

Kees van der Waal (ed.), *Winelands, Wealth and Work: Transformations in the Dwars River Valley, Stellenbosch*

University of KwaZulu Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2014

258 pp

ISBN978 1 86914 260 5

R315.00

This text represents the culmination of the collaboration by staff and postgraduate students from the University of Stellenbosch in the Dwars River Valley. The collaboration has resulted in an academic work that aims to examine the changes in practices and place as a result of shifts in both local and global patterns of political and economic life. The text seeks to map out a range of responses to the global neo liberal forces at a very local level and in doing so it has touched on rather topical issues in South African anthropology and history today. Examples of these themes are shifting populations; new models of development; the slow violence of poverty and domination; and emergent and protean forms of dominance as well as responses, such as the new Pentecostalism. All in all the work takes the reader on a journey through a site of contrasts. The reader encounters gentlemen's wine estates, squatter camps, abandoned farm houses, idyllic villages (gentrification) and a people's desire for respectability through housing, family, church, work and heritage. It follows in the tradition of anthropologists like Fiona Ross who has attempted to document the experience of raw life in the new South Africa.

In the opening chapter the reader is introduced to the working concepts of the book, which are as follows: transformation, gentrification, development and *ordentlikheid* (respectability). Transformation is the old stock and trade of anthropology; the discipline has always been charting reactions to a changing world. In the past it has been about the reaction of "the Other" to colonialism, to modernity, to capitalism, to independence. And of late in South African anthropology, it has been very interested in documenting and theorising the culture of the country's political transition. *Winelands, Wealth and Work* quite aptly focuses on how the inhabitants of the Dwars River Valley are experiencing the effects of the post 1994 political transition here in South Africa. Moreover, the text blends in an examination of neo liberal shifts and their impact on agriculture, employment and deepening poverty as well.

The second of the working concepts is gentrification. Gentrification is a visible manifestation of the transformation and thus offers a valuable lens through which to examine and compare the class and culture of economic changes. A third concept or "core notion" is that of development. This is one of the more contentious concepts due to its dubious histories. Here at the outside we are given

insight into the critical use of the notion by the collaborators. The reader is referred to James Ferguson and Arturo Escobar for their critical engagement with the idea of development. The idea of development, we are reminded, has a dual nature; on the one hand we find a development industry which is always full of hope and certainty in contrast to the “level of practice” where we are confronted with “paradox, counter productivity, failure, ambivalence and irony” all of which the authors intend illuminating through the research process (p 19).

Lastly, the authors operationalise a term that has been popularised largely through the work of Elaine Salo (2003) and Fiona Ross (2010), namely *ordentlikheid*. The text treats *ordentlikheid* in two ways: in one instance as a defence against the imagined onslaught of the indecent and secondly, as an aspirational concept. Thus on the one hand *ordentlikheid* signals a struggle to maintain decency, social values or communal standards. In this usage, it is an attempt to “protect” the home and community from negative, external influences. The first usage of *ordentlikheid* finds its clearest expression among the middle classes, while the second usage is represented by the “fugitive aspirations” of the destitute, inadequately housed, the unemployed, the former farm worker and the poorly schooled, all of whom live in hope of attaining the social decency implied by the concept.

In the rest of this review I want to briefly summarise some of the contributions in four parts. First, the history of dispossession; second, the varying patterns of transformation as evidenced through resettlements, development interventions and gentrification; then the chapters that have a more thematic interest; and lastly, the theoretico ethnographic conclusion. I am particularly enthused by the historical contribution on the Dwars River Valley made by Tracey Randle. The chapter uses both primary and secondary sources to construct a history of dispossession in the region. Overall the chapter is a well researched history of the region that spans most of the period from earliest European occupation to the radical policies of apartheid to the present. Moreover, the author does not simply tell the story of dispossession, but frames it within the theoretical construct of “slow violence”. The chapter is a carefully measured story that does not lose pace or flow due to paucity of sources and it provides the reader with a clear sense of the historical processes that are relevant to later chapters. This entire chapter in its relation to subsequent contributions in this volume is indicative of the amount of work that the researchers spent on co ordinating their research questions and efforts.

The next section of the book identifies and examines three varying patterns of transformation in the region: state sponsored development and resettlement, share equity schemes and lastly, gentrification through the establishment of private secure housing estates or gated communities. These trends in transformation are examined in three different sites: Languedoc, Solms delta, and Boschendal. The story of Languedoc resettlement is one of discontent and adjustment, social activism, social ills such as drug and alcohol abuse, but above all it is about how community is established and people eventually triumph or make do with the hand they are dealt. The tale is almost cliché in South African urban development after 1994 with the struggles to adjust to life in RDP housing developments that bring together former farm labourers, backyard dwellers, evictees and other destitute or inadequately housed people.

Solms Delta is a much celebrated success story of the Western Cape winelands. The main thrust of the chapter on Solms Delta is to contrast the stated aims of land reform (in the form of a share equity scheme) as opposed to welfare ventures. The evidence the author suggests points towards privately undertaken welfare ventures, such as sport, music and profit sharing being far more successful than official state schemes at creating empowerment and upliftment. The author argues that a small measure of paternalism on the part of those driving the scheme is partly responsible for the success of the Solms Delta model. Lastly the Boschendal estate and the contestations it has brought to light again bring the legacies of apartheid into focus. Many fear that the proposed housing component of the spatial development plan would simply re-inscribe onto the landscape old class distinctions. Above all the concern is that these secure housing estates do not forward the goal of integration which is considered to be a key policy direction in the post apartheid era.

The next part of the book deals with the subject matter of transformation in a very different way. Instead of focusing on sites as the previous sections did, the authors instead select particular themes to give us a view of how people are reading and dealing with the transformations. The first of these is the chapter by Kruger who deals with the slow violence of poverty. Kruger has not taken the connection between poverty and violence for granted and rather wants to offer us a critical examination of the link between two ideas – violence and poverty. Indeed she has applied a unique methodology she calls psycho ethnography in an attempt to show how we as researchers may be complicit in the production of such accounts of poverty. Her results suggest that people experience the slow violence of poverty with a “bizarre mixture of disempowerment and agency” (p 151). If the account here is anything to go by, then we can certainly look forward to her forthcoming book.

We are further treated to chapters about the role of women “dorp supporters” (town supporters) who are the backbone of the “communities”, again echoing the work of Salo among women in Mannenberg. The subsequent chapters deal with the role of neighbourhood watches as mechanisms for policing decency in the settlements. Lastly we are given a glimpse of the changing role of religion through the increasing popularity of Pentecostal churches in what are predominantly settlements founded around churches of the Calvinist tradition. The suggestion is that the changing needs in the neo liberal world produce a particular set of desires that the Pentecostal tradition responds to directly.

Winelands, Wealth and Work concludes with a glimpse at the Gif squatter settlement. Many residents in this and other squatter settlements across South Africa continue to live as if apartheid has never ended; that the impact of racial capitalism still haunts these localities. Robins suggests that there are worrying trends such as continued retrenchments that would make the conditions of slow violence found at Gif settlement the possible reality for an increasing number of residents of the Dwars River Valley. In conclusion, he leaves us with a cautionary question; he asks us to wait and see “whether ‘sustainable development’ in the valley becomes an economic reality or simply another dystopia” (p 229).

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