggested here, Bill and Maureen are most occupied with their business during the peak season. Thus, while they indicated that much of their enjoyment in managing the Holiday
Camp and Rail Trail Services emerges from *just meeting people*, their experience of ‘rural restructuring’ has also led to their appreciation of the winter season:

*Bill:* …but you look forward to it, the slow-down in the winter. …it’s a different kind of clientele and much lower which at one time was a little concern to us but not now because we look forward to having no one in.

It would appear then, that Bill and Maureen’s experience of ‘rural restructuring’ through their development of a rural tourism product, has been largely reflected in busy days managing the administrative side of their business, and by an appreciation of the off-peak season. There are however, other aspects to their experiences of ‘rural restructuring’ emerging from their performance of rurality. While Bill, for example, recognises the importance of his local knowledge to making the operation of their business an easier endeavour and to providing tourists with a comfortable experience of the Rail Trail, he also suggests that now *everyone’s an expert on the Rail Trail*. Unsurprisingly then, Bill and Maureen’s experience of ‘rural restructuring’ has also been characterised by the monitoring of competition to their Rail Trail Services. Thus, in reference to another business which offers tourists a packaged experience of the Rail Trail, Bill suggests:

*Bill:* They’d like to push us out I think. We do them a lot of harm I think. He does us a lot of… well not harm, just a lot of competition like, you know.

Further, Bill clearly thrives off this competitive relationship as highlighted in his response to what he enjoys most about running the business:

*Bill:* …trying to outsmart the competitors. Everyone knows we’re all looking, counting… who’s got the most bikes out and… we don’t like being beaten.

Operating a tour business in which they manage the provision of accommodation, transport and luggage transfer for tourists along the Otago Central Rail Trail, however, also leads to the requirement for Bill and Maureen to be immersed in more mutually supportive business relations along the trail.
9. The Individual Scale of ‘Rural Restructuring’

Bill: And it’s just a network of… of a team, it’s all teamwork. No one person could do it on their own without the whole team pulling in together. So if something goes wrong up the Rail Trail, one of the…I could call on anyone and they can hop and pick someone up for me, and do something like that, without running a vehicle through all the time.

The overall experience of ‘rural restructuring’ for Bill and Maureen in developing a rural tourism product, may be partly gauged by ending with an outline of their future plans. Thus, while Bill plans to erect four new motels at the Holiday Camp in the near future, these will be for the benefit of a new owner. Partly in reflection of his own stage in the life-cycle, but also emerging from the undoubtable intensity that developing and maintaining their business has required, Bill suggests I need a bit of relaxation.

9.3 Ngaire Sutherland

I thought it should be a good business
but I didn’t know it would run me to the ground.

Capitalising on the 60 km service void between Middlemarch and Ranfurly by taking over and developing the Otago Central Hotel has had considerable effects on Ngaire’s experience of ‘rural restructuring’, which, through her performance of rurality, has simultaneously affected the rural tourism product offered to guests at the business scale. Given that there was no local alternative for tourists when Ngaire chose to invest in the business, the hotel really shot up in a hurry so that Ngaire was busy hosting guests before the business had been properly developed. Thus, in the early stages of her ownership, Ngaire’s experience of business development was characterised by her need to both accommodate guests and convert the derelict hotel into a viable industry.

Ngaire: I mean in those days I probably wouldn’t ever get to bed before one o’clock or two o’clock, and I was doing all my own washing, sometimes three o’clock. And it tells after a while.
In addition to the long hours that Ngaire was working in the early stages of business development, this phase of ‘rural restructuring’ was also characterised by Ngaire’s frustration with the legal requirements that she had to meet.

*Ngaire:* “Well no, we’re not gonna try and stop you.” I said “I find that hard to believe”, because they stand in the way an awful lot… you know, I mean the criteria you had to meet was just ridiculous really.

These criteria have, furthermore, led to the prolonging of the development phase at the hotel as legal requirements, Ngaire suggests, are constantly changing. Consequentially, while she pursued the developments at the hotel envisaging that they would meet the demands of the Council for the next ten years, she soon realised that, *in actual fact, I never catered for more than one.*

Despite this prolonged, and ongoing, period of development, a pattern has emerged to Ngaire’s performance of rurality. Thus, the nature of the daily routine which characterises her experience of rurality, is reflected in Ngaire’s account of an afternoon spent operating the business.

*Ngaire:* There’s the washing and there’s… you want windows cleaned and those sorts of things, they’re all done after two o’clock, the other maintenance jobs are done, gardening’s a bit of a non-event with the café still open and quite busy. And the meal’s have gotta be done. The tables have to be set and there’s… If we’re on linen service… I mean that’s got to be back, the linen, and the shelves all stacked up.

Ngaire suggests that one of the hardest things for her lies in the combination of both accommodating people in the hotel and catering for people at the café. In attempting to make both elements of the business successful, and servicing the needs of as many tourists as possible, Ngaire continues to work long hours which, she suggests, has led to her being *basically burned out.* Thus, while she emphasises the enjoyment that she gets from meeting nice and friendly people through the business, the *hands-on* and *labour intensive* nature of running the hotel leads Ngaire to suggest that:
Ngaire: When you’re running on the big numbers all the time it is just so pushy that the enjoyment does go out of it and, you know, I mean we all get a little bit stressed out at times.

The nature of ‘rural restructuring’ at the individual scale is clearly and closely linked to the business scale of restructuring. In addition to the apparently negative influence that the demands of business development has on Ngaire’s experience of rurality in terms of taking the enjoyment out of the performance, this influence may also be seen more positively. This is apparent, for instance, not only in the pleasure that Ngaire takes from meeting people during the quieter times of the year, but also in her experience of being covered extensively by the local and regional media.

Again, however, the individual experience of developing a rural tourism product feeds into the nature of the product that businesses offer to visitors. Thus, emerging from her experience of developing and maintaining the success of the hotel, and from the self-reflection required to successfully develop and operate a rural product in the service industry, Ngaire believes she needs to make changes to her role at the hotel in order to maintain the standards of the services offered to tourists.

