

Dispossessing the Dispossessed? Mining and Rural Struggles in Mokopane, Limpopo

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About MARTISA

Mining and Rural Transformation in Southern Africa (MARTISA) is a comparative research project established by the Society Work and Development Institute (SWOP) under the leadership to investigate the impact of new mining activity on evolving forms and relations of communal land, traditional authority and local community in mineral-rich rural areas of Southern Africa. In particular, it seeks to establish and explore the interconnections between broader changes in the regional political economy of extraction, and the historic trajectories, patterns of differentiation and modes of contestation of these localised configurations of rural property and power. MARTISA is thus concerned with the making and unmaking of rural social orders as mining capital expands out of its historic heartlands into the former homeland and labour-sending areas, which increasingly constitute the region's mineral-commodity frontiers and hence some of its most intensive sites of rural transformation and struggle.

As well as aiming to generate high quality research in its own right, MARTISA seeks to advance a pro-poor agenda by supporting local human-rights NGOs and community-based organisations active in these areas, and by building collaborative links with academic researchers and civil society organisations elsewhere in the Global South.

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Introduction

Between the scattered villages of Mokopane stand the mountains of mine dumps - evidence of a landscape significantly altered as a result of the operations of Amplats's Mogalakwena Mine and the fast-developing Ivanhoe Platreef Project. This scene of clusters of

village homesteads straggling the edges of the mine dumps mirrors the struggle over land between the mine and the village residents. This study investigates the impacts of Anglo American Platinum's (Amplats) Mogalakwena mine and Ivanhoe's Platreef mining project in rural communities near Mokopane, in Limpopo province, South Africa.

Map of the study area

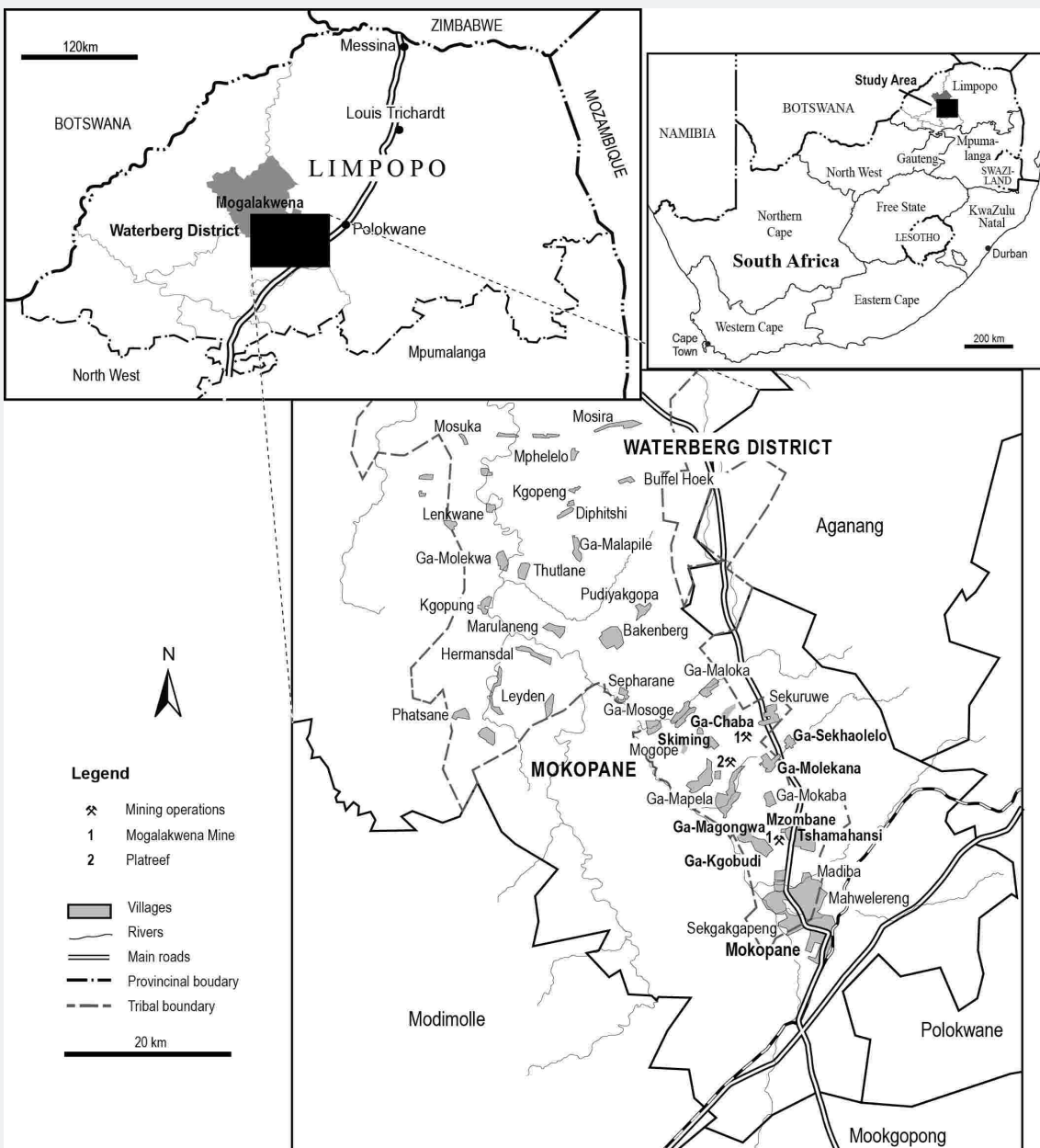




Plate 1: Homesteads and mine dumps in Mokopane (Popopo Mohlala 2015)

Over the past two decades the world's leading platinum producers, like Anglo American Platinum Limited (Amplats), Impala Platinum Holdings Limited (Implats) and Lonmin Plc (Lonmin), have rapidly expanded their operations in rural South Africa. This growth followed major increases in the platinum price, beginning in the late 1990s, and was intended to take advantage of South Africa's unique geological endowment: the massive, ore-bearing rock formation called the Bushveld Complex (BC) which accounts for over 80% of the world's known platinum group metals (PGMs)¹ reserves. Communal land in South Africa's densely populated former 'homeland'² areas has increasingly become the focus of platinum mining expansion. The platinum-rich BC, often referred to as 'the platinum belt', spreads beneath a vast swathe of rural land which falls under the political jurisdiction of several traditional - 'tribal' - authorities, particularly in the North West and Limpopo provinces. Extreme poverty, high unemployment, poor education standards, and a lack of basic services are among the legacies ravaging these tribal authority areas which fell within the Bophuthatswana and Lebowa Bantustans during apartheid (Mnwana and Capps 2015).

The town of Mokopane (former Potgietersrus) is one of the fastest growing towns in Limpopo province, thanks mainly to the rapid expansion of platinum mining operations in the area. Mokopane and its surrounding

rural areas fall under the political jurisdiction of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality.

The communal area north of Mokopane, a hodgepodge of small village clusters, mine dumps and a few patches of ploughing and animal grazing fields is governed by the Langa-Mapela (henceforth Mapela) and Kekana (Valtyn) traditional authorities. The Mapela traditional authority area is under Kgoshi (Chief) K.D. Langa while the Kekana area is under Kgoshi L.V. Kekana. There are more than 40 villages in Mapela while Kekana consists of 19 villages of different sizes. Each village is under a ntona (headman/headwoman) who reports to the Kgoshi. The traditional councils in both communities are constituted in terms of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Frameworks Act of 2003 (Act 41 of 2003, or the TLGFA). As we shall see later in this chapter, many residents in Mokopane have diverse histories and distinct ethnic origins. However, Sepedi is the dominant language.

Fieldwork took place between March and November 2015 in eight villages near the town of Mokopane in Limpopo. Four of the selected villages (Ga-Sekhaolelo, Ga-Molekana, Ga-Chaba and Skimming) fall under the jurisdiction of the Langa Mapela Traditional Authority, while the remaining four (Tshamahansi, Ga-Magongoa, Mzombane and Ga-Kgobudi [a section in Mosesetjane]) fall under the Kekana Traditional Authority. Selection

of villages in the study area was mainly determined by two factors: i) Proximity to mining operations: we selected villages that were located very close to mining operations, because such villages are likely to experience the impacts of mining more than villages located further from mining activities. ii) Relocations: we also selected villages that had been relocated from their land as a result of mining expansion in order to investigate post-relocation experiences, particularly the impacts of relocations on livelihoods, access to farming and grazing land and cultural rights of the relocated families.

The following methods were used to explore the research questions of this study:

- A small-scale survey: To investigate the multiple and differentiated forms of livelihood in Mapela villages. For this survey, 10 households were selected from each of the eight villages included in this research. In total, the survey research covered 80 households. Overall, the findings of the survey were corroborated with other data gathering methods. This was a way of ensuring that the survey findings can be crosschecked and are robust.
- Life histories: Six to seven detailed life histories were collected with randomly selected heads of households in each village. The selected informants were gender mixed, to allow both male and female household heads to participate in the study.
- Organisational and institutional interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with a number of key informants who are attached to various local organisations and institutions. The selection of this category of respondents was purposive. These informants included traditional leaders, leaders of community-based-organisations and local government officials.
- Focus group discussions (FGDs): Two FGDs were conducted with purposively selected elders and groups of youth in each village. The FGDs were composed of not more than ten participants (both male and female).
- Archival research: Archival research was conducted at the National Archives in Pretoria and Wits Historical Papers, which contain files relating to the creation of tribal authorities, the histories of various farms, and agriculture practiced by African households in the region.
- Deeds Research: Research was conducted at the deeds office in Pretoria to determine historical

changes in ownership and servitudes on the farms in the study area.

In this report we detail our main findings primarily focusing on the emerging forms of mining-led dispossession, loss of access to and control over land and landed resources, loss of livelihoods, change in food security and interfamilial conflict that processes of resettlement have caused. We foreground these findings with a history of the area in order to provide a deeper understanding of how these rural societies were created, their vulnerabilities and deeply rooted grievances. We show how the colonial and apartheid processes of African land dispossession and state custodianship over African property rights allowed for the ultimate control of mining capital over mineral rights. Thus, the communities living on the land have had no direct benefit from local mining operations, in contrast to other groups such as the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela and Bafokeng Traditional Authorities, which in the past received royalties from the exploitation of mineral resources within their territories and have now converted these into direct equity stakes in the mines (Mnwana and Capps, 2015).

One of our key findings is that communities have had similar experiences with regard to dispossession and resettlement, and have similar grievances, despite the fact that the expansion of the Mogalakwena mine and Ivanplats mine, in Mapela and Kekana areas respectively, have taken place at different times. While the mining companies insist that they have followed due processes of consultation and provided appropriate compensation to relocated households, our research has shown that community members feel otherwise. In this paper we unpack the roots of their grievances so that they can be properly understood, rather than dismissed as coming from a “particular ideological standpoint which advocates providing communities and, seemingly, individual households, with the ability to block the development of natural resources belonging to the State and which generate significant economic benefits for the nation as well as new economic and social opportunities for local people” - as Amplats (2008,4) put it in relation to a critical NGO report on its Mogalakwena and other Limpopo operations (Action Aid, 2008). Our contention is not that the development of resources should be blocked to protect these communities. The mining sector continues to be of strategic importance to South Africa’s national economy. The key question, however, remains whether development of the sector, and especially the fairly

recent expansion of Platinum mining into the former homelands, can transcend the adverse legacy of mining and land dispossession in South Africa and proceed on a more equitable and less exploitative terms. While we do not claim to provide the answers in this report, we highlight the many complex factors that such a policy would need to take into account, and which are all too frequently overlooked or misunderstood.

The discussion in this report is divided into three main chapters. In Chapter Two we foreground the findings on contemporary struggles by providing a deeper history of dispossession in the study area. Chapter Three demonstrates how mining expansion has intensified the historical challenges confronting rural livelihoods in Mokopane. In Chapter Four we discuss the emerging forms of land dispossession and modalities of resistance that continue to unfold as a result of rural-based mining expansion in the study area. Based on these findings, we summarise key conclusions in Chapter Five.

A History of Dispossession

In this chapter we look at the creation of the Mapela and Kekana ‘tribal’ communities, which are presently experiencing loss of land or resettlement due to the expansion of local mines. These present-day events should be understood within a deeper history of dispossession. This chapter addresses three strands which we hope to pull through later chapters. First, we look at a history of dispossession of land from Africans in the area. This not only involved an overall loss of land for Africans as a whole as the government failed to recognise pre-existing customary rights to land, but also involved the systematic curtailment of African’s ability to plough as much land as they wanted, where they wanted, even when plots had been held by a family for a long time. It also involved the closing down of opportunities for progressive African farmers who wanted to farm on a commercial scale and hold land independently, away from chiefly control. We show how a limited number of powerful tribal authorities were created out of a far more politically and ethnically complex region. Chiefs came to be seen as the true and rightful representatives of Africans, even though the families being incorporated into Traditional Authority areas may have started off with very different political loyalties and a sense of identity different to the ‘tribal’ and ‘communal’ one they were ultimately forced to adopt. Because these processes were very closely linked we discuss them together. In the final section we look at the history of mining in the area, and how mineral rights were alienated from the communities that were established on the land. This sets the scene for later chapters, and connects with some of the important themes that are raised in the third and fourth chapters, in particular, the impact of further land loss on already strained livelihoods, tensions around the role of chiefs as representatives of the people, and the continuation of resettlement practises that ignore important social and cultural elements of landholding systems and residential patterns.

2.1 The creation of tribal authorities in a complex region

The Mapela and Kekana Traditional Authority areas, which adjoin each other, have very deep historical roots in the Mokopane area, stretching back to the early 1800s. The territory of these groups stretched far, though borders were fluid and overlapping, and the influence of these chiefs waxed and waned. These were not homogenous societies in the sense that everyone shared the same language, kinship networks, or origins. It was also possible, particularly towards the margins of such a territory, for some homesteads to be independent from the chief, or to have allegiance to a different chief or headman. Within these areas, households had very strong rights to the land they cleared, and on which they established their homesteads and fields (Kerr, 1990).

