



Winelands, Wealth and Work

Transformations in the Dwars River Valley, Stellenbosch

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Through histories of slavery, colonialism, apartheid and paternalism, the Dwars River Valley in South Africa's Western Cape province instantiates labour exploitation and concomitant societal ills. Recently, and in line with South Africa's neo-liberal development tack, investment in the valley has generally turned from wine production to property speculation. Hope for development has become pinned on the commodification of landscape as tourist and elite farming destination. The addition of real estate development to an area of agricultural production around Boschendal provides the backdrop for an investigation of the post-1994 social transformation processes in one of the most sought after landscapes in the Cape.

This careful study asks how the people of the Dwars River Valley respond to changing land use and how that relates to the historical and spatial contexts of the valley. It shows, in a richly textured way, how poor people use creative tactics to survive – whether it's by turning to Pentecostalism, patrolling ordentlikheid [respectability] or negotiating the contradictory, gendered norms that frame respectability and entrepreneurship. By exploring Solms-Delta farm as a case study, the book also looks at how initiatives can open up real possibilities for empowerment.

Speaking to the massive Western Cape Farm Strikes of 2012, this book reveals agency in the Dwars River Valley and suggests that marginalised people have not acquiesced.

The collection nuances current political and media debates by assessing historical and contemporary processes of dispossession, alienation and development. Its sustained regional focus speaks to broader issues surrounding the effects of neo-liberalism in post-apartheid South Africa.

— Prof Fiona Ross, University of Cape Town

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