

**COLLECTIVE MEMORY, MEDIATED ACTION AND LAND DISPOSSESSION IN THE
EASTERN CAPE**

By

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Abstracts

Land, particularly in post-colonial societies, is marked by a complex interplay of proprietorial and symbolic values. This paper examines the construction of collective memories of land dispossession within a specific rural community in the Eastern Cape province. Against the backdrop of attempts to grapple with the complex political, legal and developmental task of responding to a legacy of legally enshrined land dispossession, this paper examines the manner in which particular constellations of collective memory and collective amnesia come to interface with current day development interventions.

Several of the structuring metaphors of a submerged collective memory within the focal research setting are examined, as is the complex interplay between autobiographical and collective memory. The selectivity of the memorisation process, its hybridity, fragmentation and silences are of particular analytic interest, as are the affordances for action it offers up. Narratives of collective memory are, following Soviet psychology-derived Activity theory, mediating tools for action. This paper seeks to elucidate these by examining the narratives of counter memory, resistance and collective amnesia that often envelop the land question, specifically in the context of rural development interventions. It is finally suggested that this collective amnesia surrounding land dispossession contributes to mismatches and resistance with development initiatives, detracting from their efficacy and poorly serving the imperatives of societal development.

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Introduction

This paper has two distinct but mutually reinforcing objectives. The first is to consider memories of land dispossession within a specific rural Eastern Cape community. Examining constellations of memory enables us to contemplate how the historically sedimented past comes to contour the present, and shape a current day development initiative undertaken within this setting. The second objective is a more general theoretical and methodological endeavour; it is the task of delineating memory as a collective, socially constituted phenomenon. Attainment of this second objective - explicating the social constitution of remembering and forgetting - will facilitate engagement with the first objective, namely examining land dispossession. Therefore with its ambitions simultaneously theoretical and empirical, this paper is structured as follows.

To commence, the complex relationship between history and memory is briefly considered. The heuristic utility of a focus on memory, as well as its fundamentally socially constituted nature is elaborated on. It is argued that the manner in which memory is produced and reproduced within a social context can beneficially be understood in terms of theoretical precepts derived from Activity theory. Activity theory emphasises the collective and artefactually mediated nature of human consciousness and enables us to examine how memory is both forged and forgotten. After briefly describing the research context, this paper draws on Activity theory's methodological insights to recount the dynamics of memory, in relation to land dispossession, on the part of the two dominant groups within the research setting. The memory work of the project facilitators and beneficiaries is discussed as 'counterhegemonic memory' and 'structurally instantiated forgetting', respectively. To conclude, the manner in which these findings point to tensions inherent in the complex political, economic and moral task of development is suggested.

Memory and History

Memory is a burgeoning area of interest across an array of disciplines including history, historical geography, sociology, psychology, folklore, museum and communication studies (Edwards & Middleton, 1990). Memory is a fecund source of inquiry because it is through acts of memory that identity and the continuity of social life are established and maintained. Memory is frequently contested because "the struggle for possession and interpretation of memory is rooted among the conflict and interplay of social, political and cultural interests and values in the present" (Middleton & Edwards 1990, p.3). The charged interrelation between memory and the social realm is evident within contemporary South Africa, where controversies surrounding the ownership and articulation of memory surface in relation to a number of areas. These range from debates around national reconciliation (an endeavour conceivably best exemplified by the TRC's attempts to fill the apartheid era memory void), to new commemorative practices, the management of heritage resources and the compilation of history curricula.

There are striking parallels between the work of memory and the challenge of history: both seek to recall the past in the present. Memory interfaces with the production of historical knowledge in multifarious ways but, in drawing on individual recollections to authenticate documented fact, historians have often concerned themselves with the veracity and accuracy of recollections. Accuracy is here viewed as a function of proximity, in terms of time and space, to the historical phenomena or events in question (Hutton, 1993). David Lowenthal (1990) summarises “Historians and other practitioners of the collective past have traditionally inquired mainly into what may actually have happened, rather than the reasons for imagining or pretending that things were otherwise” (p.134).