Ngaire: That’s where I tend to think it’s time I backed right out because I’m probably just a bit flat, and, being a bit flat, you don’t put… the extra effort in. I just really now would like to, you know, back off and leave someone else to run it cos I don’t feel I’m as sharp and smart.

Changes have, in fact, already been made to Ngaire’s business reflecting her exhausting experience of developing a rural tourism product. In 2006 she employed a close relative to take over the management of the hotel. This change has subtly re-defined the character of the business and the services offered to visitors for the hotel’s new manager is now the primary agent in providing comfort and hospitality to consumers. In relation to the hotel, Ngaire, meanwhile, has reduced the hours that she works and mainly occupies herself with maintenance jobs.

Ngaire, moreover, has found another outlet through which to experience the positive aspects of business development and which, she envisages, will also ease her workload. She has
recently purchased Hyde’s derelict school and is, at the time of writing, involved in converting this into a function centre. Ngaire hopes that this development, in addition to maintaining the success of the hotel during the off-peak season through attracting corporate functions that also require the provision of nearby accommodation, will also keep her experience of rurality an enjoyable one.

*Ngaire:* It’d be very enjoyable cos you can put heart and soul into something special. And if you got one every fortnight or three weeks it would be great. Diversifying, I suppose, gives you another… another something to work towards… you know, it gives you another direction which keeps it enjoyable.

### 9.4 Shirley and Malcolm Hodge

*From the beginning till now has been a horrendous journey and it’s been something that you would not believe. That much money has had to go into this building.*

Shirley and Malcolm’s conversion of Ranfurly’s old post office into a backpackers arose from their need to develop an alternative summer income to their laundry and video-hire businesses and their prediction that there would be an increasing demand for accommodation with the growth of the Rail Trail. The development of the business began with Shirley and Malcolm approaching other business operators in Ranfurly to ensure that they would not be taking custom away from other providers and that their investment would have the community’s support. It appeared that they were on safe ground in both cases.

*Malcolm:* We thought we were sort of sliding into a niche…

*Shirley:* …there was a lot of people that threw blankets and sheets and stuff like that our way. Yeah, just locals and that… “Do you want these for your backpackers?” “Yes!”.

The owner of an old backpackers across the road even gave Shirley and Malcolm his approval. By 2002, the backpackers was ready to accommodate guests. In a similar vein to the experiences of the Theyers and Ngaira Sutherland, Shirley and Malcolm Hodge are kept very busy in operating their various businesses.
Shirley: You will get up in the morning, you will clean up after last evening’s guests, Malcolm will come in and do the rubbish and I will do the beds. Then we’ll do all the laundry, after I’ve done that I’ll pick up all the hotel’s laundry because I’ve got that side of it out there too, so that keeps me just as busy as what this does. And the videos, yeah, so probably… 10 hour days maybe… roughly.

This hands-on and labour-intensive daily performance partly emerges from Shirley and Malcolm’s desire to maintain the profitability of their business, which is Malcolm’s explanation behind their lack of employees. Throughout Shirley and Malcolm’s experience of ‘rural restructuring’, however, the profitability of their business has been continuously compromised by the investments that they have been required to make. This has affected their experience of business development to the extent that Malcolm repeatedly suggested that they would never have converted the building into a backpackers if they had known what it would entail. In large part, their dissatisfaction is linked to the compliance requirements that they have had to meet - emerging from the various architectural modifications they have made to the backpackers in order to increase visitor comfort - and to the many safety measures that they have had to install.

Malcolm: We would be the most safest place in the Maniototo to stay, because we were used basically as an example when the new coding system came out. And everything had to be done by the book and had we known that…

Their annoyance, however, is also connected to their perception of the broader business environment. Business operators that accommodate fewer than eight people, for instance, are not, to the same extent, required to meet such building regulations leading to a rapid and significant rise in the number of houses that have been simply opened up to accommodate a small number of guests. These developments, according to Shirley, really hurt financially because we hadn’t even got established before all these other people were up and running. Malcolm was therefore keen for the District Council to alter its stance on the provision of accommodation to let the other operators know what we’ve had to go through. Businesses are also competing for custom in other ways that Shirley and Malcolm perceived negatively.
Shirley: Commercial operators got on it, the next thing you know they’re renting houses to rent… to put backpackers in…and they don’t have to do anything with them and that… that annoys me. Yeah it’s unfair.

While Shirley and Malcolm’s experience of developing their business has been characterised by the difficulties of meeting regulatory requirements and operating in a competitive environment, they also recognise the positive experiences that come with owning and managing the backpackers. Shirley, for instance, has had her initial concerns about strangers quashed in the process of running the business.

Shirley: Well most of the people, I can say this quite honestly, most of the people that come in are honest… Cos that was one of my biggest fears, can you trust them, you know. Strange people coming into your house…

In common with the other entrepreneurs interviewed, Shirley and Malcolm especially enjoyed the social side of the business. The pleasure that Malcolm gets from meeting the people and just having them in, saying goodbye, looking after them while they’re here, and the enjoyment he takes from his overall role to just make sure everyone’s happy, informs the business-scale provision of comfort and hospitality to guests in clear ways.

Malcolm: I especially like it when you get a group booking…. We can sleep 22 but I mean if you get a group of about 15, 16, something like that, we just sort of say “Well no, sorry we’re full now”, let them have the place to themselves cos… they’re doing something together and they’re all happy as hell aren’t they? It’s good.

While Shirley and Malcolm have ideas about the best ways to enhance their visitors’ experiences and to maintain the profitability of the backpackers in the future, their plan, as reflected in their putting the business on the market, is to move away from Ranfurly. Shirley is keen to move closer to her family and, having experienced five years of running the backpackers, has come to the conclusion that it’s a lot of hard work for very little money really. Drawn from their own experiences of developing a business, Shirley and Malcolm thus envisage a new relationship emerging between the backpackers and its owner, which will be
reflected in an alternative performance of rurality thereby leading to an alternative individual experience of business development and an alternative development of the business.

