UNSETTLED:
RE-IMAGINING POSITIONALITY AND PLACE

INAUGURAL ADDRESS: PROF CHERRYL WALKER MAY 2007

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cherryl Walker's appointment as Professor of Sociology at the University of Stellenbosch has meant a return to her Western Cape roots. The route travelled has been a varied one, moving across formal disciplinary boundaries and spanning the NGO, academic and public sectors, but also illustrating certain continuities in intellectual commitments and practice.

Born on 7 March 1951 in Bellville, she grew up on a farm outside Durbanville and attended Rhenish Girls' High School in Stellenbosch. After matriculating in 1967 she spent a year as an exchange student in the USA, near San Francisco (a particularly heady time to be there), before returning to complete her BA at UCT. As a post-graduate student at UCT in the 1970s, she researched women's involvement in political activism in twentieth-century South Africa, then a novel area within the academy. Her Master's thesis was published as *Women and Resistance in South Africa* in 1982, but banned for distribution within the country until its re-issue in 1991.

In 1979 she moved to KwaZulu-Natal to work on a rural development project. This exposed her to conditions in rural South Africa and led to her ongoing involvement in land issues as an area of both research and activism. In the 1980s she was deeply involved in exposing the apartheid state's programme of population relocation, as a founding member of AFRA (a land-rights NGO), a core contributor to the Surplus People Project's major study, *Forced Removals in South Africa,* and co-author (with L Platzky) of *The Surplus People* (1985). After several years in the USA, which included an affiliation to the Centre for Research on Women at Stanford University, she worked for the Black Sash in Grahamstown, before taking up a lecturing post in the Department of Sociology at the University of Natal in Durban in 1989. Her edited book *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* appeared in 1990.

In 1995 she moved to the public sector as Regional Land Claims Commissioner for KwaZulu Natal in the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights. After five enormously challenging years, she returned to full-time research and writing on land and gender issues. In 2002 the University of Natal awarded her a DLitt Before moving to Stellenbosch she spent two years as Chief Research Specialist in the Human Sciences Research Council in Durban.

Cherryl is married to John Crumley and they have two sons, Zac (19) and Cai (16).

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What was once far away comes closer, and the past becomes the present.

– Alain Touraine (2000: 1)

This is an extraordinary moment for me, and I begin by thanking all of you for being here to share it: colleagues, friends and, of course, those of my family who are here with me today, who will most appreciate my sense of the extra-ordinary. I realise that for many of you this is an ordinary occasion (albeit an extra one) – ceremonial, no doubt, and collegial too, but ordinarily, conventionally, so. But for myself and for those who have been part of the journey that brought me here, there is little that is routine about it.

I think one is granted, or at least can exercise, some licence on occasions such as this to indulge. Much of my work up until now has centred on the ambiguities of land restitution and land reform; tonight I deal with land in a somewhat different way. I want to explore intersecting themes about origins and identity and land from the vantage point of being in Stellenbosch. Is it possible to re-imagine what this landscape represents and my place within it and thereby move from 'settler' through 'creole' towards a more inclusive – cosmopolitan – perspective on who and where we are?

The question is the starting point for a large research agenda; in this lecture I cover some preliminary terrain. I begin by reflecting on my own location. I then explore some resources for this imaginative work – first, representations of the history of this region in two local museums and, second, the usefulness of the related but differently inflected constructs of 'creole' and 'cosmopolitan' as conceptual tools (here, used more as heuristic devices than actual social categories). In conclusion I touch on the contribution that the Department which now provides me with my professional identity and intellectual home can make towards a reconfigured place.

The indulgence I request is not for my choice of subject matter but for the personalised way in which I approach these themes. My intention is to situate the personal within its larger, social context and confirm the relevance of thinking about positionality – mine, but also yours – at the public and, indeed, political occasion that this event represents in the life of a department and a university.

So, first, this extraordinary moment for me, which has to do with origins and identity – and also with possibilities.