The arrival of Boers and establishment of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR - the white settler state) profoundly changed this region as a new system of property ownership was imposed on these older territories and land tenure systems. Land was surveyed and cut up into farms which were granted or sold to burghers³ and speculative land owning and exploration companies. This generated conflict between Boers and Africans and in 1881 the government established the “Lokasie Kommissie” to demarcate locations to the “large Native tribes” which they could occupy “in peace”.⁴ As Lekgoathi remarks, this in fact “formalized the process of expropriating land from Africans.” (Lekgoathi, 2006: 69) While some chiefs received small locations, many others received nothing. In 1890 the Lokasie Kommissie recommended Rietfontein, Turfspruit, Macalacaskop, and portions of Sandsloot, Tweefontein, and Knapdaar for Valtyn’s (Kekana) Location.⁵ The Lokasie Kommissie recommended the farms Molen Draai, Commandodrift, Zwartfontein (later number 814) Moordkopje, Gezond, Sandsloot, and portions of Mozambique, Inhambane, Groningen and Knapdaar for the Mapela Location.⁶ This is how Zwartfontein 814 and Sandsloot 236, two farms of particular interest in this working paper, were incorporated into Hans Masibi’s/Mapela’s location in 1887. The process of demarcating locations was interrupted by the South

African war and a second Location Commission was set up by the new Colonial government after 1904 (Lekgoathi 2006:90). In 1906 the farms Macalacaskop 243 KR and Turfspruit 241 KR were transferred to the Native Affairs Commission to become part of Valtyn's location.

These locations were a meagre compromise for Africans wanting land. Colonists and white settlers imagined that African land tenure involved a vague system of 'communal' ownership, with the chief as 'custodian' of the land. When land was set aside for a location, ownership remained with the South African government. Chiefs and their people did not have mineral rights, only surface user rights.⁷ They did not have the right to sell the land and all decisions regarding the land had to be approved by, or were taken solely by, the Native Commissioner. Although locations tended to be demarcated where people were concentrated, the Mapela and Kekana chieftaincies were quite large in terms of numbers, and their many adherents were scattered over a very wide area. Furthermore, the same geographical area was also populated by other African households which were not subject to either chief, or any chief at all.⁸ Thus, what the government was essentially doing was recognizing limited land rights of certain chiefs to limited areas of land, imagining that they somehow represented all Africans in the area. In doing so, they failed to recognize the land rights of any other Africans, whether they were part of the larger chieftaincies or not. This had profound implications.

Because locations were so small relative to the size of the population, it meant that people were restricted in the amount of land they could cultivate within the locations. The demarcation of locations meant that, as boundaries became more fixed, a population which otherwise would have been spread out along both sides of important rivers such as the Mogalakwena River was crowded together in locations consisting of some good ground, some marginal land, and less river frontage. This was not only a blow to cultivators. Land on the other side of the river was used to graze cattle, and boys went to circumcision school in the hills on the other bank (Hofmeyr, 1994: 68-69).

Roughly the same number of Africans in the Potgietersrust district lived on private farms as in the locations: 16974 lived in locations and 16934 on private farms, while 900 lived on Crown Land and 2200 in towns.⁹ It appears that the people living on these farms tended to be rent tenants. As late as 1914 the Chairman of the Beaumont Commission¹⁰ said that of 81 farms

to the north and north-west of Valtyn's and Mapela's locations, "none of them are actually occupied by Europeans... I don't think there is a single "labour" farm".¹¹ Over the next ten years, households living on private farms came to be seen as more prosperous than residents of locations. With limited white commercial agriculture, rent tenants could sometimes use as much land as they wanted to for cultivation and cattle grazing. They were also mobile, allowing them to abandon farms with limited water supply, where soil quality and grazing was poor or had deteriorated, or which became too populated. The 1914 Beaumont Commission, established after the passing of the 1913 Natives Land Act in order to investigate conditions of land tenure, contained striking contrasts between the economic situation within and outside of locations.¹²

However, while these families had a degree of choice in where to settle and under what conditions, they had little security of tenure. The households living outside locations had been given no rights to the land they occupied when it was surveyed and sold to white settlers or land-holding companies. Over time, as white commercial agriculture developed, the security of these households diminished, and they were vulnerable to eviction and exploitation. The 1913 Natives Land Act, which prohibited rent tenancy, also began to impede African's independence and mobility, although the effects of the law were generally felt much later, from the 1930s. (Hay, 2014:750). Nevertheless, this period was characterized by anxiety regarding the status of Africans on privately owned land, and the increasing congestion of locations. Furthermore, the future of locations was uncertain. While some government officials called for locations to be extended to accommodate Africans moved off private farms, others argued that they should be kept small, in order to force Africans into wage labour.¹³ In this context, chiefs or otherwise constituted groups became interested in purchasing land to extend locations or hold as private property. This was the context in which Zwartfontein 818 was purchased by the 'Langa tribe' in 1913.

The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act and the consolidation of locations

It was the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act, which built on the 1913 Natives Land Act, and the developments in white commercial farming which took place in the same period, which significantly affected the independence of Africans on privately owned farms. There were multiple reasons for this. The status of African families as tenants with tenure dependent entirely

on the grace of landowners and the government made them vulnerable to eviction, and gave white landowners and the policemen who served their interests enormous power.¹⁴ As white commercial farming developed in the 1930s, farmers were able to make demands for rent tenants to provide labour. Should they refuse, they were evicted. In such cases of eviction people's houses were sometimes burnt down, and with short notice to leave, tenants frequently lost their crops and cattle. Some moved to locations, but locations were becoming increasingly overcrowded. Some moved out of the crowded locations to the white farms and to towns, but under increasingly compromised positions. This was the period in which farms like Overysel and Armoede began to see an increasing influx of residents. The farms had long been in the general area of Mapela and Kekana influence, and were recommended for these tribal authorities for that very reason. However, as with a lot of land in the region, it was fairly marginal compared to the more favoured farms with river frontage. For example in 1917 when the Secretary for Native Affairs wrote to the Native Commissioner of Potgietersrust to find out if the farm was occupied by natives and whether "Masibi's people" would "be in position to purchase as tribal property", he was told that the farm was occupied by only two families and that Masibi was not interested in buying the farm as it was "unpopular" because of "the sandy nature of soil" which was unfit for cultivation.¹⁵ Despite the apparently poor quality of this land however, the population grew over the next twenty years. By December 1936 there were 29 families on the farm living as tenants. In January and February 1937 an additional 12 families moved onto the farm. Population growth on what was, comparatively speaking, a poor quality farm, is indicative of the stress that families in the region were being put under, and the increasing pressure on land in areas to be used for African settlement. Similarly, Armoede does not seem to have been very extensively settled before 1927, after which there was an influx of people. An important point to make about this influx of people was that the growing population was very diverse. Archival documents providing information on these new tenants on Armoede shows that families came from 14 different farms in the broader region, including three different 'tribal locations' and one informal 'location', and some travelling from as far away as the Pietersburg district.¹⁶ The tenants included a mix of Shangaan-Tsonga, Sotho and Ndebele families.

Environmental degradation - or increasing fears of it - was the consequence of this increased pressure on land

within and around the locations. In this context, the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act was passed. The Act opened up land for African settlement, however in the Waterberg area the Native Affairs Department tended to favour the purchase of land by the Trust, for the extension of existing locations.¹⁷ This was partly to allow the Trust to control land use on these farms by imposing regulations, in order to alleviate fears of continuing environmental degradation. This was a major blow for the more prosperous African farmers, who were unable to purchase land, and who faced a future in locations where their landholding would be significantly curtailed. Many Africans from private farms were told that if they wanted land, they would have to go through their 'great chief' or 'paramount chief' to get it - even when they denied having such an allegiance.¹⁸

Despite - or perhaps because of - these efforts to bolster the "tribal system" by increasing the size of locations and forcing Africans to move there (unless they became labour tenants), the area remained politically complex. Jackson's description is illuminating:

The people of Mapela are members of a considerable number of different non-exogamous totemic clans, the names of which they generally bear as family names. The different clan names reflect the diversity of the people's origin, and Mapela presents a microcosm of the surroundings [sic] Sotho peoples... Some of the [Mapela] wards consist of small chiefdoms or sections of chiefdoms that were conquered by the Langa and left in occupation of their old settlements. They continued to govern themselves, but subject to the Langa paramountcy. Other wards consist of people who joined the Langa voluntarily as entire groups, and were given areas in which to live and govern themselves subject to the Langa paramountcy. Other wards, again, came into being when farms were acquired by the chiefdom. These farms were occupied by more or less heterogenous populations, and headmen have been appointed to govern them. (Jackson, 1978: 120).

The Kekana area was similarly ethnically diverse. The history of the farms Rietfontein (in the Kekana area) and Vaalkop (in the Mapela area) reveal some of this complexity. A close study of these farms also shows how dispossession occurred on these farms even in a context whereby the Trust was purchasing the farms for the extension of the locations.

Rietfontein had long been an important farm for people connected to the Kekana chieftaincy. By 1936 the farm was occupied by 20 African families, apparently “from Valtyn’s location” who provided labour for Mrs Amm, the owner of the farm.¹⁹ It was thought “a very valuable addition to relieve the congestion in Valtyn’s location, considering the quality of the grazing and arable land available and its proximity to the Railway and town.”²⁰ Valtyn’s Location at the time was said to resemble “the Sahara Desert”.²¹ The Trust purchased the farm, but rather than easing congestion in Valtyn’s location and securing the tenure of the African families already living on Rietfontein, the purchase of the farm had the opposite effect. Rietfontein was no longer considered a self-contained farm. Rather, it was treated as an extension of Valtyn’s location, and planned according to the new programme of ‘reclamation’, later referred to as ‘rehabilitation’ or ‘betterment’. “Betterment” required families to limit their stock, which forced people to sell livestock at massively reduced rates and resulted in culling programmes. People’s use of natural resources was also restricted, for example wood cutting was prohibited except in small areas very far from actual settlements. Finally, with the zoning of land, some people lost access to ploughing land, while others were massively restricted in how much they could cultivate. This process caused gender, generational and interfamilial tensions. (Delius, 1996; Hofmeyr, 1994; Hendricks, 1989; de Wet, 1995).

In July 1937, two months after it had been purchased, there were 360 people living on the farm.²² But despite the existence of this population, and the presence of good arable soil, the Locations Reclamation Committee recommended that the farm should be reserved for grazing and the population on the farm resettled elsewhere.²³ Rietfontein should be fenced, cutting it off from Valtyn’s location and those who used Rietfontein for grazing and resources. Plans were made to cull ‘excess’ livestock belonging to the families living on the farm.²⁴

After some debate, the Native Affairs Department decided to move the families on Rietfontein to Vaalkop instead of Valtyn’s location. Vaalkop was already occupied by 53 families of varying size and prosperity when the Trust purchased it.²⁵ After the “Rietfontein natives” moved onto the farm, officials began to plan for the ‘zoning’ of the location, including the establishment of a residential area where households would be placed in close proximity to each other. In 1942 the Trust arranged for the ‘exchange’ of the farms Scirappes, Bavaria and Blinkwater, belonging to the Mapela ‘tribe’,

for the Trust owned farms Vaalkop, Oversydel and Tweefontein. This exchange entailed further disruption to the families living there, as families were expected either to move from their homes in order to join ‘their tribes’ or chief elsewhere, or to transfer their allegiance to a new chief who was given jurisdiction over their land.²⁶ Thus, by the 1940s Rietfontein families may have found themselves triply disillusioned by the Trust. First, when they lost access to land on Rietfontein, secondly, when they were relocated to Vaalkop but under a new set of ‘Trust’ rules and regulations, which resulted in the loss of livestock and limitation of ploughing land, and finally when their political identity became determined by the land on which they lived - and they had very little power anymore to decide where to live.

In this context of dispossession, it became increasingly necessary for households to enter into forms of waged employment - an end result of limiting African land purchase that many interest groups in white society had wanted for decades. The irony is that Africans generally received very low wages on the assumption that they had a rural base and so wages did not have to cover all of their living expenses. Thus, many rural households engaged in multiple livelihood strategies in order to make ends meet. Ironically, it was generally the people who were employed who could afford to plough larger fields (Delius, 1996: 149) Those without employment struggled to get inputs for farming - although home gardens remained important. Whatever this relationship between waged employment and agriculture was, respondents to the surveys and interviews conducted during fieldwork made it clear that farming was fundamental to their livelihoods. When jobs became scarce from the 1980s, social welfare grants, pensions in particular, also became increasingly important.

In 1951 the Bantu Authorities Act was passed, giving chiefs and tribal authorities administrative power in reserve areas. The Act was based on the culturally essentialist idea that “chieftainship was the central and authentic institution within African culture, upon which an alternative and distinctive domain could be constructed” (Ashforth, 1990: 153 - 169). In this process, many smaller chiefs and headmen lost recognition (if they had recognition in the first place). Rather, power was concentrated in the hands of a small number of chiefs who were willing to obey the orders of the Apartheid government (Delius, 2008: 231). The Bantu Self-Government Act, the basis for the creation of Bantustans, was passed in 1959. Political and economic resources became tied to ethnic affiliation and political

status (chiefs were often first in line to take advantage of new opportunities). The creation of Bantustans was as much about political expediency as about commitment to the idea of ethnic separatism, and, given the small size of the Ndebele population, it was not thought necessary to grant the northern Ndebele, including the Kekana and Mapela chieftaincies, their own ethnic homeland (Lekgoathi, 2006: 136). Thus, these and neighboring chieftaincies were placed under the Pedi (Northern Sotho) 'homeland' of Lebowa, which was granted its fictive independence in 1972, adding a further layer of political complexity to the Mokopane region.

In 1994, the Bantustans were dissolved. The system of chiefly authority did not come to an end, however. Tribal Authorities were renamed Traditional Authorities - a more sanitized name for a system that was little changed. People living within the Traditional Authority areas continue to be governed by hereditary chiefs, with elected councils. This political situation has not gone uncontested. There have been chieftaincy disputes in both the Mapela and Kekana chieftaincies for a very long time.²⁷ But, thanks to the role of chiefs in helping to bolster the Apartheid system, and the unpopular Lebowa government, chieftaincy has also suffered from a crisis of legitimacy. While many rural people still believe to a greater or lesser extent in the institution of chieftaincy, individual leaders have nevertheless come under fire. In the post-apartheid era these disputes are also related to questions around why it is that local communities have not seen any benefits from the mining occurring on their land. Before moving ahead to these present day concerns, we will now look at why it is that, poor leadership aside, local people have not benefited from mining on their land.

2.2 A History of Mining in Mokopane

Long before platinum was discovered in the Mokopane area, Africans living in the 'tribal locations', had been denied any rights to the minerals beneath their land. This was because the land was considered 'state land'; Africans living in the locations had surface rights, while mineral rights were held by the Crown. This was the situation with regard to the farms Zwartfontein (814LR), Sandsloot, Macalacaskop and Turfspruit. Outside companies could apply to the state to prospect and mine this state-owned land, but under the 1908 Gold Act no "coloured" person could prospect or mine.