Memory may profitably be subject to further scrutiny. Understandings of memory can be conceptualised on a spectrum, ranging from individual at one extreme, to social and collective at the other. At the individual pole memory, involving individual perception and recall, is the traditional concern of psychology. At the opposite pole, memory is viewed in more expansive social and collective terms. Embodied in culturally located narratives and myth, memory is here a matter of anthropological or linguistic interest (Thelen, 1990). While history has conventionally straddled the space between these two poles, it has frequently been concerned with socially located memory or ‘mentalities’ at the expense of individual memory - perhaps reflecting history’s cumbersome relationship to questions of subjectivity.

It is here suggested that disciplinary proclivities towards factual authentication and verification, plus a relative inattentiveness to the microdynamics of individual memory, have even permeated attempts to reformulate memory at the core of historiography, in the form of oral history.

Oral historiography emerged in the post war period and sought to draw on the eyewitness testimony of those otherwise marginalized and ‘hidden from history’, in order to fill the elisions of official recorded histories (Tonkin, 1992). Notwithstanding its utility, oral history has arguably never entirely transcend earlier concerns about the reliability and representativeness of individual eyewitness testimony. Frequently reifying spoken narratives to produce textual ‘records’ or ‘spoken documents’, oral history has remaining largely confined to traditional historiographical issues and perspectives and is often relative heedless of the microdynamics of individual recollection and subjectivity (Hutton, 1993). Minkley and Rassool, (1997), for instance describe South African oral historians ready collapse of oral accounts into historical realist narratives, thereby bringing together “modernist appropriations of oral discourses with nationalist and culturalist teleologies of resistance to generate a grand narrative of experience read as ‘history from below’” (p.94).

Taking memory as its central concern in seeking to understand the relationship between the remembered past and action in the present, this inquiry appropriates memory as praxis. However “looking at memory

as praxis rather than text requires us to shy away from creating typologies of memory in favor of specifying the place of memory in creating the possibilities for histories and subjectivities” (Frazier, 1999 p. 116). In this focus on subjectivity and action in the present, memory in neither an autobiographical (cf. Kuhn, 1995) nor traditional oral history sense will be drawn on. Instead this research examines the embeddedness of memory in the social realm, by developing the (ostensibly paradoxical) proposition that the workings of individual memory can best be understood as inextricably socially constituted, and bound up with activity. It is argued that this emphasis on a decisively social form of memory work offers the promise of going beyond the notion of memory encapsulated in modernist historiography and confers a powerful modality to strike a theoretical rapprochement between memory and understandings of the historical past.

Working with a notion of the social constitution of memory turns the focus to how historical truth is constituted. Thelen (1990) elaborates on this agenda, “In a study of memory the important question is not how accurately a recollection fitted some piece of a past reality, but why historical actors constructed their memories in a particular way at a particular time” (p. xv). Hence the analytic focus is not on illocutions dredged from the memories of individual research participants, but rather on recollection as a form of activity, an act of performance. Adjudicating the accuracy and veracity of respondent’s recollections is avoided; the question is less one of what memories exist (and what is their verisimilitude to documented history) and more one of, how do these recollections work and what functions do they serve in the present? This general approach to the past can be understood as broadly contiguous with late twentieth century challenges to the historicism enshrined in modern historiography. While modernist history was animated by the objective of resurrecting memories and ‘mentalities’ of the past and recontextualising them in the present, much contemporary work is far more modest in its ambitions and reflexive concerning the exercise of power. These historiographic tendencies are evident in contemporaneous interest in the politics of historical representation and the history of commemorative practices (cf. Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Lowenthal, 1985; Marling & Wetenhall, 1991).

Remembering Social Memory

The social memory focus embraced in this inquiry views memory as linked to the practices by which members of a social group remember. It furthermore attends to the motives, biases, moods and audiences of those from whom recollections are elicited. The notion of the social or collective nature of memory is by no means novel, it was prefigured in early work by Bartlett (1932/1967) and Halbwachs (1951/1980). Social or collective memory can briefly explicated in terms of the following four theses. Firstly, an individual’s memory is inextricably bound up with the collective memory of the surrounding community of recollection. Memory is hence located in a social context and cannot simply be understood as a storehouse of individual experience: “Every collective memory...requires the support of a group delimited