In part it is the unexpectedness of returning to my roots after many years spent living and working on issues around land elsewhere. Coming back to the Western Cape, to the Boland, to Stellenbosch, has confronted me with unexpected but seemingly pertinent patterns in my life. To find myself living in the street where my grandmother once lived, working in the town where I went to high school, immersed back in landscapes imprinted on me in childhood, at an institution which in my youth seemed so disconnected with who I was and thought I would become (the impossibility of imagining this role and venue then, alongside the actuality of both now) – all this presents a disquieting sense of continuity with a set of identities I once thought I had outgrown. The authority of class and kin and gender and racialised privilege in shaping these apparent continuities tugs uncomfortably at my attention.

At the same time, being here, now, impresses upon me a sense of discontinuity with that past. This is also disquieting but, I want to think, a more useful starting point from which to consider what it means to be located in Stellenbosch, as a sociologist, in 2007.

My sense of discontinuity comes from several sources, all of which subject my personal narrative to larger contestations around identity, resources and place. It is not as simple as finding myself working in a building that used to be called the 'BJ Vorster Gebou', but is now the *tweetalige* 'Lettere en Wysbegeerte//Arts and Social Sciences Gebou//Building', although that has

something to do with it. More disconcerting is the unfamiliar high-gloss styling with which 'The Cape' as brand and lifestyle has been reworked and re-presented since I last lived here. This proposes a vision of this region which has very little in common with the un-assuming, relatively modest and unselfconscious under-standings of place that I recall from the wine farm on which I grew up. It is a proprietary, self-serving appro-priation of emblems that privatises and excludes; it offends my sense – deeply inculcated, I realise – of birthright.

Alongside this, and (if I am honest) even more discomforting, is the daily confrontation with, or skirting around, an alternative imagery of the Cape – the Cape not as a place of genteel living but as a site of massive, growing deprivation and squalor. The deprivation is rarely picturesque and strongly suggestive, especially to those who are doing the skirting, of a dismembering disorder which seems to be gaining ground, threatening not only discredited hierarchies but also precious stabilities. My regular route between home and work is through sturdy vineyards and uplifting vistas, where the signs of poverty are safely tucked into the landscape, fairly easily contained within and by the view. It might be possible, I think, to construct a set of daily routines that insulates one against the evidence of gross poverty and alienation beyond this small corner. But even if this were possible and one wanted to stay in this cosy, confining corner (which I do not), it is not possible to deny for long the clamour resounding beyond its boundaries. Where do I stand in relation to that?

Still more disquieting is a potent discourse that draws strength from the manifest inequalities and ex-clusions in which I am embedded, to work with a set of simple, interlocking binaries: black/white, indigenous/settler, disadvantaged/wealthy, African/other. These are premised on the assumption of static, primordial, group identities and a thin but sufficient – efficient – history. This discourse defines me as a representative of an illegitimate privilege, a 'settler' when all is said and done, with only a very light claim to be here and to participate in its opportunities. It is much more de-centring of my memories of a relatively modest, rooted, childhood time and place than the theme-parked excesses of the 'Cape Winelands' brochures. It displaces not only my past but my future.

Alain Touraine (2000: 11) has argued that the work of sociology is to understand and represent the discontinuities of the contemporary world. Night, he claims 'has already fallen on [the] republican ideal' and the sociologist has much to do:

Sociologists have to get up early and walk at dawn through the new landscape created by the upheavals of the night. … Their primary role is to note discontinuities, to stop looking at the lights of the past and to look at the confusion of visible reality.

In an affirmation of the centrality of intellectual work, he also suggests that 'our most urgent need is the need for ideas, rather than political or economic programmes' (*ibid*: 300).

He is writing from France on the cusp of the new millennium, but the metaphor of dawn over a landscape disturbed by the upheavals of the night has resonance here. In this lecture I work with the unease of return, to consider what it means to claim this landscape as home and to practise sociology in a small, historically over-determined town, located in the cultivated borderlands that separate a restless metropolis on the one side from a troubled rural hinterland on the other. Unlike Touraine, however, I think that in South Africa, at least, we cannot afford not to look – relook – at 'the lights of the past.'