The state - or specifically, the Department of Native Affairs, the South Africa Native Trust, the Bantu Trust

and later still the Bantustan governments in the case of African 'reserve' land - had the duty to negotiate with prospective mining companies while taking the needs of the surface users into consideration (Capps 2012:71). This involved things like deciding on amounts that would accrue to 'tribes' (often in practice, chiefs) for things like leasing surface rights, or obtaining prospecting and mining rights.

Platinum was discovered in the Mokopane area in the 1920s, and this led to speculative activity. South Africa respected the common law principle that landowners owned both the surface and mineral rights to their land. This principle lay behind a lot of land purchase by land and exploration companies which were more interested in mining than any other type of land use. For example, the farm Armoede was purchased in 1896 by the Landed Proprietary Company, which sold it again to Transvaal Consolidated Lands and Exploration Company in 1902. By 1908 Land Companies under the umbrella of the Transvaal Landowners Association owned portions of 32 farms in the North Waterberg district alone.²⁸ After platinum was discovered in the area, Potgietersrust Platinums quickly purchased the farms Overysel in 1925 and Vaalkop in 1926. But as Capps (2012:69) has outlined, in South Africa, over time "an ad hoc combination of administrative practice and legislation led to the statutory recognition of the severance of mineral rights from surface rights". This meant that mineral rights could be traded separately from the actual surface of the land - or that the surface of the land could be traded separately from the mineral rights, which remained with the company. This is enormously significant for the Mokopane region. In 1926 Potgietersrust Platinums were able to purchase the mineral rights to Zwartfontein 818LR from Chief Alfred Masibi, who owned the farm "on behalf of the tribe".²⁹ Masibi received a significant financial reward for the transaction - at the very least £750 in respect of "his services to the Tribe."³⁰ (This was a pattern to be repeated. Masibi and his descendants were known to take money accruing to the 'tribe' from any source, with the salaries of the Chief, the treasurer and councilors making up the greatest share of expenditure by far in some periods).³¹ But it also meant that, once having purchased land in a time of speculation, companies could sell that land but reserve the mineral rights to it. This is what happened when the South African Native Trust approached Potgietersrust Platinums (in the case of Overysel and Vaalkop), and, individuals in the case of Rietfontein and Armoede, with a request to purchase these farms for the purpose of extending the

overcrowded locations which these farms bordered. The owners of the land wanted to reserve the mineral rights (or in the case of Rietfontein, maintain a half-share in the mineral rights). The South African Native Trust was not in an easy negotiating position, and despite their concerns that the alienation of mineral rights would compromise their ability to “protect natives in their occupation of the surface”, they agreed to these conditions of purchase.³²

Having mineral rights gave companies “full, free and sole right and interest in and to all precious and base metals and minerals, precious stones and mineral products, and substances of every kind including coal and oil, in upon and under” the properties. This was together with the right to prospect for and to mine, recover and exploit such metals, as well as “all rights as may be necessary or incidental to the exercise of such rights”. This included water use rights, the right to store water in various ways, and to “use of so much of the surface as is necessary”. They could “erect and remove again without compensation any machinery, buildings, plant, poles, wires, pipes, rails and other erections.” Ultimately, they had “as full and unrestricted rights to the said metals, minerals, stores, products and substances and to the prospecting therefore and the mining and exploitation thereof as the Company would have possessed had it remained owner of the said property.”³³

Thus, in September 1926 Potgietersrus Platinum Limited, a subsidiary of the Johannesburg Consolidated Investment Company Limited (JCI) - Amplats’ predecessor - began its operations on the mineral rich farms Sandsloot 236KR, Vaalkop 819 LR, and Zwartfontein 818 LR (Buchana, Nolan, Suddaby, Rous, Viljoen, and Davenport, 1981: 568-569; Little, 2006:4). The global decline in platinum prices forced the mine to close in May 1930. (Buchana, et al 1981:569). JCI returned in the late 1960s, began removing water from its old shafts in Zwartfontein and drilling again for more PGMs. This activity stopped abruptly in 1970, apparently because “values [were] erratic” (Ibid). JCI began drilling again in 1976. This time drilling-operations expanded into Overysel 815 LR - a farm directly opposite Zwartfontein on the northern side of the farm. Once a substantial ore body was located on Zwartfontein and Overysel, JCI began its “full feasibility study including detailed drilling, trial mining, and bulk sampling” which carried on until the 1980s (Ibid).

In 1987 the mineral rights to former Trust land in Lebowa (where the mineral rights were not already held by a

third party) were transferred to the newly created Lebowa Minerals Trust (LMT), which was “explicitly defined as a corporate body possessing mineral property in a similar manner to a private rights holder, as opposed to mineral rights held by the state” (Capps, 2012: 72). This meant the LMT could sell mineral (and prospecting and mining) rights, and did not have to consider the wellbeing of the residents of the surface of the land in question, including ensuring that they received a share of the profits of any mining taking place (ibid). By the time JCI took a decision to begin mining in 1990 it had already secured a massive mineral right area of 137 km² (Amplats 2008) spreading over seven farms occupied by villagers in the Mapela area. In 1993, Amplats, through its subsidiary, Potgietersrus Platinums Limited (PPL), entered into a surface lease agreement with the Mapela Tribal Authority over large portions of the farms Overysel, Zwartfontein and Vaalkop. Kgoshigadi Atalia Thabantsi Langa (1993-2010), the predecessor of the current chief (also his mother) signed this lease on behalf of the Mapela community. According to the lease agreement, the traditional authority gave permission to Amplats to occupy and enjoy “exclusive right” over the leased land “for the remaining economic life of the mine in return for payment of an initial lump sum rental of R1 200 000 ... and an annual rental (initially R5 000), escalating at 10% each year...” (Amplats 2008:10). The mine also promised to pay annual estimated operating costs for the remaining life of the mine into “a trust for community development”. This amount was to be paid into “an account of the Local Magistrate Court for the benefit of the Mapela Tribal Authority and are based on the agricultural potential of the land” (Ibid).

By the time this contract was signed (1993) the Amplats’s mining operations were already underway. The process of extracting “the highest grades” of ore out of the open pit on Sandsloot farm had already begun (Little, 2006:4). The first blasting took place on the 12 February 1992 (Ibid). Open pit operations (the second pit) expanded into the Zwartfontein farm in 2002. In 2007, the mine opened a third pit. The latter straddles Zwartfontein and Overysel (Ibid). Villagers who had historically lived on this land and whose livelihoods depended on it had to be relocated to make way for this massive pit.

Potgietersrus mine has since been renamed the ‘Mogalakwena Platinum Mine’. In April 2016, Amplats struck another deal with Kgoshi Langa on behalf of the Mapela community. This made available a sum of R175-million to the Mapela community “to settle a number of legacy issues”. Instead of producing “a seed capital

for creating sustainable, long-term and diversified growth for the community” this new deal has intensified popular resistance to Chief Langa and also exacerbated inequality and community divisions. We detail these struggles in Chapters Two and Three.

In response to the recent slump in commodity prices, mining companies have focused on cutting costs - including retrenchments of workers and mothballing or selling of mines with higher production costs. Amplats has responded by putting up for sale the strike-torn, labour intensive, shaft operating assets in the North West province, the Union and Rustenburg Mines, with the strategic intention of favouring its more mechanised, open cast operation, the Mogalakwena Mine in the Limpopo province (Seccombe, 2014). For a number of reasons, the Mogalakwena Mine is “a priority asset and the flagship operation of [Amplats’s global] Platinum Portfolio” (Amplats, 2015³⁴). Most important for the population of Mokopane, the mine is highly mechanised, and the employment opportunities it offers are for skilled people. The SWOP Working Paper by Andrew Bowman (2016) entitled “Dilemmas of distribution: financialisation, boom and bust in the post-apartheid platinum industry” which is part of this series, provides more information on this.

- The Mogalakwena Mine has significant reserves and its lifespan expected to prolong well “beyond 2060” (Amplats, 2014:34).
- It is now the key generator of profits for the Amplats group. Its operating costs are low relative to other mines in the Amplats portfolio, and it has managed to maintain healthy profit margins despite the downturn in platinum prices in recent years.
- It does not have the same labour problems as the traditional platinum mines. It is a highly mechanised open cast operation, with far higher rates of labour productivity than the labour intensive shaft mining operations on the Western Limb of the BIC. In 2013, for example, 5189 tonnes of ore were milled at Mogalakwena per employee working at the mine, while at Rustenburg and Union the figures are 385 tonnes per employee and 503 tonnes per employee respectively. This means the mine needs to employ fewer workers, and that those it does employ are, generally, more skilled and better remunerated. However, as we shall see later, this business model appears to complicate the job promises that Mogalakwena Mine made to local villagers where it conducts its open cast operations.

Platreef is a fairly recent mining project which was still developing when this study was conducted. It is a massive PGM (including Gold and Copper) extraction project which stretches over three large farms in the Kekana area - Turfspruit 241 KR, Macalacaskop 243 KR, and Rietfontein 2 KS - the mineral rights to which were acquired from the LMT before it was finally disbanded in 2001. Largely owned and controlled by Ivanhoe Mines Ltd³⁵ (64%) Platreef³⁶ is set to become one of the largest and most lucrative mining operations in South Africa and arguably “the world’s biggest new platinum mine” (York 2015).

Conclusion

The present day rural economy of the communities living in the Mokopane area is the outcome of decades of cumulative dispossession. What this chapter has shown is how, over the last hundred years, households have become increasingly economically stretched and stressed as their access to land for cultivation and grazing has been constrained in the context of segregation, and the squeezing of African households into locations. Nevertheless, despite this pressure, households have continued to be reliant on agriculture for at least some of their livelihood. The scene for conflict with the mines has long been set, as large rural communities grew on mineralized land, the mineral rights for which have long since been alienated from the community. The next chapters show how the trajectory of cumulative dispossession and the resulting increase in economic stress have continued.

Furthermore, the colonial and apartheid distorted perception of African landed property rights as ‘communal’, secured through membership or affiliation to a tribal polity and controlled through the custodianship of local chiefs still persists in South Africa’s post-1994 democratic era. The ‘new’ legislation³⁷ that redefines citizens living in the former homeland areas as ‘traditional communities’ (under chiefs) has, however, reproduced the apartheid-style interpretation of communal property rights. Now chiefs (of different ranks) in these areas are empowered to become custodians of communal land and other natural resources. Not only does this go against many rural peoples’ understanding of the authority of chiefs, it can also violate the cultural meanings attached to and connections with the land. The interviews conducted in the villages of Mokopane demonstrate this finding (see Chapter Three).

Three

Mining and rural livelihoods in Mapela and Kekana

Post-apartheid livelihoods in Mapela and Kekana

The previous chapter has shown how the historic dispossession of land and establishment of large-scale white commercial farms in the Mokopane region resulted in the displacement of African households and their confinement to 'native locations'. In subsequent years, rural dwellers in the Mokopane area have continued to practice agriculture under these inequitable and precarious conditions. With the infusion of resources

from non-agricultural sources of income, mainly wage earnings and remittances from oscillatory migrant labour, agricultural activities have remained resilient and a key component of rural life (McAllister, 1999 & 2001).

In recent years, the villages of Mapela and Kekana have been confronted with considerable changes in the local agrarian economy, yet this has not diminished the continued relevance of farming activity for many households. Indeed, in a context of high levels of unemployment, non-wage forms of livelihood remain significant and for some may even have grown in importance. However, the predominant effect of mine development in these localities has been to exacerbate the challenges facing rural households in constructing their livelihoods. The decline in agricultural activities has above all been accelerated through mining-related dispossessions. Households that had productively



Plate 2: Ploughing fields competing with mine dumps in Mapela (Sonwabile Mnwana 2015)

utilized their land-based resources for domestic consumption and even market sale were dispossessed of their land, in the process intensifying the decline of agricultural activity. Moreover, while mining is generally thought to benefit local communities by creating job opportunities, in the Mokopane area it has provided few employment opportunities. In other words, rural livelihoods are being destabilized by mine expansion, without commensurate benefits to counter the adverse effects that ensue from the presence of mining operations. In this chapter, we draw on our survey data to chart the impact of mine development on rural livelihoods and domestic food security in the Mapela and Kekana areas. We first look at non-agricultural forms of livelihood and how they have been affected by the mine developments, and second at the effects of mine-driven dispossession and relocations on agrarian activity and domestic food security.

3.1 Non-agricultural forms of livelihood

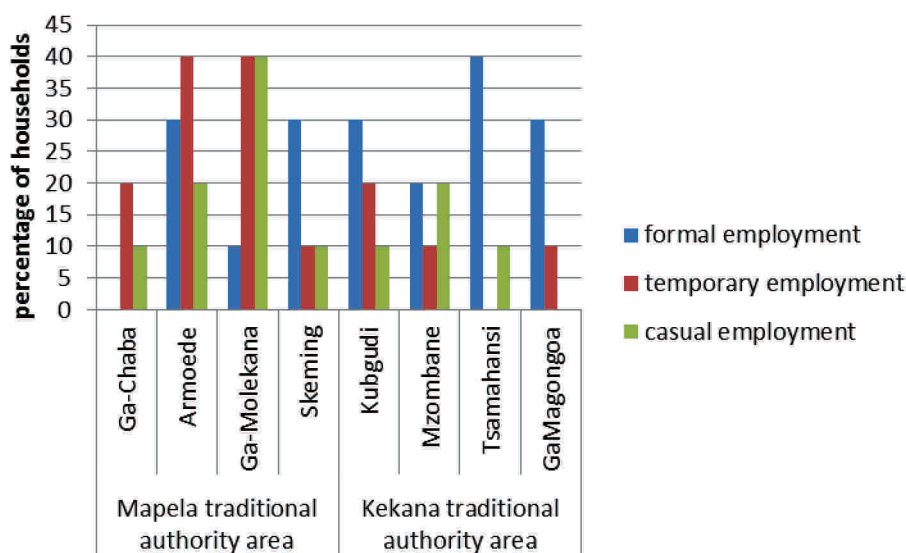
Forms of employment and labour absorption in the new mining economies

The Mokgalakwena municipal area is characterised by high levels of unemployment especially amongst the economically active youth. According to Stats SA (2011), Mokgalakwena municipality has an unemployment rate of 40.2 percent while youth unemployment is particularly high at 51.7 percent. The general trend of high unemployment levels is evident in the few households with access to formal jobs in our survey on mining impacts on livelihoods. In Mapela, villagers argued that the impact of the mine on jobs and livelihoods is very

minimal. The problems of jobs in connection with the mine are twofold. First, the villagers argued that the few available jobs are of a temporary and short-term nature and very few locals managed to secure long-term, steady employment at the mine. Secondly, the politics of recruitment has often resulted in the ‘exclusion’ of ‘deserving’ locals. Villagers argued that the distribution of employment opportunities is not equitable in terms of what they see as ‘deserving’ villages directly affected by mining activities either through loss of land or experiencing environmental problems.