in space and time” (Halbwachs, 1980 p. 48). This view challenges the dominant notion of memory as inviolably intrapsychic and located in the head of the individual Cartesian subject. Secondly, memory is dynamic and mutable rather than static. What is remembered is both subject to revision and very often contingent to the quotidian social demands of the present. Thirdly, memory is dialectically linked to its antithesis - forgetting or amnesia. The condensation inherent in memory requires material be selectively remembered and retrieved, consequently “every act of recall entails an act of oblivion” (Crew, 1999 p. 75). Fourth and finally, memory is bound up with questions of subjectivity and identity, both communal and individual. Memory therefore shapes how the individual remembering subject, and groups of subjects, come to understand themselves. Memory bestows identity, security, authority and legitimacy on its holders (Thelen, 1990).

It is here argued that advancing this notion of social memory, which extends beyond the idea of memory *evoked* in a social context to memory as *constituted* in a social context, confers two significant heuristic gains. It firstly facilitates delineation of the relationship between particular constellations of memory and activities, since memory is both subject to and constitutive of particular activities. It secondly enables contemplation of memory and its absence (or failure) - in the form of forgetting. In what follows Activity theory will be introduced in order to understand the fundamentally socially constituted character of memory to, in turn, facilitate analysis of the microdynamics of memory and amnesia surrounding land dispossession.

Social Memory as Activity

Activity theory is neither a self contained nor specific theory of memory; instead it explicates the social constitution of consciousness, cognition and subjectivity more generally. Deriving from the Soviet socio-historical or cultural-historical school of psychology pioneered in the early decades of the twentieth century Activity theory is associated with the work of Luria, Leontiev and, perhaps best known, Vygotsky (Kozulin, 1986). Seeking to reformulate psychology on a materialistic basis these theorists took socially meaningful activity as the explanatory nexus of human behaviour. Vygotsky, for instance, focused his analytic lens on ‘object-orientated action mediated by cultural tools and signs’ (1978, 40) rather than tautologically examining consciousness in order to theorise consciousness. Examining the interface between individual and world, a focus on activity enabled these theorists to steer a middle course between a Pavlovian ‘reflexological’ (or behaviouristic) psychology on one hand and a introspective, mentalistic continental tradition on the other (Kozulin, 1986). These traditions represent two halves of the same duality; the former examines behaviour without mind, the latter mind without behaviour. Therefore, poised between an empirical endeavour and cultural-hermeneutic enterprise, Activity theory serves to transcend the individual-social antinomy that continues to bedevil the human sciences to this day (Shotter, 1989).

Activity theorists focus on mediation through culturally located tools and signs saw them accord great importance to the notion of historicity and therefore ‘genetic’ (viz. ‘origins’) analysis because “any psychological phenomenon emerges from interaction of processes occurring in all the [temporal] levels of human life system: phylogeny, cultural history, ontogeny, and microgenesis” (Cole 1995, pp. 191-192). Activity theory requires practice be located transtemporally because social settings are not discretely circumscribed but rather “laminated, overlapped, and interwoven social phenomena that occur in the moment and across time and space” (Gutierrez & Stone 1999, p. 151). The dynamic, socially constituted nature of all human mental life, including memory, can be explicated in terms of three concepts. The first is the basic distinction between higher and lower mental functions, the second is the centrality of semiotic mediation to all mental life and the third is the manner in which action and activities are enacted within institutional contexts. These theoretical postulates will be discussed under the three headings that follow.

Memory has its origins in higher mental functions

Vygotsky made an important distinction between the higher and lower (or elementary) mental functions. Elementary functions include non-verbal behaviour, involuntary memory, and the basic perceptual processes, all of which are present at birth. Elementary or natural memory is mechanistic, instinctual and pre-semiotic. It is evoked by external stimuli in a direct and unmediated way. The higher mental functions including intelligible speech, logical thought, voluntary memory, attention and volition develop through the child’s embeddedness in a social context that is constitutive of consciousness. Higher mental functions, including memory, are mediated by signs that are in turn socio-culturally embedded and transmitted. Furthermore as higher mental forms of memory are voluntary and logical “it is not that the mind is just prompted to ‘go and get’ an image by some encounter with the present: rather, the past is deliberately recalled for a determined reason” (Bakhurst, 1990 pp.219-210). The developing human subject’s expansion of consciousness sees elementary functions evolve into qualitatively different higher mental functions.