For me it is not, as TS Eliot once described it, 'to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.'[1] It is, rather, to return and to look at the place differently – to see the place anew. Not a new place, but a differently composed place, in which my experience of the past is not disavowed but is repositioned: sidelined, if you will.

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At a conference on land restitution that my Depart-ment co-hosted last year,[2] Nicholas Blomley, a Canadian anthropologist and a keynote speaker, spoke about the 'imaginative work' that property does:

How we think about property and space is im-portant, given the important work that property does in the world. It is tempting to think of property simply in allocative terms (who has what). While this is important, we are in danger of overlooking the imaginative work that property does, the way it shapes our beliefs as to what is natural, possible and desirable (Blomley 2006: 2).

A corollary is that a successful programme of land restitution also requires new ways of thinking:

Property restitution, similarly, does not only entail the reallocation of material resources. Restitution can also entail (or perhaps requires) creative forms of re-imagination, and the constitution of new forms of engagement with others (*ibid*).

Blomley's insight is certainly relevant for the formal land restitution programme of our new democratic dispensation, which has generally been ineffective both in the 'reallocation of material resources' and in the 'creative forms of re-imagination' that he invokes, as a growing body of literature attests. What is also coming to the fore is the importance of thinking about these issues in terms of time as well as space – part of the challenge of making restitution work, I have argued elsewhere, is to re-examine the assumptions about the past that animate it.[3]

I want to apply the idea of the imaginative work of property to this discussion of place. Even though much of the Stellenbosch area falls outside the reach of the restitution programme provided for by the Restitution of Land Rights Act, limited as that is to twentieth-century dispossessions,[4] the need for restitutive re-imaginings of this region is still strong. (This is not to suggest that re-imaginings are all that is needed, but what I focus on tonight.)

Stellenbosch is certainly a challenging place in which to think about new relationships to people and place, in part because here the cadastre of private property and the historically shaped power relations that go with it appear to be so particularly entrenched. (And although there is not space to develop this, it needs to be noted that these relationships are gendered, not only shaped by 'race', ethnicity and class.) Unlike Cape Town, where the farm boundaries of the first 'free burghers' of the late 17th century are now well buried beneath the city's subsequent, complex form, in Stellenbosch the markers of dispossession and the new property dispensation that the first Dutch settlers installed are still strikingly present. Here, more clearly than anywhere else in the country, the freshly painted signage of the past three hundred and fifty years seems everywhere in place. In the farms and classic Cape Dutch buildings that grace them a certain understanding of land enjoys a remarkable presence. Land as privatised property, property as power and order, is projected across the environment – beautifully laid out in vineyards and fields and landscaped, gated developments, neatly organised and divided by fences and walls. And in the streets of the town itself, the imprint of old hierarchies linger.

It is not surprising that for many the social landscape that this physical environment supports appears so fixed: layered and sedimented in ways that can only be endured or celebrated or appropriated or destroyed. But is it not possible, following Blomley, to re-imagine this landscape in support of a restitutive and inclusive, rather than exclusive, vision of belonging and well-being?

In search of resources for this I visited two museums, each located on one of the very earliest farms in the Stellenbosch region – the first, Vergelegen, in Somerset West, established in 1700, and the second, the Museum van de Caab, on the farm Delta in the Franschhoek Valley; the original farm on which the museum is located was established in 1690. Both were suggestive about the possibilities for re-interpreting place in time; they also illustrated to different degrees the interplay of continuity and discontinuity in the social construction of space.

Vergelegen, with its manor house, glorious gardens and 300-year-old camphor trees laid out along the axes drawn by its first owner, the controversial Governor, Willem Adriaan van der Stel,[5] appears at first sight to epitomise the continuities of colonial property and privilege into the post-1994 era – available to be enjoyed by whoever cares to pay the entrance fee at the gate and embrace the soothing spirit of its park. Here, however, ownership has been updated for our globalising economy and today the estate is preserved as part of our national heritage by a corporate owner, the multi-national company Anglo American. And alongside the gardens and wine-tasting and restaurants are two displays documenting the history of the estate which, although mostly celebratory in tone, do provide material for more destabilising readings of this protected place.