While Ivanhoe’s Platreef project in Mokopane is still in its nascent phases, tensions are already simmering on the question of access to employment. The host villages are characterized by high surplus labour whose absorption into labour markets is, among other things, often hindered by the lack of skills and training. Some oral accounts show that most local villagers are quite conscious of the legislative requirement for mining corporations to prioritize local labour when hiring. Yet throughout the various stages of developing the mine, for instance exploration and drilling, locals noted that they were confined to menial jobs. For example, some respondents argued that since the mine started they had only ever performed manual work like felling trees and clearing the ground (Interview 8 Group 1, Ga-Magongoa, 15.08.2015). There was discontent because expatriates and other non-locals were perceived as having access to skilled and remunerative jobs requiring high levels of technical expertise. Others acknowledged the skills gap as the main problem hindering access to gainful employment. Yet they argued that it is the mine’s responsibility to equip locals with the requisite skills

Figure 1: Access to different forms of employment in Mapela and Kekana villages (n=80)



(Interview 8 Group 1, Ga-Magongoa, 15.08.2015). In the mining villages, exclusions from the emerging economies is often manifest along such social cleavages as gender and seniority. From our research, it became apparent that youth and unemployment issues are synonymous. In Tsamahansi the youths argued that they are usually not fully represented in leadership structures which tend to be dominated by the elderly members of the community (Interview 7 Group 2, Tsamahansi, 05.09.2015). As most of the elderly people are not in the economically active category, questions around employment in the community are often treated as marginal. Gender and generational issues are explored further in the next chapter.

The role of social grants in the survival of rural households

Our research reveals that in both Kekana and Mapela areas, state social transfers play a significant role in the survival of households (see Fig. 2). Old age and child support grants are the most common forms of state welfare transfers in the research sites. This conforms to the wider trends in much of rural South Africa where social grants have assumed an important ameliorative role in the context of widespread poverty and the dearth of employment opportunities.

During the research, respondents argued that social grant earnings provide a reliable source of income. Different types of social grants are often combined for survival purposes. This type of income is often used for meeting the daily reproduction needs of households, for instance, purchasing food. The social grant earnings

were also used to meet monthly expenses like paying for the subscriptions for burial societies, rotational saving schemes and grocery societies. In fewer instances, these resources are used to support survivalist informal sector activities as households supplement their meagre resources. Social grants are an important redistributive mechanism which provides an important cushion for households in a context of widespread poverty and lack of employment opportunities.

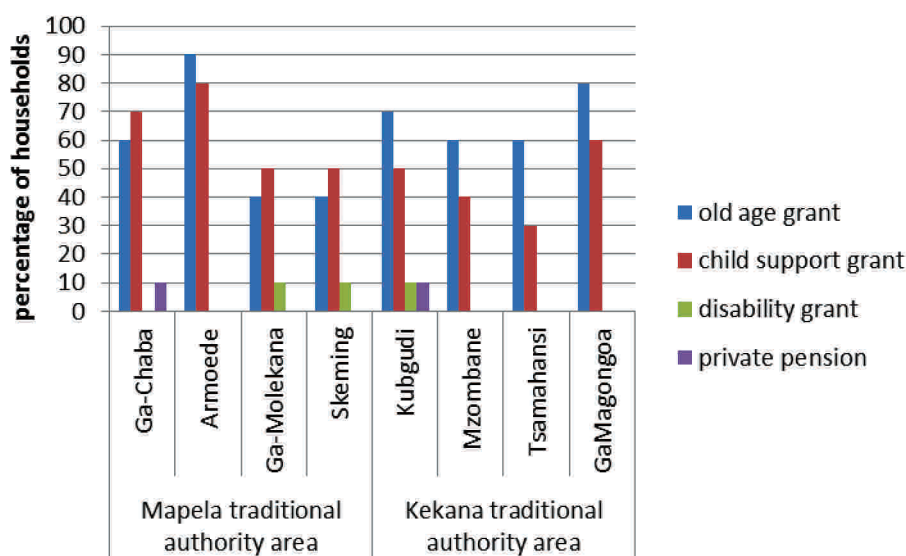
In this context of high unemployment and reliance on small social grants, the use of land for agrarian-based livelihoods remains critically important in the Mokopane area. According to their narratives, people in Mokopane primarily relate to land as their main source of food. Our respondents in both communities expressed that land has historically been the main (although not the only) source of livelihood. Homesteads get access to land either through acquiring large plots, or by utilizing land on residential plots.

3.2 Rural livelihoods in the context of mine expansion

Access to large ploughing fields in Mapela and Kekana traditional authority areas

The recent establishment of large-scale mining activities in both Mapela and Kekana traditional authority areas has resulted in land dispossessions and displacement of rural households. Between 2006 and 2015 Amplats (Mogalakwena mine) relocated about 1000 families - over 7000 people - from the villages of Ga-Sekhaolelo and Ga-Puka in Mhlotlo village (on the farms Overysel

Figure 2: Access to social grants in Mapela and Kekana villages (n=80)



815LR and Zwartfontein 818 LR - respectively) in the Mapela traditional authority area, relocating them to the farms Armoede 823LR and Rooibokfontein 823LR (Amplats 2014, 10). This massive relocation project was to enable Amplats to excavate its northern open pit, which is now expanding. This resulted in many households losing access to ploughing land (ActionAid Report, 2008).

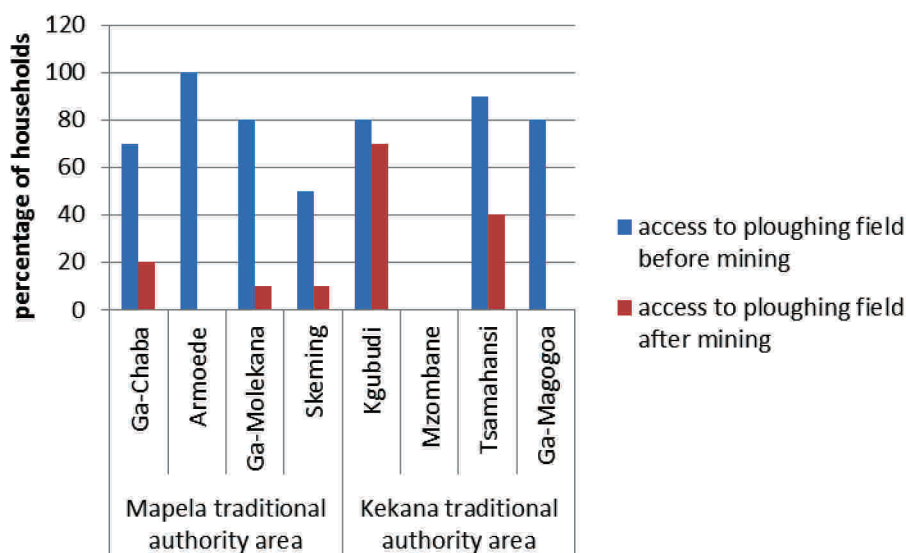
Even in cases where villagers were relocated and alternative land made available, the outcome has been adverse. For instance, in spite of AngloPlatinum Mogalakwena mine making alternative agricultural land available for Ga-Sekhaolelo residents, this did not avert the decline of agricultural activities in the village. Firstly, some of the farmland designated for compensation is far from the newly relocated villages, making it difficult to access and utilise. For those farms which are conveniently located (Armoede and Rooibokfontein), residential plots take up a portion of that land. The remaining farmland which may be used for large ploughing fields and grazing commons is not adequate. In the case of Armoede, the alternative land for residential plots consists of 685 hectares while the remaining portion of 1 230 hectares was designated for ploughing fields and grazing commons (see ActionAid, 2008:27). The remaining land is not only small in extent but, according to interviewees, it is open bushveld with relatively infertile soil, which has not been developed for crop cultivation. In addition, this expanse of land for ploughing was not clearly demarcated on the basis of individual homesteads. Prior to relocation most households had their own ploughing fields as part of their productive resources. Lack of clarity and

uncertainty around land-holding has been a huge disincentive for those households with the wherewithal or capacity to mobilise resources to cultivate their large ploughing fields.

In the case of Ga-Chaba, villagers narrated how the expansion of Mogalakwena mine towards Ga-Chaba village in 2005 saw a significant portion of agricultural land, both large ploughing fields and grazing commons, being fenced off. The research participants argued that the mine expansion robbed them of their prime agricultural land. During the field work it became apparent that dry-land cropping on large ploughing fields had virtually collapsed in the village of Ga-Chaba. Remnants of cultivation on the outside of the perimeter fence signify acts of resistance as villagers desperately try maintain a precarious hold on the margins of what was previously their land.

The Platreef mining project will affect the land which falls within the farms of Turfspruit (Ga-Kgubudi and Mzombane), Reitfontein (Ga-MaGongoa and Tsamahansi) and a number of villages in the Macalacaskop farm which were not part of this study. Kgubudi and Mosesetjane villagers in Kekana traditional authority area were dispossessed of their ploughing fields during the initial phases of developing the Platreef mine. The landowners were not formally informed about the presence of the prospective mine and its activities. Prospecting and drilling activities were conducted without the landowners' knowledge and consent, violating the principle of prior and informed consent. In the process, gaping holes were left in some of the ploughing fields and deposits from the drilling activities

Figure 3: Access to ploughing fields in Mapela and Kekana villages (n=80)



contaminated the soil. Villagers argued that since the drilling and contamination of their ploughing fields the soils have become highly infertile and there is stunted growth of crops.

Besides exploration and drilling activities in the Kekana area, a 20-hectare construction compound for the mining shaft and other mining components has already been enclosed (Ivanhoe, 2014). The enclosure of land for the future mine has already deprived the nearby villages of much needed agricultural land. The recently enclosed area was part of the grazing commons for the nearby villages.

The widespread, mine-related land dispossessions and disruptions to local agricultural activities have undermined the local food economy and household food security. The negative impacts of mining on land-based livelihoods were demonstrated across the eight villages that we studied in the Mokopane area. Below, we discuss this finding in detail.

‘Re be re bolaya mabele!’ [We used to harvest a lot!] - ‘Re be re eja!’ [We used to eat!]

Oral accounts in the research sites capture local perspectives of the loss of land and decline of cropping in large ploughing fields. A 68-year old man, a village farmer, explained how his ploughing field which was about fifteen hectares was reduced to only three hectares. According to him and other respondents the mine’s consultation with villagers was poor and promises made were never fulfilled:

It was in February 2002 that the people from the mine and the chief called a meeting of the local residents. The people from the mine told us that we would no longer be allowed to cultivate our fields anymore because mining was going to take place on that land. We asked them about the effects of losing those ploughing fields, pasture lands, trees for firewood medicinal roots and herbs. They told us that for everything that we feared to lose the mine would compensate us. To this day we have received nothing from the mine! (Interview: Ga-Chaba.31.03.2015)

An excerpt from one of the interviews with an elderly woman in Ga-Chaba village (Mapela area) on the decline of agriculture and its impact on food security is also very illustrative. The elderly woman commented:

“Re be re eja!” [We used to eat!] We depended on farming for survival and we were not struggling. We used to eat mabele (sorghum), maize and beans and we were not suffering at all. Now we are no longer farming because they [the mine] took away our ploughing fields. (Interview.Ga-Chaba.30.03.2015).

Our adult respondents narrated how they used to harvest several bags of crops, including sorghum, maize and beans. A woman in her early 60s summarised this:

My parents made a living out of the land. They cultivated land for crops. They were able to harvest sorghum, maize, beans and many other things which we lived on. We would produce between 10 to 12 bags, depending on the rains.

Figure 4: Crops grown in ploughing fields in Mapela (n=40)

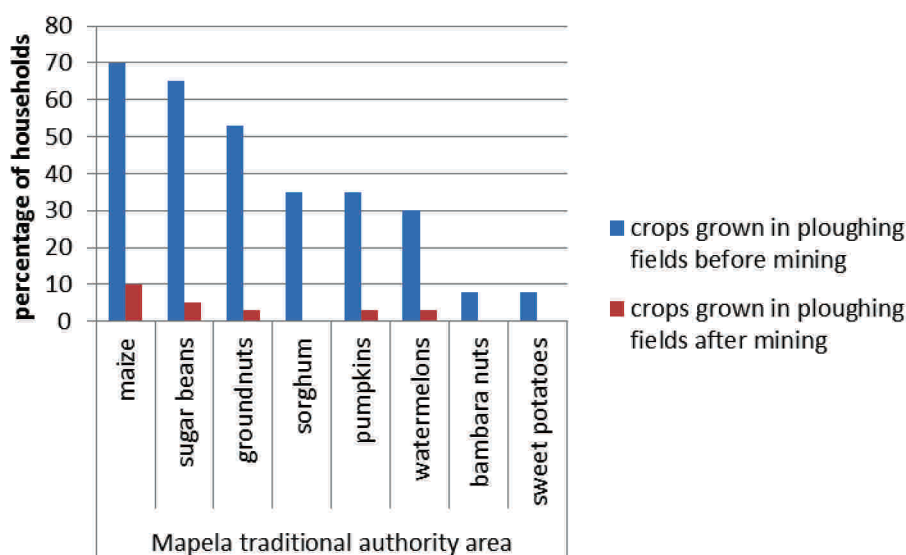
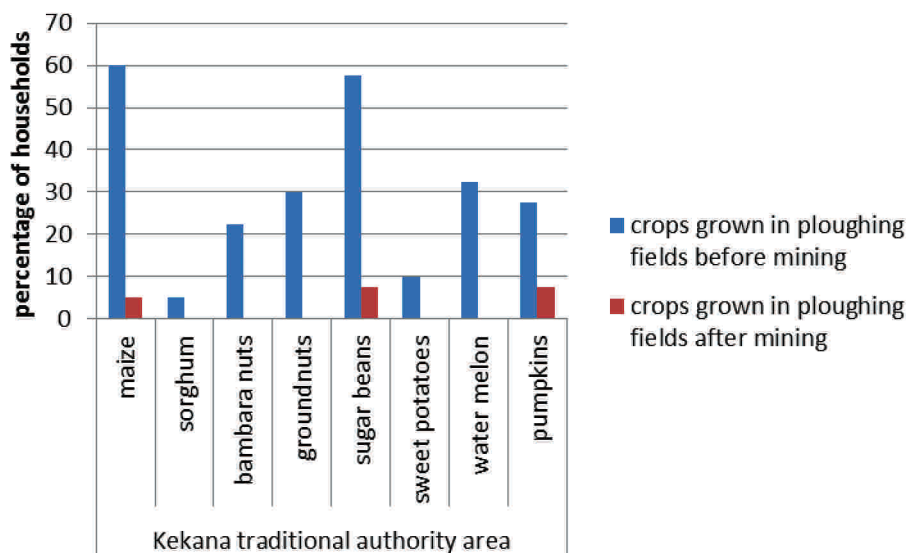


Figure 5: Crops grown in ploughing fields in Mokopane villages (n=40)



Some would have a harvest of 15 bags. It varied amongst the farmers. After harvest time, we took sorghum and maize for grinding to the milling depot to make sorghum and maize meal. We exchanged grain into ground meal. When that batch ran out we would fetch another sack from storage and consume it and so forth. That was our way of life. (Interview: Ga-Chaba.25.03.2015)

These narratives describing the loss of food security are borne out by survey data. The data in Fig 4 and 5 shows the dramatic decline in the number of households growing certain types of crops in ploughing fields in Mapela and Kekana respectively. In the research sites, maize and sugar beans were the most widely grown crops in large ploughing fields. From the above, it is clear that mining has had adverse impacts on local household food security. However, large-scale mining expansions also undermine the prospects of rural accumulation through smallholder agriculture by diminishing key livelihood resources, for instance, land and grazing commons.