Shirley: …like there was this guy looking at it, he was a keen fisherman and hunter. He could introduce that into it and… advertise it and say I’ll take you out fishing and hunting and, you know, the option’s there… we’ve done all the groundwork, it’s wide open for anyone who wants to come in and just… have that insight as to what to do…

9.5 Graeme Duncan

I still wake up in the night and pinch myself – “Is it really happening?”. I mean living in Wedderburn all my life… we’d never known what a tourist was until 2000 really.

With his ancestors and family having been farming in the area for 150 years, and having been closely involved in community attempts to retain local schools and pubs, the development of the Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn has brought a whole new dimension that Graeme never ever envisaged would happen. Having bought a block of land adjacent to their own property in 1996, the Duncan family found themselves with a derelict farmhouse which they had little idea how to use; they had merely bought the land because if you were standing still in farming, you weren’t going anywhere. Thus, the last consideration was ever anything to do with tourism. A decade later, stimulated by their desire to diversify from farming, their natural interest in tourism, and their ownership of land next to the Otago Central Rail Trail, the Duncan family’s performance of rurality indeed partly hinges on developing and operating a business that services tourists on the Rail Trail.

The change in direction towards tourism, after farming for fifty years, has afforded Graeme an interesting challenge. Following several years of Rail Trail observation and business planning, the development of their rural tourism product from 2003 appears, however, to have been a relatively smooth transition overall.

Graeme: …it’s been a smooth road really. And I think that’s because we didn’t have to rush into it initially. …somebody says “You’re farming people instead of
sheep”, well possibly we are, it’s something like that, you’ve gotta supply what they need in both cases...

This smooth transition has not only been enabled by the time the Duncan family took to develop their business, and by the transferability of their farming knowledge and skills to the tourism industry, but also by the fact that the development was a family venture.

Graeme: …if you have too many other people making decisions you don’t tend to get them done… that’s the advantage of a family-owned business or whatever, you’ve got this dream, you do it and then you work it out from there on, just get on with it, so that’s an advantage.

With their business now in full operation, the family is now heavily occupied with ensuring that tourists are encouraged to visit the business, and that they leave it having had a positive experience. Their work is thus characterised by cleaning, providing breakfasts, responding to bookings and enquiries, meeting guests and carrying out maintenance work. In continuing their farming operations at the same time, the development and maintenance of their business has, however, required a need to balance their often conflicting commitments to agriculture and to tourism.

Graeme: …you’ve gotta draw the line, say “Right, there’s some things we’ve gotta do up there” and you’ve gotta walk away from it at home. On the other hand, there’s things, times, on the farm that mean that you can’t put the time in up here… yes, you do try and budget your time as much as you can.

In terms of their interactions with guests, this conflict leads Graeme to suggest that:

Graeme: …sometimes we don’t have enough time to do it fully, as much as we would like to. We have to perhaps rush through it a bit.

While their performance of rurality has led to their need to carefully manage their time and, perhaps, to endure a heavy workload at busy times, it has, Graeme suggests, been an overwhelmingly positive experience of ‘rural restructuring’. As well as from the pleasure that he takes from meeting a lot of interesting people, much of the enjoyment that Graeme
associates with owning the business and *having these people going through and trying to cater for their needs… and make their experience more pleasurable, more memorable*, is reflected in the character of the Red Barn. Thus, while accommodating guests has led Graeme to come to appreciate the spectacular landscape of the local area, it has also led to his appreciation of the area’s history.

*Graeme:* And that’s something we had to develop too, our history…. …we didn’t think we had a history really, seriously speaking…. …and two years ago my wife and I did a tour of England and the continent…. …it was a learning experience just to see how other parts of the world…. what is interesting to tourists…. …you’ve got to find what’s interesting, it’s history.

Drawing on this learning experience as tourists in Europe, Graeme and his family were thus able to develop a notion of what may be interesting to tourists in their local area. As outlined in Section 8.4 the Red Barn has been used as a centre through which to present the history of the area to visitors. This history ranges from the history of farming in the region to the history of the railway, and from the history of the Rail Trail to the history of the Duncan family. Graeme’s experience of business development and ‘rural restructuring’ has been particularly enhanced by these historical reproductions.

*Graeme:* I just enjoy sharing our history with the people now. ….I’ve reached a stage in my life that it’s…. it’s good to be able to share these… these experiences over the years, our history and rejuvenate I guess. Otherwise it tends to die, your history. ….as you grow old, all of a sudden you think “Gosh”… you haven’t really shared a lot of this in your lifetime, and the things I can remember that my father told me and all of a sudden, you know, it’s lost, it can be lost very easily in these areas so yeah, it’s managed to renew that.

The experience of ‘rural restructuring’ in terms of the development of a rural tourism product began, for Graeme Duncan, with the Duncan’s purchase of some land in 1996. Since then, Graeme’s performance of rurality, and his experience of rural living that emerges from this, has been significantly re-defined with the development and maintenance of the Lodge and Cottages Wedderburn. Thus, while there was no original intention to become involved in
the tourism industry the business has become such an important part of our lives now to the extent that Graeme now believes it always will be.

_Graeme:_ I think it will be part of our farming operation for... forever now. Yeah, I’m sure it will be, as a diversification of farming, yeah, now that it’s in the system.

9.6 _Nikki and Ralph Milne_

_For a starter, I thought I was going to do the PR, I was gonna mow the lawn and I was gonna collect the money. But now I found myself making beds, washing dishes, hanging out washing..._

In some ways, Nikki and Ralph’s experience of ‘rural restructuring’ is similar to that of the Duncans for these entrepreneurs have also used the development of a tourism product as a route through which to diversify from their farming operations. In a similar vein to the sentiments expressed by Graeme Duncan, the performative transition from farming to tourism has entailed particular experiences for Nikki and Ralph.

_Ralph:_ Well it’s widened my horizons from a farming point of view. We just used to deal with farming people and now we’re dealing with... well, tourism people.

In addition, the couple also suggested that they have had to become much more organised as bookings are often being made twelve months in advance. Dealing with bookings has also required Ralph to become more computer literate, a personal development that he has found quite rewarding.

