

Dead End Street?

Coming from Europe Barrydale reminds an elderly European person of the quiet villages you could find all around Southern Europe. Landscapes as Provence, Tuscany, Spanish Coasts like Costa Brava, Costa del Sol, Costa de la Luz and their hinterlands where harbours for Europeans trying to escape their restless cold-war societies in the 60ies. They were not all drop-outs, but many have been among them. The southern belt was then not only attracting foreigners as tourists or holiday home-owners, but even modern industries and in some regions wealthier than regions in the former old industrialised regions in middle or northern Europe. To catch a glimpse of the old south's beauty one has today to cruise through large industrial and residential areas to find historical centres surrounded and filled by noise and exhaust of thousands of cars, motorbikes, trucks, buses a.s.o.



There is not a view to the future of Barrydale like above. South Africa is very different not only by the long centuries of colonialism and apartheid policy and not only because it is a piece of Africa not only by population but even by geography and that concerns almost rural regions and their urban centres like all these lovely little towns like Swellendam, Montagu, Ladismith, Heidelberg, Bredasdorp, Bonnievale, Robertson a.s.o.

Related townships where the coloured people were forced in during apartheid times accompany each white centre like other side of a coin. Even with an expanding economy reaching rural pockets this division will remain. Population growth will be despite HIV greater in townships than in related white centres. And there are no new jobs for all these people growing up or losing their jobs on nearby farms. No foreign investors will show up to build factories or call centres.



Except some newcomers most township people are dependent on local whites as builders, gardeners, handymen, truck-drivers, fruit-packers or cowboys. They rarely can show up the little capital needed to become self-employed. This little social problem is hanging like a cloud over the empty streets of Barrydale when the day-work is done and the crowd of weekend shoppers climbed the bakkies to bring their food back to their miserable shacks on the farms or the last shopping-bag found his way up the steep road to Smithville, the perfect township because out of view of white Barrydale hidden behind a mountain carrying Barrydale's water-reserve on top. Look now back to Europe lovely cities like Aix-on-Provence, Avignon, Gerona, Granada or Naples, Sorrento a.s.o you find them surrounded by suburbs. People live packed in tiny appartments in ugly high-risers like anywhere in the world from Hong-Kong, Beijing, Taipei, Moscow, Berlin or St.Paul-Minneapolis. Nevertheless millions try to escape Africa and start a new life in any of these southern European ghettos, which were produced by "normal" policy and are not result of a systematic policy of apartheid.

Ten years after Smithville still shows the legacy of that policy. But how can capitalism solve a social problem which is also a consequent result of capitalist development? Until recently real existing socialism forced European nations to balance social repercussions. Since economies of these nations have to adapt to new conditions on world markets budgets come under stress. There is less to distribute to the poor, disabled or growing numbers of old age people. And it seems this trend will procrastinate endlessly. Somebody has to pay interest on invested capital: market will not pay and only labour can add value. And labour is cheaper and more productive in other emerging economies.

So what people here can do to escape their townships? Move to where they can find work? Where? Where to live than? Another township, insecurity, misery?
This social trap is not typical for Barrydale - it's a condition of life.