Evidence from the Mapela and Kekana villages shows that loss of grazing commons and arable land has undermined prospects for rural accumulation driven by local agriculturalists. Most of the agriculturalists who were stepping up, as their agricultural enterprises flourished are now on a downward livelihood trajectory following the loss of important livelihood resources, grazing land and ploughing fields. The case of the Pitjeng homestead, in Ga-Molekana village in Mapela is illustrative of the declining fortunes of most households who were once part of a vibrant local agrarian economy.

Pitjeng homestead, Ga-Molekana village

Mr Pitjeng and his siblings inherited what he describes as a sizeable herd of cattle and a fairly productive ploughing field. In his words, 'we had twenty-seven cattle before the mine came'. His father had been engaged in wage employment, for several years investing in his rural homestead, growing the herd of cattle and cultivating a variety of crops on the family's land. Mr Pitjeng was also to engage in his own journey as a migrant labourer, working on a couple of jobs along the way. He found a more stable job as a blue collar worker in one of South Africa's large energy corporations. His job at the energy company allowed him to send money back home to invest in his father's rural homestead since he had not established his own independent homestead. Mr Pitjeng was unfortunately retrenched. Not long after his return to the village, his father passed on. He inherited the homestead which came with the field. The cattle were split amongst the siblings. But he still remained the custodian of the cattle since he was the one amongst his siblings who had remained on his father's homestead. This gave him access to all the productive resources of the homestead, allowing him to continue farming and rearing animals. However, upon the arrival of the mine, their ploughing field was annexed, and they practically had no access to grazing land. This profoundly affected their livelihoods. Mr Pitjeng and his siblings decided to sell most of their cattle since they no longer had access to grazing land. It was also not economic for them to buy supplementary stock feed. Currently, the Pitjeng family has two cattle left. With few cattle and without their ploughing field, Mr Pitjeng now relies on piece jobs for survival. The homestead garden provides him with vegetables for consumption. Generally life seems bleak for him since the loss of his family land. (Interview: Ga-Molekana. 15.04.2015)

The decline in the agricultural activities of the Pitjeng homestead shows some of the recent downward trend where the growth of a dynamic group of rural agricultural accumulators is now highly unlikely. In many of our research sites, as has already been argued, there was evidence of rural accumulation within the local agrarian economy. For instance, some of our research participants owned more than one ploughing field. Others borrowed more land through social networks paying for its use in kind. These are often non-monetised arrangements which point to localised land markets embedded in social networks. In some instances, people mobilised resources from wage employment, acquiring expensive agricultural equipment to become highly productive in their farming. Tractors are often used to provide ploughing services to fellow villagers providing an additional avenue for earning money from agriculture. This dynamic and upward growth of agricultural activities in Mapela and Kekana villages has waned following mine-related land dispossessions, relocations and other disruptions to agricultural activities.

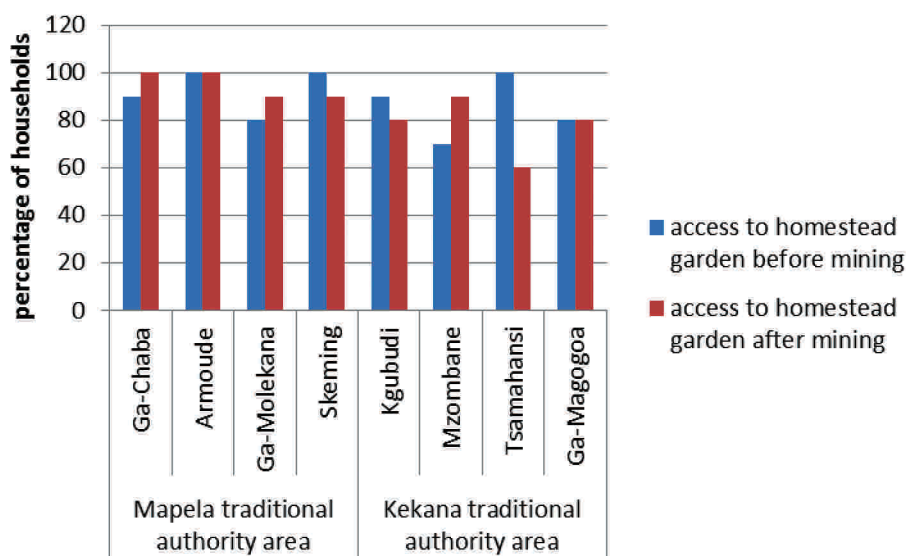
Access to homestead plots in Mapela and Mokopane traditional authority areas

Research in South Africa's rural areas has shown that in times of crisis and precariousness rural households withdraw from the cultivation of large ploughing fields and concentrate their efforts and resources on smaller land allotments: homestead gardens.

While large ploughing fields are located beyond the confines of the village, land within the proximity of the homestead is readily available by virtue of establishing a homestead. Homestead gardens also constitute relatively small portions of land. Homestead gardens are easier to manage than large ploughing fields, which require households to mobilise significant resources in the form of draught power, agro-inputs and labour. The cultivation of homestead gardens is also differentiated. Mostly, well-off households erect perimeter fences around their homestead and household plots. This allows them to secure their crops from being destroyed by both sedentary animals within the homestead and grazing animals. In some contexts, a decline in the cultivation of large ploughing fields has resulted in the intensive cultivation of homestead gardens, with increases in both yields and the range of crops being cultivated. Thus, residential plots play a critical role in the local agrarian economy.

Research in Mapela and Kekana shows that homestead gardens are an important agricultural resource which ensures household food security. Homestead gardens in these villages are usually a mixed crop farming system with households growing maize, different types of vegetables and some legumes. The research participants noted that crops grown in homestead gardens are critical in subsidizing household food expenses. Most villagers argued that with access to

Figure 6: Access to homestead gardens in Mapela and Kekana villages (n=80)



various food supplies from their gardens they rarely spend money on food from the local grocery shops and retail supermarkets. In spite of the resilience of homestead garden cultivation in other contexts, there has been a slight decline in the cultivation of crops in homestead plots in the Kekana and Mapela areas.

In both Kekana and Mapela areas households have not successfully been able to shift resources and efforts from the cultivation of large ploughing fields to cultivating homestead gardens. Instead, there has been a decline of cultivation in homestead gardens alongside the much more dramatic decline of cropping in large ploughing fields. This can be accounted for by the relocation process, whereby households had to prepare new land around the homestead yard. The newly settled villagers, for instance in Armoede, have argued that the soil quality is very poor compared to their previous

village. This has resulted in stunted growth of crops and very poor yields from the homestead gardens.

Others in Ga-Chaba and Ga-Molekana argue that dust deposits from the blasting activities in the mine have gradually reduced the soil fertility of their homestead gardens. Both Mapela and Kekana households have experienced a persistent 'water crisis' which they argue is linked to the mining activities happening in their communities - mining is by nature a water intensive activity. The water crisis in Mapela and Kekana is manifest in the depletion of ground water sources with boreholes only holding water intermittently during peak times of the rainy season, and the enclosure of water bodies, for instance dams, without mechanisms to ensure adequate access by host communities. This forecloses any possibility to supplement rainfed agricultural activities through irrigation or other rainwater harvesting methods.

Figure 7: Crops grown in homestead gardens in Mapela villages (n=40)

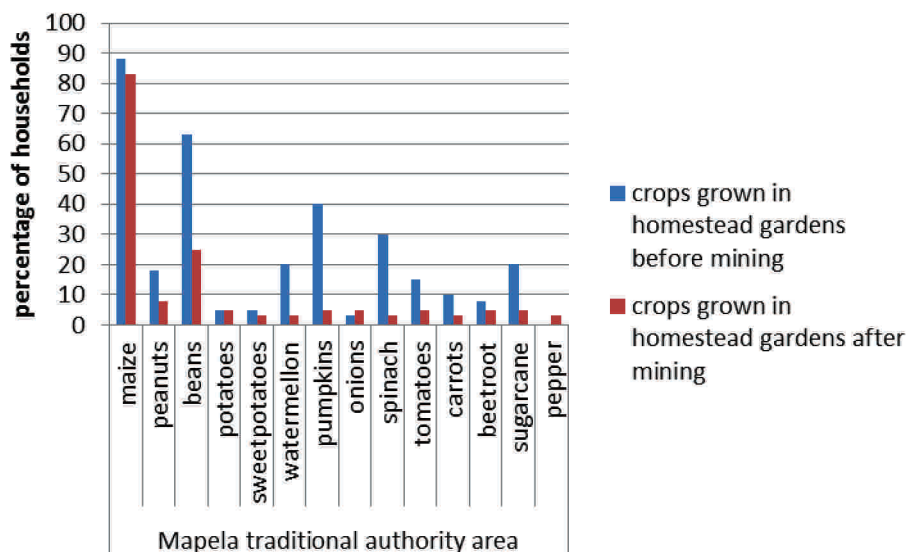


Figure 8: Crops grown in homestead gardens in Kekana villages (n=40)

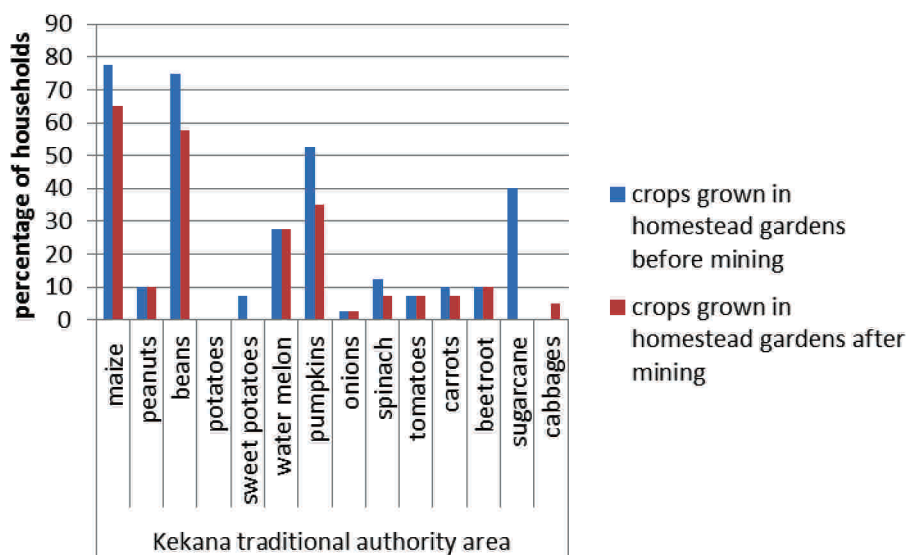
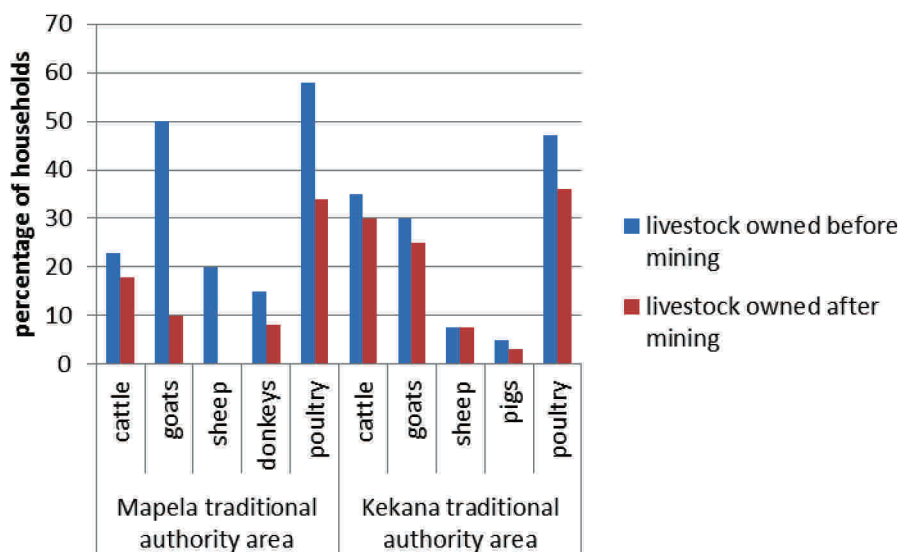


Figure 9: Livestock production in Mapela and Kekana villages (n=80)



In both the Mapela and Kekana areas, maize and beans were the most widely grown crops in homestead gardens (see Fig. 7 and 8) and there is a sharp decline in the production of these crops following the establishment and expansion of mining activities in the area.

Some research participants argue that with the decline in homestead cultivation they have had to spend more money on purchasing food. Furthermore, before the mining-related disruptions to local food production, most households grew a wide range of crops in their homestead gardens. The diversity of crops grown in the homestead gardens has declined remarkably in the period following increased mining activities in both Mapela and Kekana villages. Some respondents have

said that with the narrow range of crops available from gardens, and with little disposable income to afford food from the retail supermarkets, they now have limited dietary choices. This has also led to the disappearance of some local cuisines which could be readily prepared using fresh supplies from the homestead gardens.