Memory is shaped by semiotic mediation

The notion of semiotic mediation is axiomatic to Activity theory. Semiotic mediation refers to the manner in which mental life is mediated by systems of symbolic representation, including various numerical, language and mnemonic systems. Signs are psychological tools in a manner analogous to physical tools: they enable the human subject to go beyond their individual capacity and act on the environment. Vygotsky elaborated on the recursivity of this process “The very essence of human memory is that human beings actively remember with the help of signs. It is a general truth that the special character of human behavior is that human beings actively manipulate their relation to the environment, and through the environment they change their own behavior, subjugating it to their control” (Vygotsky, 1978 p.51). Memory does therefore not represent the natural unfolding of an innate capacity for remembering; it is

heavily dependent on the sign systems that are taken in (or ‘internalised’) in the course of development. It is important to note that this process of internalisation is not the transferral of an external activity on to a pre-existing internal plane of consciousness, it is the process by which consciousness is formed (Shotter, 1989). The upshot of the above is that memory is mediated by semiotic systems and organised through socially located symbolic resources. As memory is inextricably socially constituted there is no capacity for memory outside of systems of mediation. Cultural artefacts such as language come to mediate even the apparently internal act of remembering. Russian existential philologist Mikhail Bakhtin notes of the supreme mediational artefact that is language, “No speaker is, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe” (1981 p. 67).

Various physically enacted practices and concrete material artefacts support the process of semiotic mediation. These artefacts range from the relatively uncomplicated, the knotted handkerchief or string tied around a finger, to the more complex, written texts or mathematical formulae inscribed on paper or disseminated via electronic media. The act of memory however requires “more than sensitivity to the instrumental use of cultural artefacts: it requires the ability to engage in the specific practice, social in origin, of the production and interpretation of narrative forms constructed in that most powerful of socially forged symbol systems, natural language” (Bakhurst, 1990 p.212). Myths, narratives and metaphors are powerful modalities for assimilating and ordering material to be remembered. Indeed, the Activity theoretic focus on semiotic mediation comes to elide the distinction between memory and the practice of history. Y. Engeström, Brown, R. Engeström, Koistinen (1990), discuss activities concerned with the preservation and retrieval of the past and suggest, “These may be coined as activities of remembering - the singing of tales, the keeping of records of various kinds, the writing of history, the running of libraries. This list indicates our dissatisfaction with the opposition between collective memory and history...From our point of view, history writing differs from the singing of tales in the complexity of the mediating means but not in any fundamentally oppositional way” (pp.140-141).

Memory occurs in institutional contexts

The activity of memory usually takes place within larger organisational or institutional contexts. Describing collectivity and object-orientatedness as fundamental characteristics of human behaviour, Leontiev sketched out a useful distinction between activity and actions. This distinction can helpfully be illustrated by his example of the ‘primitive hunt’ (Leontiev, 1978). The overarching object of the activity are the hunted animals, which will provide food and hides for the hunters. Within the hypothetical hunting party a single individual might be tasked with driving the animals toward the hunters. Viewed narrowly, this individual *action* of frightening a herd of animals appears pointless, if not counterproductive. Yet conceptualised as a broader, collective object-orientated *activity* it comes intelligibly into focus. Hence actions are bounded, often individual, finite and regular acts; activities are larger, temporally enduring and often institutionally embedded aggregations of actions. Y. Engeström

(1999) incisively notes, “in complex activities with fragmented division of labor, the participants themselves have great difficulties in constructing a connection between the goals of their individual actions and the object and motive of collective activity” (p.173).

The Research Context

The Activity theoretical approach delineated above was applied to a small set of empirical materials collected as part of a larger study conducted within a rural development project located in a former homeland area of the Eastern Cape. The data set comprised of researcher fieldnotes, archival materials from the project and a series of interviews conducted (in English and Xhosa) with various roleplayers.