_Ralph:_ I didn’t even want to turn a computer on but now it’s a bit like fishing, you get on there and you just see what you’ve got trapped in the net sort of thing, for the bookings. It’s quite a novelty, each day looking at that.

For Nikki and Ralph, however, the performance of rurality required to develop and maintain their business has also entailed different experiences from those reported by Graeme Duncan. While they suggest that they have been lucky to take over _a business that’s up and running_ in
terms of the goodwill and image that had been built up by the previous owners, the fact that this take-over occurred during the peak season meant that Nikki and Ralph had little time to prepare. Indeed, they were required to accommodate twelve guests the very night that they bought the Bed & Breakfast. Furthermore, since the takeover in January, they have spent just three nights at their home leading Ralph to suggest that the transition has been a considerable culture shock for the couple.

*Ralph:* We put through in the first three months what I thought we’d struggle to do in 12 months…

The busyness that has come with their take-over of the business, and the legal requirement that they must stay at the school when they are hosting guests, led to the early stages of business ownership constituting a particularly exhausting experience.

*Nikki:* We’ve got really tired! We’ve got a bit rundown actually, yeah, and we lost weight… …cos we’d come home at maybe seven o’clock at night and I hadn’t thought about what we were having for dinner…

*Ralph:* It just… for the first couple of months, until we got into a system, a routine, we were chasing our tail a bit really…

In their experience of taking over a tourism business Nikki and Ralph also told of numerous other issues including their initial embarrassment at asking for payment, especially from guests that they knew, and their desire to upgrade the standard of the accommodation which could not be satisfied due to their busyness.

The experience of ‘rural restructuring’, however, also differs subtly between Ralph and Nikki as a result of the different performative transitions that have had to be made. Ralph suggests that the transition from farming to tourism was particularly difficult for him because *on the farm you might go all week without seeing anybody sometimes and then all of a sudden I was having to remember names and talk to new people everyday.* In continuing to work as a nurse three days per week, however, Nikki has often found the transition difficult in other ways.
Nikki: Although on a work day for me it’s… I find it a little bit hard because I’ve talked to people all day and then I get down to the school and I’ve gotta keep talking and that’s a little bit hard at times…

The difficulties that Nikki and Ralph experienced in taking their business over in the summer began to ease towards the end of the season, so they were able to appreciate more fully the positive aspects of running the Bed & Breakfast. These include the relationships that they have developed with local food providers.

Nikki: Well probably the pub, yeah we have a close relationship with them because we… most people do go over and they know that… And it works well actually, and with the wee coffee train, in Lauder we’ve got a wee coffee train and we try and promote their business as well, we say “Look, go over for a coffee”.

Moreover, while sometimes viewing the social demands of the business as more of a chore than a pleasure, meeting people simultaneously constitutes one of the more enjoyable experiences for Nikki and Ralph that come with their new performance of rurality. They suggest, for instance, that they have made several friends through owning and managing the Bed & Breakfast. Despite the initial adaptation from farming that Ralph has had to make, and the chill out time that Nikki requires after a day’s work at the hospital, the positive social interaction required to make the business successful, furthermore, has come quite easily to Nikki and Ralph.

Nikki: But we’re people people aren’t we? We’re both quite good at communicating… I think we’re really hospitable anyway. That’s just… that’s just the people we are.

The overall experience of ‘rural restructuring’ for Nikki and Ralph, reflected in their take-over and management of a Bed & Breakfast business, has also led to the couple contemplating ways in which they can make the annual transition from farming to tourism a little easier in future years.

Ralph: I think by the finish we had it down to a fine art, and we were handling it a lot better then but what I’d like to do next year is gear the farm up, now that we
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know what’s needed down here… …we’re gonna have to simplify the farming operation really…

The potential ways in which the individual scale of ‘rural restructuring’ impacts upon the business scale of ‘rural restructuring’ are also highlighted in Nikki and Ralph’s plans for the future. In particular, they are aiming to encourage guests to stay longer at the Bed & Breakfast because, as Nikki suggests, everyone’s only staying one night so there’s a lot of work for one night… In order to keep guests at their business for more than one night, Nikki and Ralph are contemplating the ways in which they can expand the provisions of their business.

*Ralph:* When you’ve got an old building like that for a starter, plus you’ve got the farm, we’re looking at whether it would be 4WD trips or… farm tours… There’s numerous things that we’re looking at that could expand in the following years.

9.7 Conclusion

Arising from new performances of rurality, individual human experience constitutes the most local scale of ‘rural restructuring’. Indeed, it is recognised that all developments, at whichever scale they are considered, ultimately begin and end with the human agent. Through particular multi-scalar formations, ‘rural restructuring’ is thus driven by, and expressed in, innumerable individual performances and experiences of rurality. Moreover, it was suggested in Section 2.4 that for ‘rural restructuring’ to be of conceptual use, it must signify a restructuring of people’s lifestyles.

The individual scale of rural change has been addressed in this thesis in relation to the entrepreneurial experience of business development along the Otago Central Rail Trail, Central Otago, New Zealand. A restructuring of rural lifestyle is perhaps most evident in the cases of Graeme Duncan and Nikki and Ralph Milne where the shifting importance of production-based and consumption-based activity in the countryside is demonstrated in a diversification from farming into tourism. I would like to argue, however, that the notion of ‘rural restructuring’ is also applicable to the other interviewees’ experiences of rurality. In developing businesses that cater for tourists on the Rail Trail, all entrepreneurs have performed in new ways with their experiences of rurality restructured accordingly. Having previously managed a Bed & Breakfast in Mosgiel, Ngaire Sutherland, for instance, is experiencing rurality anew, emerging from her development of the Otago Central Hotel.
The experiences of ‘rural restructuring’ that are generated by business development along the Rail Trail, and the related provision of comfort, hospitable and informative hosts, and historical insight, are wide-ranging. As such, entrepreneurs suggested that their experiences have been characterised by business competition and cooperation, tiredness and enthusiasm, interactive pleasure and social exhaustion, and a personal valorisation of the past and alternative planning of the future. Simultaneously, performances of rurality, from which such experiences emerge, have ensured that the nature of business-scale restructuring is as it is. Indeed, following these experiences of ‘rural restructuring’ are new ways of living through rural space, that will not only bring new experiences for these entrepreneurs but also impact upon the mutually constitutive and multi-scalar model of ‘rural restructuring’ in new ways.
10. Conclusion