Livestock production in Mapela and Kekana traditional authority areas

Livestock has long been a cornerstone of the rural agrarian economy. In both the Mapela and Kekana areas research participants argued that cattle were important for draught power, meat and milk. Cattle and other small livestock also continue to play an important

Plate 3: Cattle kraal in a homestead in Kekana area (Katlego Ramantsima 2015)



role in the ceremonial life of rural households in the area. This includes the use of animals for paying the bride price, their slaughter for funerals and other cultural ceremonies (cf. Cousins, 1996; Ainslie, 2005).

Our research findings show a decline in the number of households keeping different types of livestock in both Mapela and Kekana. Survey data in Fig. 9 shows that the decline in livestock rearing has been experienced with respect to cattle and small livestock like sheep, goats and poultry. Thus, the proportion of households keeping sedentary and grazing animals has declined in the villages of Mapela and Kekana.

Conclusion

Evidence on the ground clearly shows that land-based and agrarian livelihoods remain significant. Rural dwellers have continued to practice agriculture under inequitable and precarious conditions. With infusion of resources from non-agricultural sources of income, mainly wage earnings and remittances from oscillatory migrant labour, agricultural activities have remained resilient and a key component of rural life. Yet this happens in an overall context where industrialisation is accorded a high priority status on the basis of its historical role in fostering growth and absorbing mass poverty. The envisaged transition

from land and agrarian forms of livelihood to non-agricultural forms of livelihood, particularly secure and steady wage employment, remains elusive especially for the bulk of the rural population.

The current conjuncture is characterised by a limited labour absorptive capacity of the economy and the overall failure of industrialisation to fulfil its historical role of absorbing mass poverty through employment generation. It is against this background that land-based and agrarian livelihoods become indispensable for rural households. Mining related land dispossession is resisted partly because of a lack of alternatives for those who are evicted from their land and not absorbed in the new and emerging economies.

Four

Dispossession, divisions and resistance

The issues surrounding community relocations in the Mapela area, particularly questions around human rights, have been discussed at length by various studies, above all in a path-breaking report by the NGO Action Aid (2008), a follow-up study by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC 2008) and an academic commentary by Farrell, Hamann and Mackres (2012).

Amplats vehemently refuted the 2008 Action Aid findings that relocated communities were not properly compensated (Amplats 2008:4). Amplats' view is that its relocations have improved people's lives which "is why the great majority of people have voluntarily chosen to relocate" (Amplats 2008:4). In 2014 Amplats reported it had spent almost R800 million in relocating more than 7000 Mapela residents since 1998 (when initial 'consultations' began) (Amplats 2014). According to the mine, this process is due to be finalised by 2015.

However, at the time this study was conducted there were still about eleven families who had resisted relocation and were occupying their homes in Mholotlo amid the mine dumps. Conditions for these families when we visited were difficult, with no ploughing fields, water sources, schools, or animals. Strikingly, we also found that some of the relocated people of Ga-Sekhaolelo in Armoede wanted to return to Mholotlo, which they now remember with nostalgia.

In the previous chapter we looked at the dispossession of land that communities have experienced, and the impact of this on agriculture-based livelihoods. But land - the use of it and the 'ownership' or tenure of it - is significant for many other reasons. The loss of land and relocation of households has had a far greater impact on local communities, and caused a far more complex set of grievances, than straightforward economic concerns around a decline in cultivation. In this chapter we discuss in more depth the relocation process that households underwent in the context of mining expansion, and the causes of the profound feelings of

discontent and resistance to mining that we have witnessed in the study areas.

We look at the process of community engagement around relocation, loss of access to natural resources, concerns around compensation, escalating local tensions around gendered and generational access to land, customary land tenure, community representation and accountability, unfulfilled promises of employment, and the deep unhappiness over the relocation of graves. We detail these findings based on the eight study villages in the Mapela and Kekana traditional authority areas, Mokopane.

4.1 Relocation, problematic engagement and discontent

The land in the Mapela and Kekana areas today is held and administered under customary tenure. The brief history discussed in Chapter One lays ground on how the current relations over customary land and political power intersect. The mantona³⁸ (traditional authority headmen) allocate residential plots and ploughing fields to members of their village wards. Once land has been allocated it remains within that family and its ownership is passed on from generation to generation.

But there is a fundamental tension inherent in communal land tenure systems in South Africa today. One of the consequences of the post-apartheid state's assumption that chiefs are the sole custodians of communal property has been the emergence of a role for traditional authorities in mediating mine-community relationships. As well as providing access to land for new mining projects, this can involve receiving and distributing funds provided by the mine for local development projects. There have been many instances on the platinum belt where this has factored in local political conflict, with the legitimacy of the chiefly power contested. To ameliorate this conflict, mines have turned to Section 21 companies to represent communities. But this has often produced similar grievances. We looked at this in a previous study on relocations from Armoede. In the first stage of the relocation process, the mine consulted the Mapela chief (Kgoshigadi Atalia

Thabantsi Langa, at the time) who then instructed the mantona (headmen) of the affected villages to oversee the formation of village relocation committees - the Relocation Steering Committees (RSCs). The RSC for Ga-Sekhaolelo consisted of 10 members (Farrell, Hamann and Mackres 2012:198). This committee reached an agreement with Amplats about relocation in October 2002 (Ibid). In 2003 the RSCs were reconstructed as non-profit organisations - the Section 21 companies³⁹ - "in order to be able to enter into legal contracts with Anglo Platinum as representative structures for the respective villages" (ibid). Former members of RSCs, now 'directors' of Section 21 companies, were paid monthly 'stipends' of between R4,000 and R6,000 (ibid). According to our respondents, Amplats facilitated the reconstitution of RSCs into Section 21 companies. Amplats, they said, was paying a lawyer who negotiated on behalf of the relocating communities, and advised the communities to reconstitute RSCs into Section 21s. However, some of the Ga-Sekhaolelo community members had objections concerning the appointment of the lawyer.

In one of the group interviews with residents of Ga-Sekhaolelo where the headman was also present, one of the respondents commented:

The mine was paying that man but I don't know who appointed him. Who appointed ...[the lawyer]? (Interview: Ga-Sekhaolelo. 07.04.2015)

To this the headman explained:

The Chieftainess recommended that we take ... [this lawyer] and we ended going with him. But I still maintain that we never chose... [the lawyer]! (Interview: Ga-Sekhaolelo. 07.04.2015)

Second, and perhaps more importantly, it was claimed that the lawyer and the members of Section 21s tended to exclude the community from key decisions about the relocation process. Apparently, they even overlooked the role of the ntona of Ga-Sekhaolelo. He explained:

We were never impressed by his [the lawyer] work. He used to only talk with the Section 21s. He would meet them in Gauteng without our knowledge. This is how I came to stop working with him and said that I don't want the Section 21 committee anymore. They also told me that I was only a headman, I had no business there. I must go back to my people and fulfil my headmanship duties. (Interview: Ga-Sekhaolelo. 07.04.2015)

The traditional authority also experienced challenges in working together with the Section 21s on matters relating to relocation. According to Kgoshi Langa, his predecessor and mother Kgoshigadi A. Langa, was initially involved in the Section 21s but later withdrew due to lack of transparency within these structures. He also found the fact that the lawyer representing the community was paid by the mine to be quite problematic:

The Section 21s first invited my mother [Kgoshigadi Langa] to take part as an ex officio member in their structures. But her role was limited she ended up resigning because there were certain things the Section 21 members were not transparent about. Again there was a conflict of interest in a sense that Anglo [Amplats] was paying the lawyer directly. He was not paid by the Section 21s. (Interview, Kgoshi K. D. Langa. 10.06.2015)

In 2005 Amplats signed the final relocation agreements with the Section 21s and the lawyers. According to Amplats:

During 13 October 2002 and July 2005 the various agreements ...were negotiated through consultations at more than 400 community meetings were held [sic], and the final agreements were then ratified and adopted by both the Ga-Puka and Ga-Sekhaolelo in 2005. (Amplats 2008:17)

Nonetheless, members of the community we spoke to felt excluded and were dissatisfied with the process. It was at that point that the Motlhotlo Development Committee (MDC) was formed to oppose the Section 21s and to voice community concerns about dissatisfaction with the relocation process and other issues, including compensation and alternative land for ploughing. This had minimal impact, however, and Amplats still did not engage directly with the community. Meetings about the relocation between the mine and community representatives continued to be held in faraway venues. One of the former members of the MDC explained:

In most cases the meetings that were arranged by the mine took place at the hotels in Sandton Johannesburg, sometimes Protea Hotel or the Range in Polokwane. It costed a lot of money for transport to go and attend meetings at the hotels to meet with the mine and legal

representatives. But the mine paid all the costs. Attending meetings at the hotels was a problem because we would often end up agreeing to things that the community could have disagreed to. (Interview.Ga-Sekhaolelo.02.04.2015).

The lack of proper structures for community engagement resulted in a top-down approach whereby ordinary villagers were excluded from key decisions. Critical issues around the land questions, significance of agricultural livelihoods, and meanings of land both as a productive and cultural resource were largely overlooked in both Mapela and Kekana areas.

Green files, 'databases' and marginalisation

At the level of the family, Amplats primarily engaged with the head of each relocated family (household). In their 2008 report, they state that:

The head of each household signed an agreement in which the terms of his/her relocation were agreed together with the size, and location of the house to which he/she and the family living in the present house would be relocated. Minutes of the meetings proving consultations are available. (Amplats 2008:17)

Having carried out these consultations, Amplats relocated 459 Ga-Sekhaolelo families from Mohlotlo to Armoede between 2007 and 2014 (Amplats 2014). The Section 21s liaised directly with the community through regular village meetings at the kgoro. Through this model, only one person in each family took decisions and signed agreements about compensation, house size and other critical issues on behalf of the rest of the family. It is to this person that the mine paid once-off compensation for loss of ploughing fields (R1,000-R5,000), the R1,500 for each relocated grave and the R20,000 to cover relocation expenses.

The mine gave each head of household a file - a 'green file' - which detailed the specifics of the old and the new homesteads including an audit of trees, ploughing fields and other things to be compensated. This was part of the audits and agreements forged with individual homeowners. This ensured, among others things, that the sizes of the new houses were equal to those that the relocated families had in Mohlotlo. The file also served as a means of identification for the head of household in negotiations with the mine. During the initial stages of the audit the household heads were issued the 'red files'. According to Amplats:

One-on-one agreements were developed with each homeowner: These specified all aspects of the new house and monetary compensation. The agreements were scoped in a process with the homeowner. First the audits (two) of existing were done and signed off by the homeowner and the Nduna (headman), second "Red Files" were developed detailing the first proposal presented to homeowners, thirdly "Green Files" were developed incorporating homeowner comments, and finally the "Freen Files" were signed off by each and every homeowner individually. Each stage involved the Community Operational Team facilitating. (Amplats 2008:19)

A number of issues have arisen out of this process.

4.2 Inadequate and unequal compensation

In Ga-Sekhaolelo, the relocated residents generally did not complain about the new houses that Amplats has built. But they are deeply dissatisfied with the compensation they received from the mine for loss of ploughing fields, grazing land, trees and other natural resources. Compensation for loss of ploughing fields differed significantly from household to household. Most of our respondents said they did not know the exact details of the method used to calculate compensation sums. They claimed that the Section 21s and mine management decided the figures using their discretion and estimations based on the size of the ploughing fields lost and the number of trees in the homestead. For the ploughing field some families received R1000 while others received up to R5000. Residents also complained that the land Amplats allocated for ploughing after relocation was neither suitable for ploughing nor sufficient in size for everyone. A resident explained:

Before we were here [in Armoede] we had ploughing fields. They compensated us in the form of money, but the mine's compensation was not even enough. For instance, my family had 20 hectares, but we were given only R4500.00 when we relocated to this area in 2007. In 2008 they began to distribute the land that you see as you enter Armoede for the people to plough. The land that I am talking about is where you see the old farm building. But that land was not enough for the entire community ploughing land. When they were building the main road they removed the top soil and left the rocks

underneath. People could not plough the land because the top soil was removed. Till today we were never provided with enough land to plough. (Interview.Ga-Sekhaolelo. 08.04.2015)

Our survey data confirms this finding. As shown in Figure 2.3, Ga-Sekhaolelo is the only one among the selected study villages that has lost all access to ploughing fields after the commencing of mining.

The mine also offered compensation for trees, unfinished structures and boreholes, which community members feel was inadequate:

When we were still in Mohloto the 'audit officials' calculated the value of our property and gave us money. I remember at home we had 28 trees. They gave us R2800. Each tree was worth R100. Unfinished structures were valued according to their size and stage of completion, for which we were given R24000. They advised against completion of these structures. For the borehole the mine gave us R8000. (Interview. Ga-Sekhaolelo. 08.04.2015)

Although the Platreef Mine is fairly new and has not begun its operations, its compensation model for the village ploughing fields had produced similar forms of discontent and inequality. The mine has fenced off more than 10 685.71 hectares of land where locals have historically raised crops and grazed animals (cattle and goats), buried their loved ones and accessed a variety of natural resources. Out of 19 villages in the Kekana area, Platreef has selected only eight 'affected villages' that it directly engaged with: namely, Madiba; Ga-Magongoa, Masehlaneng, Masodi, Mzombane; Sekgobokwe; Tshamahansi, and Kgubudi. The engagement with residents in these villages is mainly through their headmen. When this study was conducted there was still contestation how these directly and indirectly affected villages are selected.

In Ga-Magongoa, some of the residents who had lost access to their ploughing fields had received an amount of R5250 from Platreef as compensation. Some confirmed that they received this payment twice. Generally, farmers were not satisfied with this form of compensation. There were also strong allegations that Platreef officials coerced the village elders into signing the compensation agreements without understanding the contents. A respondent explained:

People were robbed. They were threatened to give away their ploughing fields. They were told

that if they don't sign documents to give away their ploughing fields, would no longer receive their social grants. The mine made an agreement with Kgosi and his mantona without consulting the community. (INT.4.Mr.Glen Monye.Mosesetjane.13.09.2015)

Group interviews in Ga-Magongoa revealed that some of the village farmers who signed the compensation contracts believed that it was a temporary arrangement. They said officials from the mine promised them that a new contract with a more substantial form of compensation would be signed immediately after prospecting was over (INT.8.Group1 Ga-Magongoa.15.09.2015).