The geographical area of the project historically saw intermittent armed conflict between settlers of European origin and the indigenous populace. Part of a volatile frontier between the expanding British Cape Colony and various Xhosa speaking peoples, nineteenth century colonial conquest made way for legally enshrined land dispossession. This resulted in the proletarianization and de-agrarianization of the rural peasantry and the rise of migratory labour practices (Bundy, 1979). The twentieth century was marked by various betterment initiatives that sought to ostensibly rationalise inefficient ‘native agriculture’ (cf. Beinart, 1982) and demarcate land use zones, but far more notably, curb population migration into urban areas. Betterment was seldom universally embraced by its recipients and has provoked some of the most violent and significant incidents of rural resistance in South African history (Ferguson, 1990). Betterment initiatives are within living memory of many of the research participants within the focal research setting, and their narratives of land dispossession referred explicitly to it.

The focal research area acquired new prominence as one of the envisaged bantustans or homelands with the increased codification and institutionalisation of racial segregation after the National Party’s 1948 ascendancy to power. In common with many of these areas, attempts at improving ‘native agriculture’ waned as the bantustans increasingly assumed their role as dumping grounds for displaced Black South Africans. The final and most readily recollected wave of land dispossession within the focal research setting came with the consolidation of the homeland state in the late 1970s. Portions of communal land, adjacent to a local educational institution, were transferred to the institution. This is currently the source of a land restitution claim lodged with the Regional Land Claims Commission (RLCC). As yet unprocessed, a respondent in the RLCC indicated that the success of the claimants is far from assured as some of the land in question is claimed by other groups, and there is uncertainty over whether compensation was paid. Other portions of land, such as that on which the agricultural project is run, are held by local residents in the form of quitrent.

These larger historical forces inextricably shape the temporal present. Relatively close to the nearest small town the small cluster of villages in which this research was conducted are relatively under serviced. Apart from being electrified, the area has unpaved roads, inadequate sanitation facilities and very few communal taps. Management of communal ranges is poor and, in common with much of rural South Africa, communal tenure systems have not successfully competed with commercial agriculture. The majority of the impoverished local population therefore does not have access to productive agricultural resources and have come to rely on a range of activities other than agriculture for their economic livelihood. These include migratory labour practices, remittances from urban relatives, various state social welfare grants, erratic informal trading and (for a very small number) employment in the civil service.

It is in this context that the current day participatory rural development project was initiated. With a firm agricultural focus it consists of a number of sub-projects including irrigated vegetable plots and animal husbandry. The project is constituted as an agricultural co-op and funded by a foreign funder. There is a distinct lack of youth involvement in the project; approximately thirty relatively elderly individuals are members of the co-op. After two years of preparatory work the project has become agriculturally productive, yet its success have been rather modest. Furthermore, the project continues to face a number of formidable challenges including tenurial insecurity, a lack of capital, unfavourable climatic conditions and low levels of community conflict and resistance. It is perhaps for some of these reasons that the community's engagement with the project has been rather measured. Yet it is argued that the specific focal project is not peculiar in any of these respects, in fact many of the dynamics and tensions inherent in development are writ large on this context. It therefore provides a useful setting in which to examine the microdynamics of memory and activity in development.

The rural subalterns' counterhegemonic memory

The first memories of land and land dispossession examined are those of the project beneficiaries. Key research participants, many of whom are relatively elderly, serve as important repositories of communal memory. They narrated the various waves of dispossession the community had undergone, ranging from nineteenth century colonial dispossession to the losses attendant to the consolidation of the former homeland state. Their memory work is here dubbed as counterhegemonic, as it is formulated in opposition to what might be characterised as forms of dominant or official memory and amnesia. This official memory is hegemonic because through its reticence and silencing it serves to de-emphasise the dispossession historically experienced by the community.

Members of the focal community described the land in a variety of ways. One of the most striking and frequently recounted narratives was that of a lost idyllic pastoral existence, a narrative punctuated by assertions of the beauty and productive capacity of the land. In these illocutions the plenitude of the land's bounty and vivid descriptions of the 'fat cattle' rhetorically serve to underscore the magnitude of

the community's current day loss. A slightly less idyllic trope, but one that accentuates the notion of productive capacity of the lost land and the efficiency with which it was previously cultivated, was the metaphor of the 'land as factory'. These illocutions can be juxtaposed with a third variety, descriptions of the forfeited land that go beyond its proprietorial or instrumental value, wherein the land is described as a source of humanness and repository of ontological connectedness. As a respondent enunciated, "Land is the main source of the human beingness", and elsewhere "Land is a very important thing, you can't stay in the sky, you can't do anything in the sky you do everything on land".