10.1 Returning to the Beginning

I set out, at the beginning of this thesis, to challenge conventional understandings of ‘rural restructuring’ which are characterised by a tendency to analyse change in the countryside at a particular scale. To illustrate, I outlined three alternative approaches to ‘rural restructuring’ in Section 2. Structural perspectives were shown to approach ‘rural restructuring’ through broad political-economic shifts at the global and national scales. Such aspatial shifts are considered to determine the most effective means of capital accumulation in the countryside and thereby lead to new forms of socio-economic and spatial organisation. While such approaches are useful in framing ‘rural restructuring’ in a way which acknowledges the rise of consumption-based activity in the countryside, I argued that there is a tendency for this understanding to theorise restructuring as a relatively uniform phenomenon. I then turned to place-based accounts of ‘rural restructuring’. These aim to challenge the tendency for structural perspectives to impose a homogeneity upon rural development by stressing the contingent and localised nature of ‘rural restructuring’. I suggested that the recognition of rural development as a heterogeneous process is encouraged by a political turn towards the principles of community-led development, highlighted, for example, in the emergence of place-based culture economies. Finally, I outlined the findings of lifestyle approaches to ‘rural restructuring’ which further demonstrate its heterogeneous nature by focusing on individual experiences of change. Such perspectives, I argued, also recognise the agency implicated in ‘rural restructuring’ through, for instance, analysing the creative impact of entrepreneurial activity upon the local context.

‘Rural restructuring’ has thus been considered from a number of standpoints, but in ways that limit its scope as an analytical tool. Drawing on the work of Massey (2004), however, I suggested in Section 2.5 that this inconsistency in approach may be overcome by considering space and place as mutually constitutive. Massey suggests that there has been an unfortunate tendency for scholars to posit space and place as oppositional. In particular, while place is commonly conceptualised as locally grounded, space is perceived as abstract and detached. In contrast, Massey advances an argument that, while recognising place as grounded and local, theorises space as grounded and local also. Thus, local places are constructed by relations and connections that reach far beyond the immediate locality (i.e. space) but space simultaneously...
takes its shape from the agency of innumerable localised places. In essence, the two are not
dichotomous, but inextricably linked and, furthermore, mutually constituted.

Building on these ideas, and aiming to respond to persistent calls emanating from the social
sciences for researchers to overcome the global-local nexus (see Alger (1988) and Milne and
Ateljevic (2001) for instance), I decided to apply an alternative model of ‘rural restructuring’.
This model was seen to challenge scale-specific approaches to ‘rural restructuring’ by
emphasising its multi-scalar and mutually constitutive nature. Change at a particular scale in
the countryside was therefore considered to simultaneously influence, and be influenced by,
both broader processes and more localised instances of restructuring.

In order to explore the applicability of this model, I chose five scales at which to analyse
‘rural restructuring’ as a mutually constitutive process, taking rural tourism development, in
particular, as a central feature of restructuring. These comprised New Zealand (the national
scale), Central Otago (the regional scale), the Otago Central Rail Trail (the sub-regional
scale), five business case studies (the business scale) and five entrepreneurial case studies (the
individual scale). In order to examine the national and regional scales, I immersed myself in
academic literature, promotional material, political rhetoric, and media discourse, relating to
rural development in New Zealand and Central Otago. Such methods were also used in
relation to the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail but my understanding of this sub-
regional scale was particularly enhanced by my cycling of the trail. At the business and
individual scales, ‘rural restructuring’ was approached through interviews with five
entrepreneurs which addressed both the nature of business development and the individual
experiences of restructuring that such development entails.

10.2 The Mutually Constitutive and Multi-Scalar Nature of ‘Rural Restructuring’
In broad terms, the mutually constitutive and multi-scalar nature of ‘rural restructuring’ is
evident in the growing importance of consumption-based, over production-based, rural
development at all scales of analysis. Thus, the transformation of New Zealand from an
international model of social democracy into “one of the most open and business-friendly
economies in the world” (Goff 2006) has been reflected in the growing association of rurality
with opportunities for touristic experiences, a development which challenges the traditional
hegemony of agriculture and other extractive industries in New Zealand’s countryside. This
shift, however, is not only linked to broader global-scale processes, but also derives from, and
influences, more spatially specific instances of ‘rural restructuring’. Thus, Central Otago, in the south of New Zealand, has gone through a similar transition with the historical dominance of mining and farming increasingly challenged by a growth in the contribution of rural tourism to the regional economy.

A more specific example of ‘rural restructuring’, that is reciprocally linked to this regional shift, is provided by the Otago Central Rail Trail. The conversion of a railway, geared towards meeting the requirements of the agricultural industry, into a Rail Trail, constructed for the recreational use of visitors to the area, clearly comprises a sub-regional case of fundamental change in the countryside. This scale-specific instance of ‘rural restructuring’ nevertheless feeds into, and draws from, the restructuring of its broader regional context. Furthermore, the sub-regional scale of change is not only contextualised, but also operates as a mutually constituted context for restructuring at more local scales. Thus, I turned to the restructuring of the rural business environment.

Again, the transition from a production-based to a consumption-based countryside is in evidence at the business scale. This is most clearly demonstrated in the proliferation of businesses in the area that are geared towards catering for tourists on the Rail Trail. The restructuring of the local business environment can therefore be seen as emerging from the restructuring of its sub-regional context. Simultaneously, however, the development of such businesses in the area has also ensured the successful conversion of a production-based railway into a consumption-based Rail Trail. Finally, I progressed to the individual scale in order to address the ways in which people’s experiences of rurality have been restructured. The restructuring of rural lifestyles was again characterised by the growing importance of consumptive activity in the countryside, most clearly evident in the cases of those who have diversified from farming into tourism. To demonstrate the mutual constitution of ‘rural restructuring’ at this scale, I drew on the notion of performance. In particular, I suggested that individual experiences of change are drawn from new performances of rurality that revolve around business development along the Rail Trail, but that entrepreneurs’ performances of rurality are also generative in their effect upon the business scale.