The first is a gallery inside the manor house, which chronicles the history of ownership from the farm's disputed beginnings as the Governor's prized domain, through to its transformation into an award-winning wine estate under Anglo American. The gallery is nicely framed for the post-1994 tourist: dominating the display, drawing the viewer in, is a large photograph of Nelson Mandela, Graça Machel and Bill and Hilary Clinton at a state banquet on the estate in 1998. Alongside this celebration of contemporary hope and authority is a more colonial stamp of approval – a second large photograph, this one of the British monarch, Queen Elizabeth, also enjoying Vergelegen at a separate occasion of state in the 1990s. But then, next to this image is a cluster of smaller photographs that invites a more provocative commentary on the continuities of power. These photographs document the first caucus meeting of the African National Congress (ANC) to be held inside the country, which took place at Vergelegen, courtesy of its corporate owners, in 1990. In one photograph of a group of ANC leaders standing on the terrace, Joe Slovo is seated on an armchair in front of the open door to the manor, facing the cameras and smiling broadly.

The display also hints at historical contestations

around the assumptions of power on display. The Vergelegen estate, we are told, was the focus of protests within Dutch settler society against Governor van der Stel's excessive concentration of wealth, leading to his eventual recall to Holland in 1707; the two very different depictions of the estate that the antagonists used to argue their respective cases to the Dutch East India Company in Holland are both on display. The protests were initiated by less well-positioned burghers; Hermann Giliomee (2003: 24) has summarised the issues thus:

> By 1705 land covering a third of the farming area of the colony was in the hands of twenty Company officials. Vergelegen, Willem Adriaan van der Stel's farm, had been developed in the grand style of European estates. The size of ten ordinary farms, it employed two hundred slaves and sixty white *knechten*, or overseers. Soon burgher society was abuzz with rumours about an opulent lifestyle, and about graft, nepotism, and bribery. A comment captured the burghers' envious disapproval of the clique of officials: '[They were] drunk from luxury, desire and frantic pride.'

The second Vergelegen display acknowledges other, more radical struggles. It is located in an annex to the wine-tasting centre, a short distance from the manor house. Here the visitor is introduced briefly to the people whose land this was once, whose dispossession is obliquely acknowledged, in a complex inversion of meanings, through the name by which the surrounding mountains are still known: 'Hottentots Holland'. Most of the display is about the slaves with whose labour this and other historic estates in the region were built. Here one learns a little of where these coerced settlers came from (Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, India, Malaysia, Java, Batavia, Ceylon, Macassar, and more) and who some of them were. Some of the information is surprising: Sheik Joseph Yussuf, the celebrated political and religious leader who was banished to the Cape from Batavia in 1694 was, one learns, a slave owner too.

Compared to Vergelegen, the Museum van de Caab offers a much longer and more self-reflexive view. Entrance to this museum, located in the farm's old wine cellar (built circa 1740), is free. This display begins with the Early Stone Age (2,5 million years ago) and from there moves the viewer steadily but not perfunctorily through a series of panels to the present. The narrative grows ever more detailed and personalised as one moves into historic times, where the development of a new set of social relations out of the unequal

interactions among indigenous people and settlers, men and women, freeborn and slave, is sketched. But the social boundaries between these different groups, it becomes clear, were not fixed and initially at least identities were blurred – thus only one of the owners of the first five farms laid out between the Dwars and Berg Rivers was not married to a freed slave or 'of slave descent himself' (Museum van de Caab nd: 11). The Cape's landed gentry has a hybrid past.

The museum works hard to dispel the anonymity of historically subordinated groups. One wall is covered with slate tiles on which names of the slaves who lived on the farm between 1690 and the abolition of slavery in 1834 are memorialised. The display also tries to give voice to the very first settlers of this land, using fragments from the interviews that the Victorian philologists Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd conducted with San informants in the late 1800s. Among them is a poignant account of what happens to people when they die, by a man called Diä!kwain who was recorded in 1871:

> … the wind does thus when we die,
> the wind makes dust,
> because it intends to blow,
> taking away our footprints,
> with which we had walked about while we still
> had nothing the matter with us …
>
> (Museum van de Caab nd: 3).