At this point it is useful to reiterate that the question of the pragmatic validity of these illocutions is of less concern than the manner in which they function as acts of semantic mediated mnemonic performance. While the above narratives are important means of mnemonic mediation, marked by impulses toward 'mythicisation' noted by oral historians (Kuhn, 1995), the discursive realm is only one arena of activity. These utterances need to be contextualised against physically enacted tactics of resistance within the focal community. This resistance varies from the relatively tacit, the intractably low levels of (and demographically skewed) 'community participation' within the project, to overt acts such as the cutting of fences and illicit grazing of cattle on the disputed land. Hence verbalised recollections concerning the lost land need to be seen as part of a larger constellation of activity. This is explored in what follows as a number of additional points are made with regards to counterhegemonic memories.

The firstly is the fundamentally performative nature of these illocutions of land dispossession. They are part of a contextual 'moral economy' evoked, wherein narratives of land dispossession buttress present day claims for reparation and resources. Scott (1985) examining a Malaysian development context similarly noted the selectivity of the local peasant's recollections: an idealised village and village economy were recalled while less desirable features of the past, which did not serve to support arguments in the present, were ignored. Within the focal research setting both project beneficiaries and facilitators disavow the notion that the development intervention serves as *quid pro quo* for land historically seceded to the facilitators' institution, but there is evidence to suggest this is the case. For instance, a community member described how the present day development initiative polarised the community, 'This project divided the people of the villages, the others they say no, we sell out the land... but we take the project in the rightfully way [i.e. in good faith]'. Elsewhere a facilitating fieldworker reflects on the tacit and opaque manner in which the claims are articulated:

Fieldworker: [referring to the community land claims] 'They [the community] don't say it clearly.'

Researcher 'Well how do they say it?'

Fieldwork 'They say "the [institution] must have an impact on our lives"'

The disguised counterhegemonic memories within the research setting recall Foucault's (1977) notion of countermemory, the discursive practices whereby resistant historical memory works through "substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and strategic reversals" (Foucault, 1977 p.151).

Therefore in faintly articulated claims for reparation, the legacy of land dispossession in this area continue to palpably shape the present.

The second noteworthy feature of these recollections is their degree of variability. Variability is evident both within and between remembering subjects, for example a single speaker might assert the instrumental value of the land, only to later declare its fundamentally unquantifiable qualities and intangible ontological significance. A further example of variability and discursive contradiction were repeated references to giving the land to ‘future generations’, descriptions of the ‘young men used to plough’, or the need to draw the youth into the project. These stated intentions are undercut by the dearth of youth involvement in the project (or any discernable agricultural activities in the area), because the realities of deagrarianization and urbanisation are most evident among younger members of the community. Yet “Variability does not have to be viewed as revealing mere methodological problems of how to establish the facticity of any person’s accounts. It can become a resource for revealing the relationship between what people remember and the ideological dilemmas of their past and present socio-economic and political circumstances” (Middleton and Edwards, 1990 p.3). Therefore this assertion of youth interest in agriculture and reclaiming the land in the name of the absent (and even seemingly uninterested) youth is a rhetorical strategy for recompense - underscoring the manner in which recollections of the past are tailored to the exigencies of the present.

Acts of remembrance are heavily influenced by various mediational artefacts. An important mediating artefact within the focal research setting was the land itself. Recollections of land dispossession were narrated during walks on the periphery of the lost land or from a hill overlooking it. Memory is frequently incarnated in space and landscape (Schama, 1995). Halbwachs (1980) considered precisely this, the intimate relationship between memory and topography. Cataloguing the Christian West’s shifting sacred geographies of Palestine through the ages, he noted how distance from a particular geographical context was inclined to make historical recollections more mutable.