From these observations, ‘rural restructuring’ can indeed be considered a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive process rather than a scale-specific phenomenon. Through focusing on tourism development in more detail, however, I have also shown that the mutual constitution
of ‘rural restructuring’ extends beyond a simple production-to-consumption transition. Most notably, at the national scale, Tourism New Zealand has developed and promoted a tourism product in line with the desires of its target group; the ‘interactive traveller’. This group is considered to be in search of unique, authentic and interactive experiences which cater for the energising and learning aspects of travel that such tourists especially value. As such, ‘rural restructuring’ (or, more specifically, rural tourism development) takes a particular shape in this multi-scalar model. Thus, at the national scale, a tourism product has been developed and promoted in ways that emphasise the opportunities for unique, authentic and interactive engagements with the countryside’s cultural and natural environments. This representation of rural New Zealand is, furthermore, reproduced at the regional scale for the development of rural tourism in Central Otago is reciprocally tied to the development of its broader context. The notions of uniqueness, authenticity and interaction, are therefore replicated in Tourism Central Otago’s branding of the region as a ‘World of Discovery’. ‘Interactive travellers’ are invited to satisfy their desires to be energised, and to learn, through actively engaging with Central Otago’s unique, ‘powerful’ natural landscapes, and distinctive, authentic culture. Central Otago’s promotion as such depends, however, upon the development of more specific tourism products that reinforce regional-scale promises.

Often considered to provide a ‘real rural experience’, the Otago Central Rail Trail is one such development which not only reinforces the aforementioned image of Central Otago but also builds its own identity from that image. Thus, the Rail Trail is portrayed as providing visitors with a unique, authentic, and interactive rural experience that stems from three main appreciations; namely, the area’s unique and undiscovered natural environment, its authentic and intriguing heritage and culture, and the physical interaction with these that comes with walking, cycling or horse-riding along the trail.

Moreover, the nature of ‘rural restructuring’ evident at the national, regional and sub-regional scales is also reproduced in the nature of business development, for the business scale’s relationship with its broader context is mutually constitutive. For instance, the five businesses studied were all geared towards providing a level of comfort to guests that was in keeping with the physical challenge involved in tackling the Rail Trail. Entrepreneurs, furthermore, not only expressed the importance of interacting in a friendly and hospitable manner with guests, but also of providing information about the local area. Such entrepreneurial provisions can be seen as meeting the ‘interactive traveller’s’ desire for travel to be a learning
experience, as well as satisfying their search for authenticity and interaction. The image of the Rail Trail as an authentic and unique rural experience is further strengthened by the historical insights that are provided at the business scale. Indeed, entrepreneurs stressed the importance of reproducing the past when operating a business along a heritage trail. Business development is not only linked to its broader context, however. Individual experiences of ‘rural restructuring’ are also related in a mutually constitutive manner to the business scale. Thus, in developing and operating businesses that provide comfort, hospitable and informative hosts, and historical insight, entrepreneurs’ experiences of rurality are restructured accordingly. In particular, respondents emphasised the physical and social exhaustion that comes with offering comfort and host-guest interaction, while also stressing the pleasure that they gained from this. In addition, entrepreneurs drew attention to the co-operative and competitive business relationships in which they had become embroiled, while one respondent also highlighted his personal appreciation of sharing his family’s history with guests.

10.3 Further Thoughts

Much has been written on the respective strengths and weaknesses of structure-oriented and agent-oriented analyses of society. For much of the 20th Century, the former orientation dominated with scholars often claiming the generality, and therefore explanatory potential, of their research findings. The main concern was with constructing theories that could be used to explain society, and its evolution, in the broadest sense. More recently, the latter approach has been in the ascendancy with advocates of post-modern rhetoric stressing the inherent dynamism and multiplicity of experience and meaning. As such, scholars have become increasingly content to limit their work to local case studies, reflected in the proliferation of research concerned with individuals, households, communities and other closely bounded entities. As academics shy away from using their findings to interrogate more general theory, however, important commonalities that connect (socially and spatially) fragmented groups are overlooked. In essence, the notion that we belong to, and are thereby influenced by, a common context (at whichever scale this may be) has been neglected in favour of emphasising the specificity of our position in that context. A widespread tendency for researchers to commit to either more general and theoretical analyses, or more empirical and situated studies, has therefore emerged from this apparent incompatibility of approach.
The need to distinguish between structure and agency has developed as a result of our modernist preoccupation to order, and think of, the world in terms of binary concepts. Reality, however, does not easily operate in accordance with the dichotomous ordering that we impose upon it. As Law (2004) would have it, the world is a mess. Ongoing, but fruitless, struggles to advance the hegemony of structure- or agency-based interpretations of the world are therefore testimony to the idea that the world and its social organisation are not as simple as advocates of either would like. As Ateljevic and Doorne (2007) suggest, there have been efforts to accommodate this revelation in social-oriented academia by moving away from a concern for structure and agency. ‘Dwelling’ perspectives (e.g. see Ingold 2000) and actor-network theory (e.g. see Murdoch 1997), for instance, are two much-cited approaches to research that, amongst other things, attempt to dispel any regard for scale and aim to better account for the unordered way in which the world unfolds.

Unfortunately, however, many scholars in rural studies have not embraced the exciting potential of this breakthrough to the same extent as elsewhere in the social sciences. As a result, there remains a notable fixation with approaching, and justifying, research at varying levels of theoretical abstraction and empirical groundedness. From Cloke’s (1989) concern for the implications of macro-economic and political change on the countryside, to Johnsen’s (2004) focus upon changing farming practices in a small community, scholars are continuing to explore rurality in a manner that depends upon committing to a particular scale of analysis. As a result, the imagined chasm between structure- and agency-oriented perspectives on rurality is reinforced.