The museum makes it clear that the layers of settlement in this valley are as deep as it is possible to go. In 2005 a team of archaeologists from the University of Cape Town excavated 'both a ruin of a late 17th century colonial dwelling and a concentration of LSA [Later Stone Age] stone artifacts … alongside each other beneath the driveway.' The excavations can be seen outside the museum:

> They were exciting discoveries as they meant that colonial and pre-historic usage of the land coincided in exactly the same location. Intact Stone Age settlement sites are rare in the Boland region and this is the first such site found in the Franschhoek valley (Museum van de Caab nd: 2).[6]

But is too much being glossed over in my appropriation of this juxtapositioning of stone-age and colonial settlements? Let me be clear. I am not trying to deny the depredations of the past, nor the significance of our history of dispossession for understanding the polarised dyad of privilege and deprivation that haunts us today. It would be grossly misleading (self-serving) to position this

history in terms of an apolitical, sanitised 'complexity', as little more than the unfolding of multiple waves of distinctive settlement that each, finally, have contributed to the rich mosaic, the 'miracle', of our multi-cultural democracy today. I am talking about resources for re-imagining positionality and place. The layers of exposed diggings and stones and discards of earlier settlements at the Museum van de Caab allow us to place the colonial history of this area within a larger, more open-ended frame – to review both the scale and the peopling of the past and to use that to reconsider what, in Blomley's words, 'is natural, possible and desirable' today.

These displays allow us to see that at some level we are all of settler stock. The manor house, the slave lodge, the khoi camp – all are built on older streams of settlement. And the new society shaped by their interactions became the riverbed over which later streams of settlement have coursed, including those on the Cape Flats and from beyond South Africa's borders today.

Elsewhere I have argued that the national discourse around land claims and land restitution does not do justice to the messy reality around historical and contemporary relationships to land and people on the ground (as it were). Referring specifically to Cremin, the first restitution claim to be settled in KwaZulu Natal when I was Regional Land Claims Commissioner, I have highlighted how an understanding of its particular history reveals larger and more dynamic processes of class formation and change than the master narrative of victim/beneficiary of state policy at different periods of our history can explain on its own:

> ... an understanding of the community's history is central to an understanding of contemporary dynamics in Cremin. It is now possible to see its twenty-year period of dispossession between 1977 and 1997 as but one phase in a longer and more complex history ... of community construction, accumulation, fragmentation, dismemberment, and reconstitution ...centring on a landowning elite that was dispossessed but not entirely destroyed by the land policies of apartheid. It is a relatively privileged class that has been able to re-emerge as a community through this successful engagement with the restitution process (Walker 2004: 202).

A related argument is being developed here. Taken together, the displays at Vergelegen and the Museum van de Caab point to a far more untidy history of settlement than dominant ideologies – apartheid in the past and Africanist today – care to acknowledge. It is one which reveals bitter contestation and segregation, but also uneven interaction and dependencies around land. It points to a heritage in this region that is hybrid – a past that is both settler and creole.[7]

The idea of the history of this region as creole is not new. The creole roots of the Afrikaans language are well documented (Giliomee 2003: 53). The concept of 'creole' has also gained a certain political currency. Jeremy Cronin (2006: 50) has used it to recover what he has termed 'the multiphonic' history of Cape Town and its subversive possibilities:

> Walk about Cape Town and you can still hear and see the ... multiphonic wrested from schizophrenia. Cape Town's subconscious has long guessed what contemporary science is now confirming: we are all the bearers of the same, mixed-up genetic bredie. Humanity is Coloured. Our proto-non-racial Cape Town has always teetered on the brink of the possibilities of its Creole reality.

Cronin goes on to argue that this 'Creole reality' provides 'an important corrective challenge to the dominant political discourse of our post-1994 South Africa', which he characterises as 'a discourse of representative redistribution':

> 'Transformation' has come to mean not transformation but the elite redistribution of some racial, class and gendered power (whether in the boardroom or the Springbok rugby team). Representative individuals from formerly disadvantaged groups are the beneficiaries. ... In the new South Africa, a small number of representatives enjoy new powers and privileges on behalf of the historically disadvantaged majority (*ibid:* 50-51).