Compensation and tensions within families and the community

The mine's primary focus on the home owners alone when distributing compensation has negatively affected the youth and women, and has been insensitive to the cultural norms of the area, whereby homesteads are occupied by extended, rather than nuclear, families.

At the household level, we also found women to be vulnerable to marginalisation during relocation. Customarily, married women had to access land rights through their husbands. Amplats channelled relocation compensation and other benefits to male household heads since men are the main holders of land rights. In cases where the husbands had passed away, their widows became recipients. However, when both parents had passed away, the surviving female children would not be eligible to receive direct compensation or have the new house registered under their names unless there was no male sibling. A female respondent explained:

The money was received by my mother. If my mother was no more, then the last born male child would receive the money. But, since the last born has already passed on then that means that they would give it to the remaining boy child. This is because the girl child would eventually get married and leave things at home as she would be reunited with her new family. (Interview.Ga-Sekhaolelo. 08.04.2015)

We also observed that, in cases where two or more male siblings continued to live in their parents' homestead in Mohloto after their parents passed on, relocation displaced the siblings who, according to custom, are not entitled to inherit their parents

homestead. For instance, before relocation, Mr Hlongo⁴⁰, a man in his late 60s, had stayed in his late parent's homestead with his family (wife and children) sharing with his younger brother and his family. During relocation, the mine gave the new home in Armoede to his younger brother since, according to local custom, the youngest male inherits the land and homestead of the late parents. Mr Hlongo and his family could not stay with his brother in the new home for two main reasons. First, unlike the old homestead, the new house did not belong to his late parents - it was his younger sibling's property. Second, unlike the old homestead which was traditionally built with separate small structures, the new house in Armoede is a modern structure. It has rooms inside - not separate small structures. As such, it is not suitable to permanently accommodate more than one family as the traditional homestead in Mohlotlo. Mr Hlongo and his family left Mohlotlo due to mine relocations in 2007 without any compensation and went around the villages looking for a place to stay. They obtained a piece of land - a residential plot - in Ga-Chaba through a local headman. His wife's family (also living in Ga-Chaba) helped them to build a shack on the new residential plot where they now live. They survive on government old age grant and they also plant maize and some vegetables on their homestead garden.

In Ga-Magongoa, Mrs Rhano⁴¹, an 87-year old woman whose ploughing field had been fenced off for the Platreef operations had also fallen into a bitter dispute with one of her sister's daughters over the R5250 compensation. According to Ms Rhano, she and other members of her family had been ploughing on her land for more than 30 years before the mine took it. The land was left to her by her late sister and brother-in-law (sister's husband). Ms Rhano, a divorcee, raised her late sister's children, and depended on raising crops for food. There were never any tensions around the use of land in the Rhano family until Platreef officials came looking for the owners of the ploughing fields to sign a contract and receive the R5250 compensation. One of Mrs Rhano's late sister's daughters prohibited her from signing the contract and receiving the compensation. This left Ms Rhano extremely unhappy and her family extremely divided. She asserted:

My niece did not share it (the money/ compensation from the mine) with me - I would be lying through my teeth! Hostility between us ensued after that. I explained to that mine representative that I had used my own resources to look after that piece of land and grow crops for decades. My niece said that I wanted to take

food out of her mouth. She went to the ntona and lodged a complaint. She also informed her son who became angry and started to threaten to kill me. The first time he came to my house he did not find me as I had stopped over at a friend's place after a church service. His death threats were narrated to me by neighbors upon arrival. He returned. He asked why I wanted to steal his family's inheritance. I raised that young man and now he was accusing me of petty theft! I reminded him that I looked after him and his entire family. (INT.5. Ga-Magongoa.17.08.2015)

Marginalisation of the Youth

Many young people felt marginalised by the expansion of mines, process of relocation, and compensation, in all study villages. Our interview data revealed that youth marginalisation eclipsed gender-based marginalisation as the key driver of grassroots anger and resistance in all study villages. To start with, young people felt marginalised by the limited manner in which many young people participated in decisions about mining-related issues at the village level. The group interviews we had with the youth revealed that many young people felt that the elders and traditional leaders dominated community meetings where mining-related issues were discussed. Senior mine officials often led these meetings. As a result, decisions have been made which have had a negative effect on the young.

According to our respondents, in March 2001, while relocation negotiations were still in progress, it was decided that headmen should stop issuing new residential stands. This decision disproportionately affected the young, who turn to headman to be allocated their own homesteads as they leave their parental home or start families of their own. The decision was taken on 17 March 2001 in a meeting attended by Chieftainess Langa and her traditional council, Amplats representatives, local municipality (Mogalakwena Local Municipality - MLM) councillors, and the mantona from three villages: Ga-Sekhaolelo, Ga-Molekana and Ga-Puka. According to the minutes of this meeting that we obtained from Ntona Sekhaolelo and his village council (on 07.04.2015), new stands were to be issued at Armoede after relocation, and Amplats management promised to build toilets, provide water taps and erect fencing (Minutes: Ntona Sekhaolelo 17.03. 2001). Amplats also requested the database (list) with the names and the number of stand-holders in the village. Community members who did not already have residential plots could not be included in the list. When Ntona Sekhaolelo later submitted a second list including

other adults who were not stand holders, he said Amplats never acted on it. Only those named on the original database of residential stand owners were issued with green files and were subsequently the recipients of compensation. Our respondents claimed that after relocation, Amplats did not fulfil its promise of providing fenced plots with toilets, taps and electricity connections for community members who were due for allocation of new residential plots in Mohlotlo. They claimed they were blocked from obtaining them by the mine's relocation process. One respondent said:

We are still fighting with the mine management because they promised us that those among us whose names were on the new database will get residential plots with a tap and a toilet but they never kept that promise. When we arrived here [in Armoede] we gave the mine the second list and they said they will keep their promise. But they never did that. Until today we are still going up and down about that issue. (Interview: Ntona Sekhaolelo. Ga-Sekhaolelo. 07.04.2015).

This is only one of many promises that youths feel have been broken. Unemployment is also among the main causes of anger:

When the mine first came and presented their relocation vision and promises to us, I was genuinely impressed. They were hitting all the right notes, especially with their understanding of our socio-economic issues. They talked about how they would take the youth away from the streets through educational opportunities. Those who could not be absorbed into mainstream education would be offered vocational skills training. Senior citizens who did not yet qualify to receive pension grants would be partnered with the disabled to start cooperative projects and young people would find employment in the mine and our parents would not need to depend on farming to feed their families. The mine is yet to fulfil any of those promises. (INT.8. Ga-Sekhaolelo. Group 2.08.04.2015)

According to respondents (officials) at Mogalakwena Local Municipality (MLM), Amplats's recruitment strategy does not enhance employment opportunities for local youth at Mogalakwena mine:

If you are mining in Mapela the first priority in recruitment should be people living there. Anglo American (Amplats) claims that there are no local qualified people while they advertise on national papers which don't have a reach into village

communities and not the local newspapers. (Interview: Mokopane 18.09.2015)

When asked to comment about the mine's local recruitment strategy Kgoshi Langa of Mapela also concurred:

To a large extent the problem with this mine [Mogalakwena] is that it is mechanised. It is not labour intensive. People get employed on contracts but for permanent jobs are few. For the mine to employ them [local people] they must have maths and science. So those who don't have maths and science feel that they are being marginalised. (Interview, Kgoshi K. D. Langa. 10.06.2015)

We also found that there was division amongst the youth about whether employment in the local mines could be considered a form of compensation for loss of land. Despite the high unemployment and poverty rate, and the many young people desperate to get any job they can find, some of the youth felt that even if the mines were to provide jobs, the wages would not compensate for the loss of land and the damage to the local environment. Some even feel that working for the mines will expose them to physical harm and health hazards. In fact, they feel that working for the mine is an unjust form of compensation for their communities who had been dispossessed by the mines. To them, mine employment was equal to settling for less. They wanted the mine to share its profits with the families that have lost their livelihoods on a monthly basis. Some youths, who perceive no apparent benefits accruing to the community, and many negative effects, have taken the position that they want the mines to close. Criticising those who wanted employment one of the young activists argued:

The only thing they are interested in is getting jobs. We want to stop mining in my area, but they want to work. When people are hungry, you cannot convince them that the food they want to eat contain poison. They will just eat and not mind the poison. Truly speaking, most of the youth from my area have no vision at all! If I wanted to work for the mine, they would have employed me long time ago. And then I would work and get sick and die. How can I work for the mines that are here to kill us? They are here to kill us! For me it doesn't matter whether it is Platreef or any another mine, I won't work for them. (INT.4. Mr. Glen Monye. Mosesetjane. 13.09.2015).

Despite significant levels of marginalisation and visible lines of differentiation, some of the traditional leaders did not acknowledge any defects in the approach adopted by the mines in engaging with the local communities and the manner in which the mining companies decided on and distributed compensation moneys. When asked if the village farmers ever complained to him about loss of land and compensation, Kgosi Kekana argued:

There were no complaints, but orders [from the residents who lost land]. They wanted everyone to be paid moneys individually and things like that. Look, if we are going to see the loss of crop farming fields due to mining, then a resolution must be reached with people who own the ploughing fields - not everybody. If it is cattle grazing land you negotiate with the people who actually used that land for grazing. (NT.Kgosi Kekana and the Mokopane Traditional Council .Mosate.15.09.2015)

The response of leaders is illustrative of the divide between chiefs and the people they represent. As a response to their marginalisation by the mine some of the young people in Ga-Sekhaolelo have started returning to Mholotlo to build small dwellings in the land that remains in-between the mine dumps. There have also been several protests against the mine and

the tribal authority since relocation took place.

4.3 'Our graves should be placed close to us!'

The issue of graves was also at the centre of popular discontent. Some residents felt violated because they had lost contact with the graves of their loved ones because of mining. Although Platreef had not yet exhumed or relocated any graves in the Kekana area when this study was conducted, some of the graves were already enclosed within the massive area fenced off for its operations. Our respondents in Ga-Magongoa complained that the mine was operating very close to the graves of their family members, thus violating South African Heritage Resource Agency's (SAHRA) standard requirement of not less than 100 metre radius. Some also that Platreef had not properly consulted with them about the matter of the impending relocation of their family graves.

According to our respondents in Ga-Magongoa and Tshamahansi Platreef the mine (Platreef) had approached some of them about relocating the graves of their family members in the mineral rights area. For relocating the graves, they said, Platreef was proposing a compensation arrangement called a 'wake fee' to be paid to every family whose graves were going to



Plate 4: A structure constructed by young people in Mholotlo (Popopo Mhlala 2015)

be relocated. Reading from a document which he said was given to him by the mine officials one of the local activists, a leader of a village organisation called Lebjana Grave Relocation and Land Claim Committee broke down the figures of the 'wake fee' as follows:

- R1000.00 for each and every grave to be reburied in the formal grave yard. This figure would be paid to the local headman.
- R950.00 for a coffin,
- R300.00 per blanket to cover the coffin,
- R3500. 00 for an accredited funeral undertaker/funeral parlour to take the remains to the formal grave sites,
- R6000.00 for groceries,
- R8800.00 for an animal to be slaughtered for the ritual,
- R1500.00 for transport of the next of keen,
- R200.00 for airtime and
- R3200.00 for tombstone (INT,.28.08.2015)

In total, the Platreef mine was to pay approximately R25 000 for the relocation of each grave if an agreement was to be reached. But when this report was written there was still no agreement between the mine and the communities about the actual compensation for the impending grave relocation.

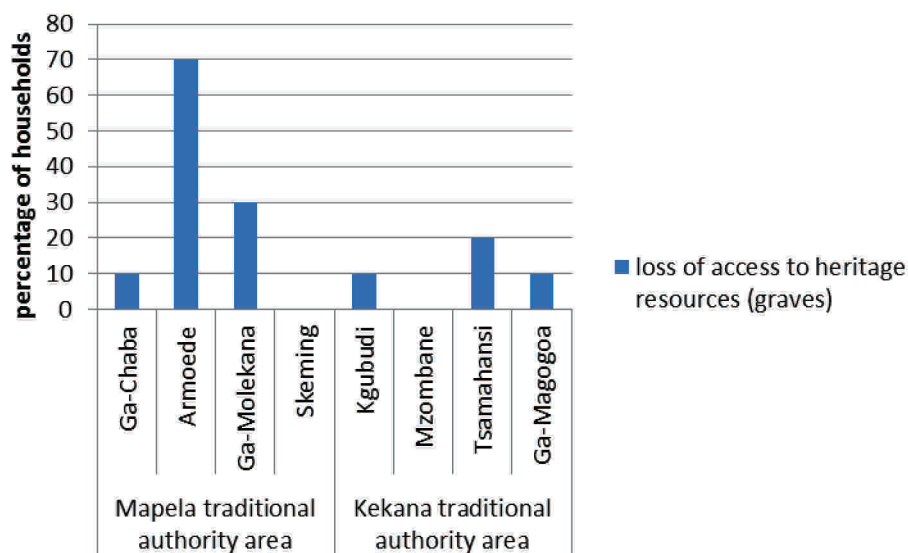
Between 2000 and 2012 Amplats relocated more than 2,200 graves (Amplats 2014) from within its mine lease area to different grave sites in the Mapela area. These graves belong to families in different villages, including Ga-Sekhaolelo. In Ga-Sekhaolelo we found that although there is discontent about the money residents received from Amplats as compensation for grave relocations (R1500 per grave), there are two main issues that make some of our respondents feel violated by the mine. First, not all the graves were successfully relocated. Many respondents complained that graves of their relatives are still at Mohloto, and that some have been lost under the mine dumps due to failings by the company hired to manage the exhumations.

