



## WINELANDS, WEALTH AND WORK:

Transformations in the Dwars River Valley,  
Stellenbosch

Reviewed by Howard Smith

Kees (CS) van der Walt (ed.)

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The Dwars River Valley is the beautiful gateway to the Franschhoek Valley. The photographs in this book capture that scenery, but its focus is the lives and living conditions of the valley's inhabitants. *Winelands, Wealth and Work* is a collection of ethnographic studies that look at changes over time. The editor, a Stellenbosch University professor of anthropology, acknowledges contradictory historical processes: "Political transformation on a national level has enhanced workers' rights... [but] economic changes relating to the move from production-orientated capitalism to neoliberal finance-based capitalism have undermined workers' security."

The greater part of the valley belongs to the Boschendal Estate. Farms first developed by Dutch settlers using slave labour were consolidated, from 1895, by Rhodes Fruit Farms as a commercial enterprise with wage labour, including migrant workers in hostels. After 1936, it passed to various owners before being consolidated again by Anglo American Farms in 1969.

Alongside Boschendal, one finds the mission village of Pniel, dating from the emancipation of the slaves; Kylemore, which from 1901 catered for the growing

population of Pniel; and Lanquedoc, established by Rhodes Fruit Farms for agricultural workers in 1902. Lanquedoc's population quadrupled between 2001 and 2004 when Anglo American Farms moved workers off its farms. Adjustment challenges seeded the many social problems that are so well described as the "slow violence of poverty" in psychologist-ethnographer Lou-Marié Kruger's chapter. Anglo American Farms opted to sell much of its formerly productive land as "estates for gentleman farmers"; the displaced workers paid the price.

An alternative approach to change was taken by the smaller Solms-Delta farms at the foot of the valley. Here, philanthropist owners granted workers and residents a share in the ownership of the land and management of the farm. Tourism, cultural activities, health and education are the foci of development at Solms-Delta – a model that contrasts sharply with the exclusions of Anglo American Farms' neoliberal approach.

The collection includes studies of the communities' approach to crime prevention through neighbourhood watches, of women's efforts to provide financial security, and of the impact of a new Pentecostal church on Pniel's traditional population.

The role of government policy in developments in the valley is clearly not central to the researchers' interests, and

questions that cry out for investigation are passed over without comment. What is the effect of the continued application, noted in passing, of the Western Cape's 1985 Land Use Planning Ordinance on residents' rights and opportunities granted under South Africa's 1996 Constitution? Is it this apartheid-era legislation that prevents workers from acquiring title to erfes on designated agricultural land? And why, despite additional funding from Anglo American, did the majority of the social housing units built in 2004 suffer severe defects? Did the mansions built for sale to "gentlemen farmers" similarly disappoint their new owners?

In these and other ways, *Winelands, Wealth and Work* raises questions that merit more probing investigation.

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