Land was not the sole mediating artefact. Despite its strong oral form, research participant’s memory work also drew on official documentation such as old quitrent leases and official correspondence from the now defunct homeland state. These textual artefacts were without exception carefully kept for, as a generation of *dompas* (pass book) carriers learnt, losing official documents can have dire consequences indeed. However prudence does not entirely explain the almost talismanic quality that accrued to these items. Even tangentially related artefacts, such as a letter indicating that the relatives of a community member detained by the homeland state police could bring various specified items of clothing to him in prison (but only ‘short pants’) are important commemorative tools. These artefacts served to reanimate explanations and narratives of the past. An experienced rural researcher relates how, not infrequently, the rural underclass volunteer official correspondence which decrees its holders to have not paid up rent or

taxes, or informing them of the termination of their tenure - documentation which detracts from their argument for tenurial security! (Kingwill, 2002 personal communication). These documents are clearly interpreted contrary to their original authorial intentions, for as de Certeau (1984) reminds us, the mere existence of a representation (or mediating artefact) tells us little of the use its holders make of it.

To conclude this section, it was suggested that community members' verbalised recollections were marked by performativity, polyphonic variability and drew on various mediating artefacts. Furthermore their recollections of land dispossession simultaneously buttress and are preserved in acts of resistance within the focal research setting. Their recollections are in sum counterhegemonic and serve to resist closure or acquiescence on the land dispossession historically experienced by the community. These countermemories do their work by claiming reparation, resources and an ongoing vigilance against acquiescence or uncritical reconciliation over the lost land. For as Mamdani (1996), writing in a slightly different memory context (that of the TRC) argues, reconciliation and the homogenized political subjectivity it creates, forged in the absence of justice and recompense is perilous.

The facilitators' structurally instantiated forgetting

Viewed through the lens of memory, one of the most conspicuous features of the focal research setting is the manner in which community members' memories of land dispossession are met by the silence of the project facilitators. In what follows the facilitators' collective amnesia concerning the areas legacy of land dispossession is discussed. It will be suggested that this forgetting can be understood in terms of the workings of institutional memory, and conversely, forgetting.

The project facilitators essentially lose sight of the beneficiaries land dispossession so the beneficiaries' recollections go unacknowledged. Y. Engeström et al. (1990), examine memory within organisational contexts and make a useful distinction between primary and secondary memory. Primary memory refers to the acts of preserving and retrieving of knowledge derived from, and pertaining to, the completing of day-to-day tasks. Within the focal research setting these would be recollections of what has been done with regards to the pragmatic acts of social facilitation and crop cultivation. Secondary memory is memory of an alternative sort. It is memory of the history of past practice and of the kind of organisation that existed in the past. Within the focal research setting secondary memory is both the institutional lore pertaining to the historic character of the institution, as well as recollections of how the broad activities of agricultural extension and participatory rural development were conducted in the past. Primary and secondary memory are therefore alternately concerned with past practice, and the history of past practice.

The centrality of artefact use in acts of remembering has already been suggested, so to was the notion that even the internal, seemingly individual, act of remembering is mediated by the supreme cultural artefact of language. External acts of remembering are aided by various systems of representation and the practice

of writing, which enables language to be codified in written texts, maps and cropping calendars etc. Y. Engeström et al. (1990) note, “although the actions of remembering are performed individually or occasionally in pairs or small groups, the external artefacts of memory are truly collective” (p.143). These external systems of remembering have both a signal and message aspect. With simple external artefacts, such as a ringing alarm clock or ballpoint pen mark scrawled on one’s hand, the signal aspect prompts the requisite (‘internal’) act of remembering. In more complex acts of recollection such as consulting a written record, conferring with a colleague or consciously remembering how a task was completed in the past, the semantic aspect predominates and the signal dimension wanes (Y. Engeström et al., 1990). In an organisational context acts of remembering therefore entail an oscillation between using documents and creating mental images, between recalling prior actions and recalling the history of prior action more expansively. Forgetting represents a breach or rupture in the movement between either of these two poles.

One common type of forgetting in organisational contexts would be the failure to maintain or access appropriate repositories of institutional memory, through neglecting to consult a written record or access the recollections of long serving or strategically positioned functionaries. There is limited evidence of this disconnection between the various facilitators and practice in the focal research setting. However it is the other sort of organisational forgetting which is of particular analytic interest here. This occurs when individuals fail to establish the connection between their primary actions (facilitating a project as part of their role in an institution) and secondary actions (reconstructing the institution's history of prior practice in the context). Organisational forgetting - recalling Leontiev’s distinction between action and activity - results from the facilitator’s failure to establish the continuity between their actions and the larger, overarching trajectory of activity. Within the focal research setting the facilitators fail to access the artefacts of remembering pertaining to land dispossession because they do not know or believe these to be pertinent. The project facilitators have little sense of their institution’s historically inscribed implicature in the dispossession suffered by the project beneficiaries. Hence community claims for recompense go unacknowledged and the project is viewed as a narrow technical intervention rather than an undertaking with political and moral dimensions. This can, partially, be ascribed to the loss of continuity that accompanied several cycles of organisational changes in the facilitators’ institution. But, as will be suggested in the following section, it also points to larger tensions that inhere in the complex task of development.