An apposite example of this can be found just up the road from the Museum van de Caab, at Boschendal. This is another historic estate that was previously owned by Anglo American Farms, but has recently been bought by a consortium of international and local 'Black Economic Empowerment' (BEE) partners; these new owners are planning to develop part of their land as 'gentlemen's estates' which will, a planning report reassures, 'keep Boschendal's cultural and agricultural integrity intact' (quoted in van der Waal 2005: 17).

According to Cronin, a significant 'buttressing paradigm' for this limited understanding of transformation is a form of identity politics 'that posits relatively fixed and pre-given identities' such as 'blackness' or

'African-ness' (2006: 51) and has us 'scurrying backwards in search of some presumptive, authentic, pure, rooted and timeless African identity' (*ibid*: 52). The wider political significance of Cape Town's past is that it undermines this quest: it 'is this dominant paradigm … that the mixed-ness, the Creole reality of Cape Town, disturbs' (*ibid*: 51).

There is also some interest, particularly in cultural studies, in seeing to what extent the theoretical debates on creolisation in Caribbean and Latin American studies can be applied to the analysis of South African society more generally (Martin 2006). Denis-Constant Martin has warned against a romantic deployment of 'creole' that effaces material inequalities:

> … a rehabilitation of human and cultural blending, if it is not tied to effective policies of social redress aimed at abolishing, or at least diminishing inequalities, does not suffice to eradicate past antagonisms between stratified and opposed groups (2006: 168).

As pointed out by Martin, the concept of 'creole' can valorise notions of origin as a combination of 'original pure and homogeneous elements' in ways that ignore the degree to which these originary elements are themselves an outcome of earlier processes of hybridity (Martin 2006: 169). Of greater concern is that the invocation of 'creole' can promote the assertion of fixed identities that are, or can be experienced as, exclusionary against others – against the non-creole. This point is borne out by a 1999 study of 'emerging provincial identities in the Western Cape' by Bekker *et al.* which found that certain ANC and PAC politicians rejected the idea of the Western Cape as a 'melting pot of … founding communities listed as Afrikaners, Khoisan and Malay/Muslim' (Bekker *et al.* 1999: 10). Their main concern was that this conception of the Western Cape (which was not described as creole) excluded '[i]n particular, the large community of Xhosa-speakers who have recently arrived in the Western Cape and are economically marginalised in the province' (*ibid*: 12).

Acknowledging such concerns, Martin has argued that what is more useful in the South African context is not the idea of *creoleness* but that of *creolisation*. Creolisation is not about restrictive identities but, rather, describes a process of open-ended and ongoing cultural intermingling that is relational, often conflictual and global. It is:

> a dynamic process which does not operate by synthesising, but generates an unpredictable energy of overcoming … whose results cannot be foreseen …. Being a process, it cannot be reduced to one

content (like creoleness), and nowadays affects the whole world (Martin 2006: 171).

With specific reference to South Africa he proposes:

> Creolisation would invite the recovery of all episodes and aspects of the South African past, including the most repugnant ones, without dividing its population according to ancient categories, but by bringing back to the fore the dynamics of cultural contacts that resulted in the creation of a unique society. Creolisation would finally help imagine the relation of South Africa to the world, to situate it as a country fully belonging to contemporary worldness … and able to contribute to it, precisely because of its singularity (*ibid*: 173).

But the underlying unit of analysis remains the group. More helpful for imagining individual projects of re-location and re-situation within South Africa are ideas around cosmopolitanism. The idea of the cosmopolitan speaks not so much to origins as to ways of being in the present. Unlike 'creole' and even 'creolisation', the primary reference point for 'cosmopolitan' is not culture, although it presupposes cultural plurality. A 'cosmopolitan', Kwame Appiah (2005: 214) tells us, is a 'citizen of the world'. The invocation of citizenship points to civic responsibilities within a locality rather than an ethnic community. He or she, continues Appiah (2005: 217), is 'etymologically at least … someone who thinks that the world is, so to speak, our shared hometown.'