However, Massey’s (2004) consideration of space as “no more than the sum of relations… and practices” (p. 8), and of place as “a product of relations which spread out way beyond it” (p. 6), presents a way in which the issue of scale in rural studies can be overcome. As conveyed in this thesis, by adopting a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive understanding of ‘rural restructuring’, it becomes clear that both structure and agency can (and, indeed, must) be accounted for in research on rurality. Rather than oppositional terms, the two are mutually constituted and therefore operate simultaneously upon rural change at whichever scale such change is considered. In short, it is the reciprocity of structure and agency, rather than the influence of one or the other, that determines the nature of rural development. For scholars to adhere to either in their research approach thus leaves many questions about the inherent interconnectivity of the world unanswered.
The consistencies identified in tourism development at each of the scales focused upon in this thesis, demonstrate that ‘rural restructuring’ can indeed be approached as a mutually constitutive and multi-scalar process. The potential of this model to satisfy the desire of scholars to overcome a dichotomous understanding of socio-spatial change in the countryside, and to simultaneously account for the roles of structure and agency in ‘rural restructuring’, is therefore considerable. This is not to suggest, however, that a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive theorisation of ‘rural restructuring’ is not in need of further interrogation. As such, a number of issues relating to the application of this model emerged during my research and analysis.

Firstly, it will have become apparent to the reader that I have, at different scales, considered ‘rural restructuring’ largely in terms of either the restructuring of image and meaning or the restructuring of reality. At the national and regional scales, for example, I was primarily concerned with the meanings inscribed upon rurality by the promotional activities of Tourism New Zealand and Tourism Central Otago. At the business and individual scales, however, I focused more upon the tangible restructuring of the business environment and rural lifestyles. Clearly this distinction stems from the need to address generality at broader scales and particularity at the more localised scales. Such an approach thus assumes a degree of congruity between the restructuring of image and the restructuring of reality. While this may appear as a problem, a multi-scalar and mutually constitutive model of ‘rural restructuring’ can instead be seen as reinforcing the findings of work on commodification, and tourism more generally, which suggest the interwoven nature of image and reality. To reiterate the claims of Cloke and Perkins (1998), for instance, rather than the provision of authentic experiences of reality, successful tourism development requires that consumers experience places and products in ways that authenticate the promotional images of such places and products. As such, the findings of this thesis suggest that a restructuring of rural image, evidenced at broader scales, is reproduced in a restructuring of rural reality, evidenced at more local scales. Thus, like spatial scales, it appears that image and reality are mutually constitutive in processes of ‘rural restructuring’.

Secondly, the level of emphasis that I have placed upon the consistencies between scales of ‘rural restructuring’ should not deflect attention from the existence of multi-scalar inconsistencies. Thus, while the concern I have given to consistency in this thesis reflects my
aim to demonstrate the mutually constitutive nature of ‘rural restructuring’, incongruities were also continually apparent. In Section 6.2, for example, Bill Theyers highlighted the negative effect that crossing a regional boundary has had on the development of the Otago Central Rail Trail, while Tourism Central Otago also suggested the need for more consistency between tourism products at the national, regional, sub-regional and business scales. This admission should not be seen, however, as compromising an understanding of ‘rural restructuring’ as mutually constitutive. Rather, it can be seen as reinforcing this notion for it points to the fact that spaces, places, and individuals are implicated in innumerable multi-scalar and mutually constitutive models of socio-spatial change. Each particular model may reinforce, negotiate, or challenge, the nature of any other. I have merely explored just one way in which individuals, places, and spaces, are reciprocally linked. As is subtly apparent at the business and individual scales, for example, the ways in which different people influence and experience multiple processes of broader change are, themselves, multiple.

This contention brings me to my final point. That is, the particular scales that I have chosen to investigate in this thesis appear to be especially well-suited to illustrating the applicability of this model. Not only has each scale of analysis demonstrated a clear shift in the importance of production-based and consumption-based activity in the countryside, but they have also fitted well with Tourism New Zealand’s targeting of the ‘interactive traveller’. These trends would not be as demonstrable if the study were to consider alternative scales, processes, or spaces, places and people. I contend, however, that this is because each multi-scalar formulation of socio-spatial change is unique. Thus, the mutually constitutive and multi-scalar nature of change is traceable in any context but, reflecting the unique intersection of heterogeneous social relations which underlie change, will be manifest in different ways.

To conclude, the model of ‘rural restructuring’ advanced in this thesis holds potential for change in the countryside to be considered anew. Its appreciation of spaces, places and people as mutually constituted offers an alternative insight into the nature of socio-economic flux. In challenging approaches to ‘rural restructuring’ that are confined to a particular scale of analysis, this model can be utilised to further interrogate and demonstrate the complexity, dynamism and fluidity that characterises the development of rurality and society more broadly.
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Appendix I

Sample Letter to Entrepreneurs along the Otago Central Rail Trail

Centennial Hall X220
Lincoln University
PO Box 123
Lincoln 7647

Email: dowsetto@lincoln.ac.nz
Tel: 0212 577671

Dear Sir / Madam

27th April 2007

I am a British post-graduate student, currently studying for a Masters in Social Science at Lincoln University funded by a Commonwealth Scholarship. Having recently spent three days cycling along the Otago Central Rail Trail, I have decided to focus my work on this and, in particular, some of the businesses that are along the route. The working title of the thesis is: The Production and Consumption of Tourism Businesses: five case studies along the Otago Central Rail Trail.

My thesis will mainly be looking at what certain businesses along the trail offer to cyclists and other tourists, and how they have responded to the development and popularity of the Rail Trail. To do this, I am hoping to carry out several interviews with the owners/managers of particular businesses and am keen to know whether you would be willing to participate. The interviews are likely to last between 60 and 90 minutes and will be recorded. They will focus on the history of the business, how it has benefited from the Rail Trail, what strategies are used to attract visitors and what services are offered, as well as any problems or challenges that have been encountered. As a participant you would reserve the right to withdraw at any time prior to the commencement of the final write-up stage of the research and, if you should desire, for the information you provide to be made anonymous in the final thesis, which may be published and may interest a number of different groups. The details of the project and your potential participation in it are further outlined in the enclosed information sheet.