Activity theory therefore encourages a reconceptualisation of the phenomenon of forgetting. Within the dominant cognitivist model of memory forgetting is the failure of the technical encoding or retrieval of information, inside the head of the remembering subject. From an Activity theoretical perspective, forgetting is a rupture in the dynamic interplay between primary and secondary, internal and external memory work. Hence organisational forgetting is a product of structurally instantiated patterns of organisational communication and action. Forgetting in an organisational context is thus not an absence

or lacunae, it is an act of production and marker of what is organisationally privileged and, more pertinently, de-privileged.

Social Memory and Development

It has been suggested how the two dominant groups of roleplayers within the focal research setting draw on different technologies and teleologies of remembering. Examining the microdynamics of social memory within this setting the manner in which community members' counterhegemonic recollections of land dispossession are met by the mute silence of the project facilitators was discussed. The facilitators are, through their institutionally inscribed roles, unreflexive to the complex ways in which the historical past patterns the present. Notwithstanding its highly literate milieu, complete with the technical infrastructure of archives and computers, the institution ironically forgets. This forgetting is met by variegated and subversive oral articulations of counterhegemonic memory by the project beneficiaries, much to the detriment of the ensuring joint activity.

Two specific tensions surrounding social development are here briefly discussed. It is argued that these tensions are not peculiar to the focal research setting, but rather represent historically inscribed contradictions in development *per se*. The first tension concerns the contradictory object of 'development', within the focal research setting. Mismatches and contradictions flow from the turbidity surrounding the object of this activity, because it is unclear as to whether the intervention is a nascent commercial agriculture or, alternatively, an income generation and food security project. These contradictory impulses often inhere in development, and indeed can be discerned in the larger South African macroeconomic policy environment.

The facilitator's amnesic silence with regards to the beneficiaries' dispossession points to the second overarching tension inherent in the larger task of social development. Within the focal research setting the activity of development is acted towards as an ahistorical activity, free of any valuational dimensions. This renders the facilitators mute to the beneficiaries' monological moral claims against their institution. Admittedly it is difficult (and beyond the scope of this paper) to suggest how these claims should be engaged with, but the absence of dialogue around them is distinctly undesirable. The impulse to treat development as value free technical enterprise (perhaps with rhetorical concession to 'participation') is discernable in many development interventions and sees development depoliticised and desocialised. Ferguson (1990) in his Foucaultian analysis of development in Lesotho describes how development leads to outcomes unintended by its proponents, most notably the expansion of depoliticised bureaucratic state power. In analysing the 'failure' of development he approvingly draws on Foucault's genealogy of the prison, where: "For a century and a half, the prison has always been offered its own remedy: the reactivation of the penitentiary techniques as the only means of overcoming their perpetual failure; the

realization of the corrective project as the only method of overcoming the impossibility of implementing it' (Foucault cited in Ferguson, 1990 p. 285). So tenacious, and often instrumentally focused, is the concept of development that its sporadic failure serves only to further reactivate and reanimate it.

Conclusion

Predicated on the notion of memory as socially constituted, this research examined the relationship between recollections of the past and activity in the present. If practitioners of the collective past are often incurious about subjectivity, psychology is commonly inattentive to historicity and the transtemporal aspects of human activity. To the mutual detriment of each. Attempting to reconcile these two sets of disciplinary approaches, this inquiry explored the legacy of land dispossession in a specific area of the rural Eastern Cape. This inquiry furthermore showed how memory is bound up with issues of power in the present. For as Kundera (1983) notes of attempts to defy hegemonic official memories in the former Czechoslovakia, "The struggle of memory against forgetting is the struggle of man against power" (p.3).

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