The image of the world as our shared hometown has the potential to free us from tightly bounded group identities without denying the relevance of more parochial cultural attachments that give meaning to individual lives. Appiah (2005: 222-3) expresses it thus:

> A tenable cosmopolitanism … must take seriously the value of human life, and the value of particular human lives, the lives people have made for themselves, within the communities that help lend significance to their lives. … A cosmopolitanism with prospects must reconcile a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of partiality.

This experience of tolerant understanding of community and place has been identified in segments of Cape Town's past, most notably in District Six before it was destroyed under the Group Areas Act of the apartheid years (McEachern 2001; Soudien 2001). McEachern has described how today the commemoration by the District Six Museum of the historically cosmopolitan

identity of District Six provides a significant resource for the construction of a positive post-apartheid identity among the district's former ('coloured') residents. This identity foregrounds affiliation to a larger community based on the experience of sharing a place and a set of conditions, not an imposed ethnicity:

> ... the retrieval of a more desirable past provides a way into new identity for them in post-apartheid South Africa as they take back urban citizenship, their identity as Capetonians. What is new is imagined in terms of, in engagement with, how they recollect the past (McEachern 2001: 243).

The identity of, in this case, 'Capetonian' can, potentially, be shared with people from different cultural backgrounds and class locations and thus support the emergence of a common sense of belonging among diverse citizens. Although it seems far easier to recognise a creole past than propose a cosmopolitan future for this region, the cosmopolitan identity pointed to by Appiah and McEachern appears to hold considerable promise for more inclusive re-imaginings of positionality and place. It recognises discontinuity while promoting belonging.

A little over a hundred years ago Emile Durkheim, one of Sociology's 'founding fathers', posed the central question for sociology as: what are the sources of social solidarity in society? A century later another illustrious French sociologist, Alain Touraine, posed a far more tentative question: can we live together in our increasingly de-centred, culturally diverse and fragmented world? What, he asks, do 'freedom, solidarity and equality ... mean in a social situation in which the centre – the palace of the prince – is empty, and ... the throne room has been invaded by speculators and paparazzi?' (Touraine 2000: 11).

These remain key questions not simply for sociology but for society, and nowhere are the issues of 'freedom, solidarity and equality' more pressing than in South Africa. Following from the discussion above, Stellenbosch University is intriguingly placed as an institution that can, potentially, bring new perspectives on how to work with the discontinuities of our time and, thereby, make an original contribution towards answering these fundamental questions. Building our sociology around a re-imagined settler/creole past and a projected cosmopolitan future could address far more than relationships to place, past and present, significant as these are.

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NOTES

1   TS Eliot, Little Gidding, Four Quartets, 1942.

2   Conference on Land, Memory, Reconstruction and Justice: Perspectives on Land Restitution in South Africa, 13 – 15 September 2006, Houw Hoek Inn, Grabouw. Organised by the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Stellenbosch University; Human Sciences Research Council and Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), University of the Western Cape.

3   For a fuller discussion on this see Walker 2005. For recent analyses of the formal restitution programme, see the papers from the 'Land, Memory, Reconstruction and Justice' conference, available on the PLAAS website at www.plaas.org.za.

4   The restitution programme applies to land that was dispossessed in terms of racially discriminatory laws and practices after the passage of the 1913 Natives Land Act; 95% of claims in the Western Cape are urban, related to the application of the Group Areas Act in the 1960s and 1970s (Walker 2006: 76).

5   Son of Simon van der Stel, after whom Stellenbosch was named, and Dutch East India Company Governor of the Cape from 1699 – 1707.

6   The start of the Later Stone Age is given as around 20 000 years ago.

7   'Settler' has become a term of denigration, but it is interesting to note here the etymology of the word 'denigrate'. It comes from the Latin word denigrare: to blacken. What might happen if we were to be more literal in our interpretation of the 'blackening' of settler identity?