I am aiming to travel to Central Otago and do the research during May. Hopefully this is a period when businesses along the trail have quietened down a little and managers may be able to spare an hour or so. I am keen to find out as soon as possible which businesses are able to contribute so I will ring you sometime next week to find out your decision. Otherwise, my contact details are outlined above and you can email or telephone me if this is preferred. If you would like to contact the University, my supervisor’s contact details are as follows:

Professor Harvey Perkins – Environment, Society and Design Division
Tel No: 03 325 2811 (ext. 8765)    Email: perkins@lincoln.ac.nz

Thank you for your time, I look forward to being in contact again soon.

Yours sincerely

Owen Dowsett
Appendix II

Sample Research Information Sheet

Lincoln University

Division: Environment, Society and Design Division

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project with the working title:

The Production and Consumption of Tourism Businesses:
Five case-studies along the Otago Central Rail Trail.

The aim of this project is:

1. To explore the production and consumption of particular businesses associated with the OCRT.

2. To examine how these processes of production and consumption relate to each other and how they relate to the places in which the businesses are situated.

Your participation in this project will involve:

Answering questions in a semi-structured in-depth interview lasting between 60-90 minutes. These will be recorded electronically if your consent is given. The interviews will be subsequently transcribed to assist analysis. A copy of the transcription will be made available to you if you should require. Questions will focus on the particular features of your business and how it has developed in response to the Otago Central Rail Trail. You may at any time decline to answer a question.

In the performance of the tasks and application of the procedures, there are risks of:
Re-living any difficult periods you have endured in operating your business.

The results of the project may be published, and may, in particular, interest other academics, other businesses and local decision-makers. However, if you should wish, you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public without their consent. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality where required, the following steps will be taken:

Businesses and participants will be given pseudonyms. The particular practices and features of the businesses will only be outlined to an extent which prevents readers from identifying the specific business or participant. All information gathered from the interviews will be stored confidentially and securely.
The project is being carried out by:

Name of Principal Researcher    Owen Dowsett

Contact Details    Tel No: 0212 577 671   Email: dowsett@lincoln.ac.nz

He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

Name of Supervisor     Professor Harvey Perkins

Contact Details    Tel No: 03 325 2811 (ext 8765)   Email: perkins@lincoln.ac.nz

The project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.
Appendix III

Sample Consent Form

Working Project Title:

*The Production and Consumption of Tourism Businesses:*

*five case studies along the Otago Central Rail Trail*

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and for the information I provide in the interview to be recorded electronically. In addition, I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved if I require. I understand also that I may withdraw from the project at any time prior to the commencement of the final write-up stage of the research.

Name: 

Signed: ___________________________ Date:


Appendix IV

Sample Plan for Semi-Structured Interviews with Entrepreneurs

Business Specifics

Could you briefly run me through a typical day as owner/manager of this business?

What services do you offer visitors to the Rail Trail?

To what extent is your business dependent on the users of the Rail Trail?

What are the main advantages of operating this particular business in this area of Central Otago?

What is the main target group of this business?

Business History

How long has your business been doing what it does?

What was here before?

How long have you been involved in this business?

What work or business were you employed in before operating this business?

What was your main motive for pursuing/getting involved in this business?

52 Please note that the questions included in this sample plan would be followed by further probes in the interviewing process depending on the answers that entrepreneurs gave.
Where did you get the idea to set up a business like this?

What was the initial process that you went through to get started with this business?

What was your inspiration behind providing this particular type and style of accommodation?

Is this what you imagined it would all be like when you started out?

Do you enjoy running this business? What particularly do you enjoy?

Policy and Regulatory Environment

How easy was it in legal terms to begin setting up this business?

What are the main regulations and legislation that you have had to consider when building this business?

In what ways, if any, have you had assistance or guidance from the local government or tourism board regarding your business?

Promotion and Marketing

How would you describe the services you offer if you were encouraging someone to come and use them?

In what ways have you marketed and promoted your business?

What kind of image do you wish to promote of the business?

Are you linked with any other businesses or organisations in promoting tourism in the area?
Who do you aim to target when promoting your business?

What sort of people do you mainly get using your services?

Business Operation

Have you done the Rail Trail?

What do you think has made the Otago Central Rail Trail so successful and popular?

To what extent do you think you have been successful in responding to the opportunities presented by the Rail Trail?

How much have you benefited from the development of the Rail Trail?

What kind of atmosphere/environment have you tried to create here?

To what level do you try and interact with your guests?

What has been the most important thing in making/keeping this business successful?

What skills do you think it has been important for you and your employees to have to make this business successful?

Have you been provided with any guidance on how to best profit from running a business in connection with the Rail Trail?

How is the work divided here? What different responsibilities do you all have?

Do you have any work outside this business?
What problems have you had in setting up and maintaining the success of this business?

What effects do the different seasons have on your business?

Business Networks and Relationships

Is this a completely privately owned business or is there any public involvement?

What new connections or relationships have developed for you as a result of being involved in this business?

To what extent has there been any other involvement in the setting up or running of your business (community, friends, businesses, government)?

What sort of relationship does your business have with other Rail Trail businesses (competitive/co-operative)?

Are you in any kind of partnership with another business?

How strong is competition from other businesses for providing similar services?

Have you experienced any conflict with the community/businesses regarding your business/the way you run it?

Business and Place Change

Can you imagine running this business in any other location? How important is this particular location to the particular business you have developed?

What sort of relationship does your business have with the local community?
What effects do you see your business as having on the local community?

How important are businesses connected to the Rail Trail in keeping the community alive?

In what ways has the development of the Rail Trail changed the nature of this community/place?

If the Rail Trail had never been developed, how do you think this place would be now?

Business Future

What ideas do you have for developing the business?

For how long can you see yourself being involved in this?

How do you think the business environment along the Rail Trail will have changed in 10 years time?