The issue that continues to haunt some resident is that of the graves of children who were either stillborn or died as young babies. Culturally, such bodies are usually buried behind the house. If at some stage the house is extended, the grave will end up inside the house. The graves were relocated before the people of Ga-Sekhaolelo moved to Armoede, and those who had graves of their children behind or inside their houses were told to relocate their families to their new homes first before their children's graves were exhumed. After relocation some were told the graves were missing while other families said the mine and the contractor simply did not go back to exhume the bodies of their children after



Plate 5: Graves inside Platreef mining right area: (Katlego Ramantsima 2015)

Figure 10: Households which lost access to heritage resources (graves) (n=80)



relocation. A woman in her early 60s narrated the story in tears:

I lost one important thing when we left Mhlotlo - my child's grave! My child passed away when she was eleven months old. We buried her behind the house. When we extended the house we extended over the grave. When we were relocating the mine promised that they will exhume my child's body when they demolish the house after we have left Mhlotlo. But this was not done. I left my child's remains behind and no one is saying anything about helping me get the body exhumed. Since 2008 I have been pleading with the mine and the people from Section 21. In 2013 when mine representatives came to our kgoro I asked them to buy a coffin because I wanted to go and dig the up the grave myself. They never responded to my request. (Interview: Ga-Sekhaolelo. 02.04.2015)

She also believes that the un-relocated grave is making her other children sick, poor and unemployed. Another woman whose child's grave was not relocated concurred:

One day the baby will give problems to one of our family members in their dreams and say that we have forgotten about him as his body is left behind. (Interview: Ga-Sekhaolelo. 02.04.2015)

The second challenge about the graves that the people of Ga-Sekhaolelo complained about was how relocated graves of their relatives were buried far away from their new homes (Armoede). Amplats provided no gravesite

close to the village, therefore people are unable to perform rituals as often as they would like. It is also unsafe for people to go there alone or in small groups. They maintain that Amplats never consulted them first before reaching the decision about the alternative burial site.

4.4 Resistance

In this context, we found that resistance to mining was escalating in the study area. There had been several episodes of community protests against mining, especially in the Mapela area where Amplats has operated on a massive scale for over 20 years. Most of the time community protests were either violently suppressed by the police or ended up in unfulfilled promises and empty agreements. Resistance took different forms in the study villages. Protest, albeit violent and risky (villagers risk being shot or imprisoned at times) seemed to be the most uniting and somewhat effective form of resistance to the mine. Our findings suggest that loss of rural livelihoods and new forms of marginalisation were at the root of the escalating tensions between locals and mining capital. In Skimming, for instance, resistance to mine expansion was rooted in competition for land. As the Mogalakwena mine expanded its operations in the early 2000s it made agreements with the Mapela traditional authority. Villagers were told that the land had been leased to the mine, so they could not use it. As more people required residential plots the village expanded eastwards towards the mine. Subsequently, conflict between the mine and the residents intensified in the late 2000s. In

2012, the mine called in police and armed guards to remove residents of the new plots by force. Shacks were demolished and some residents were arrested (Interview. Skimming.24.04.2015).

While this research was still in progress, in August 2015, a two-week long protest against Mogalakwena mine took place. Residents had a number of complaints that differed slightly from village to village. One of the common complaints was that the mine did not prioritise local youth in its recruitment processes. The youth complained that the mine was employing people from far away, whose local environments were not affected by mining operations. Another common demand among the protesting villages was compensation for the loss of ploughing fields and grazing land for animals. Protesters also complained that Amplats and Chief Langa did not consult properly with the community about mine-driven development projects in Mapela. In villages close to the mine residents demanded that Amplats must act swiftly in dealing with dust pollution and damages caused by mine blasting to their houses. People of Ga-Chaba and Skimming villages demanded the reopening of the old Seritarita Secondary School (in Skimming). They were against Amplats' relocation of the school to Sandsloot village which is several kilometres from away from Skimming. The school is located close to the mine and had been closed due to blasting at the mine site. The community demanded their old school be reopened because they could not afford to pay for their children's transport to and from the new school that the mine has built, and Amplats had made no provision for transportation.

For two weeks, residents blockaded the roads connecting to the mine, thus, prohibiting any entry to the mine. As a result, many workers at the Mogalakwena mine could not report for work. Protesters burnt down and vandalised a part of the Mapela traditional authority offices, the chiefs' house and the community development infrastructure provided by the mine, including the sports stadium and the agricultural project at Ga-Chaba. They also torched a truck passing by carrying potatoes and it was left badly vandalised.

Resistance to mining led to harassment of the villagers by police and other authorities. Police tried to disperse the protesters by shooting with rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. More than 50 protesters were arrested and charged with public violence, damage to property and other charges. One of the protesters, a woman, was shot and injured during these shootings.

The then Minister of Mineral Resources Mr Ngoako

Ramatlhodi had to intervene. He facilitated a two-day negotiation meeting between the Mapela community and Amplats which was held at the chambers of the Mogalakwena Local Municipality buildings in Mokopane on the 9th and 10th September 2015. The aim of the meeting was to chart a road map towards resolving the long-drawn dispute between the mine and the community. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Mineral Resources, Mogalakwena mine's Operations Manager Mr Richard Cox, and representatives from protesting villages, South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), and NUM. Only five villages sent representatives to be part in this meeting: Ga-Chaba, Ga-Sekhaolelo (Armoede), Strekwater, Skimming and Leruleng. Other villages had no confidence in the process initiated by the Minister and decided not to take part. It is worth noting, however, that the Mapela traditional authority was not represented in the meeting. The meeting reached an agreement to elect a task team to deal with community grievances. The interviews we had with some of the village activists after the protest revealed that the two-day meeting and its agreement did little to rebuild trust between the community and the mine. One of the activists in Ga-Chaba commented:

“There is no agreement. Those people [the mine and the SAHRC] are playing with us. We want compensation!” (Telephone Interview: 02 October 2015).

The residents in the Kekana area have also had similar protest matches and even attempted, on several occasions, to stop the mine from taking their land through the courts of law.

Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with a number of key grievances which have culminated in community resistance to the mines. Loss of land, inadequate compensation, the problematic process of relocation and the resulting family and community tensions, and concern over the relocation of graves, have created an atmosphere of anger, disillusionment and distrust. The findings demonstrate that resistance to operations of Amplats and Platreef mines in Mokopane is not only rooted in the struggles over mining-led local economic development opportunities (jobs, etc), but it is deeply entrenched in the agitation for an alternative livelihood source, for example for a more sustainable system compensation on a monthly basis. Such findings point towards the less reported effects of rural-based mining expansion in South Africa.

Five

Reflections

In this report, we have detailed the findings of the study which investigated the impacts of Anglo American Platinum's (Amplats) Mogalakwena mine and Ivanhoe's Platreef mining project in rural communities near Mokopane, in Limpopo province, South Africa. Among the key findings the study has shown how contemporary forms of mining-led dispossession were preceded by other forms of dispossession in the study area at different historical moments. Drawing mainly on archival and secondary material, we have discussed the history of land dispossession of Africans in the study area. We have demonstrated how the history of land dispossession in the Mapela and Kekana areas was rooted in the colonial state's refusal to acknowledge and recognise the precolonial character of power and rights of Africans to land and land-based resources. Like elsewhere in Southern Africa, the process of systematic alienation of land belonging to Africans was simultaneously applied together with the process of the colonial state's crystallisation of its own control over African population by significantly empowering a few traditional authorities. Such processes did not only enhance the power of a few chiefdoms in Mokopane (including Mapela and Kekana), they also entrenched the control of colonially recognised chiefs over rural land. The weak nature of African rights to landed property also culminated in alienation of mineral rights from African communities in Mokopane. In Chapters Three and Four, this study had demonstrated how the loss of land and mineral rights laid a strong foundation for contemporary forms of dispossession, which creates uncomfortable continuities with the apartheid past.

The analysis and discussion of the survey material in Chapter Three has shown how land-based livelihoods have systematically diminished at the face of rapid mining expansion in Mokopane. Mining-led dispossessions have led notable decline in agricultural activities in the rural villages of Mapela and Kekana. Although crop farming and domestic livestock production had cleverly suffered at different historical moments due to earlier forms of land dispossession (during colonial and apartheid periods), the recent

occupation of huge tracts of farming land by mining activities has evidently constrained the flourishing of livestock and crop production. Our findings suggest that households that had been resilient in agricultural productively despite earlier forms of dispossession have begun showing strong signs of decline of agricultural activity due to mining expansion. Mining related land dispossessions have undermined the food security of households in these localities. In instances where compensation has been paid to the dispossessed and relocated households, this has been barely enough to make up for the loss of livelihoods experienced by the households. In their own words, villagers repeatedly argued that they relied on their land to produce food that would sustain them from month to month throughout the year. Consequently, the once-off cash payments from the mine were not commensurate to the benefits previously derived from owning and utilizing their arable land. The rallying cry amongst the villagers has overwhelmingly been about *Kgwedi ka Kagwedi*. *Kgwedi kagwedi* meaning that reproduction and consumption needs are requirements they deal with on a daily if not monthly basis. Since produce obtained from ploughing fields, for instance, constituted a huge component of household reproduction and consumption requirements, a once off payment in the form of compensation for loss of land is seen as highly inadequate and unjust. The excerpt below is illustrative:

Because they have taken our ploughing fields each and every household should benefit, every month end there should be some income that we get to purchase food. They are able to benefit hourly from the land they took from us which is unfair because there is no other mine that does not produce as much as they do. [Interview, Ga-Sekhaolelo (Armoede) 31/03/2015.]

Our findings also suggest that relocation has led to marginalisation of some social categories as a result of the manner in which customary land rights are structured and how the mine interpreted these rights when distributing its relocation benefits. Interview evidence suggests that social categories that were not favoured by custom to hold land rights were marginalised during

and after relocation. These categories include the youth, unmarried women and male siblings who were living in their parent's home before relocation and are not, according to custom entitled to inherit the homestead.

The findings presented in this study connect to the grammar and agency of rural resistance to mining. Although resistance in the study villages took different forms it often culminated in turbulent episodes of community protest action.

Finally, this study has shown that large scale mining investments have not in the Mokopane case adequately addressed the high unemployment rates, poverty and lack of services and infrastructure that face the rural communities of South Africa's former homeland areas. In the Mokopane area, Anglo American Platinum's Mogalakwena mine is fully established and has been operational for some years while Platreef is a new mine expected to resume operations in the near future. Yet there are similarities in the two business models, the

socio-economic features of their host communities, the impacts on the local economy and the overall trajectory of development ensuing from these large-scale mining ventures. Some locals drew contrasts between Ivanhoe's Platreef positioning of itself on the international stage as a world-class mining corporation, and the poverty and deprivation of their everyday lives. Villagers argued that more needed to be done to ensure that investment models were more inclusive. The case of AngloPlatinum's Mogalakwena mine in Mapela has allowed Mokopane villagers hosting Ivanhoe's Platreef mine to witness how the 'win-win' scenarios portrayed in large-scale mining deals do not always materialise. The Mogalakwena case study exemplifies how local communities often do not benefit meaningfully from large-scale mining investments while different powerful groups and interests capture the benefits. Thus, such a shortcoming demonstrates that the current wave of rural-based mining expansion and its emerging forms of marginalisation, establishes yet another episode of dispossessing historically dispossessed African families.

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Keynotes

- ¹ Six platinum-bearing metal elements (iridium, osmium, palladium, platinum, rhodium, and ruthenium) that have catalytic properties and are used for a variety of purposes, including making jewellery, autocatalysis, electronics and chemical reagents.
- ² Also called 'Bantustans' - the ten ethnically-defined semi-autonomous African 'states' that were created during apartheid for Africans/Blacks in South Africa in order to exclude them economically, socially and politically. Homeland governments were dissolved in 1994 when the first democratic government was elected.
- ³ Citizens of the Boer Republic.
- ⁴ Report by the Commissioner for Native Affairs Relative to the Acquisition and Tenure of Land by Natives in the Transvaal (Pretoria, Government Printer, 1904), pp. 33, 46.
- ⁵ South African National Archives (Hereafter SANA) Gov 1085 182/06 Location Commission Report on Valtyn Makapan's Location, 1907.
- ⁶ SANA Gov 1085 182/06 Location Commission Report on Mapela (Masibi) Location, 1907.
- ⁷ SANA ACT 46, 1082/21, Land Department, Minute to Native Affairs, 8/4/07.
- ⁸ See for examples Wits Historical Papers SAIRR, AD843 B44.12, Waterberg.
- ⁹ Department of Native Affairs Transvaal Administration Reports for 1904, pp. C61 - C62.
- ¹⁰ Established to determine the distribution and nature of African settlement and to decide on areas to 'release' from the restrictions to African land purchase and occupation of the 1913 Natives Trust and Land Act.
- ¹¹ Natives Land Commission (Beaumont Commission), Minutes of Evidence, p. 338.
- ¹² Beaumont Commission, p. 307.
- ¹³ See evidence of Beaumont Commission and later Land Commissions, also M. Hay, "Buying Naboth's Vineyard: The Challenges of Land Transfer Under the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act" - many of the same processes can be seen in the Waterberg area.
- ¹⁴ For an example see SANA LDE 1775, 32357/23, "Notes which might be of interest regarding the method of control of the native squatters on the 60 farms comprising the New Belgium Estate or Block".
- ¹⁵ SANA NTS 3696 1673/308, Secretary for Native Affairs, confidential note, 19 October 1917; *ibid*, Telegram, from Potgietersrust Natives Department to Natives Department Union Buildings, 20 October 1917.
- ¹⁶ SANA NTS 7121 476/323.
- ¹⁷ See Wits Historical Papers (Hereafter WHP), SAIRR papers, AD 843 B44.8, Notes on the session of the Nat. Aff. Com. (afternoon session with natives).
- ¹⁸ For more examples see also WHP SAIRR, AD843 B44.12, Waterberg.
- ¹⁹ SANA NTS 3626 1149/308, Agricultural Supervisor to the Director of Native Agriculture, 18 November 1935.
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, Agricultural Supervisor to the Director of Native Agriculture, 18 November 1935.
- ²¹ *Ibid*, Magistrate, Potgietersrust to Reinecke, Native Affairs Department, 10 September 1935.
- ²² NTS 3677, 1479/308, Agricultural Field Assistant, Potgietersrust to the Additional Native Commissioner, Potgietersrust, 19 July 1937.
- ²³ *Ibid*.
- ²⁴ NTS 3677, 1479/308, Secretary for Native Affairs to The Chief Native Commissioner, Northern Areas, 8 April 1938.
- ²⁵ NTS 3696 1674/308, Naturelle-Aankope Waarderingsrapport Vaalkop 256.
- ²⁶ NTS 3626 1149/308, Additional Native Commissioner to The Chief Native Commissioner Northern Areas, 1st June 1940; NTS 8979, 199/362(2), Native Commissioner Potgietersrust to the Chief Native Commissioner, Northern Areas, 19 July 1954.
- ²⁷ See Esterhuysen (2012) and Skosana (2012) for more on disputes over the Kekana Chieftaincy.
- ²⁸ Johannesburg Public Library, S Pam 631.11 (682) TRA, H.A Bailey, The Transvaal Landowner's Association Handbook, 1908.
- ²⁹ The proceeds of the sale of mineral rights were used to purchase the farms Scirappes, Bavaria and Blinkwater. The mineral rights to these three farms were already reserved by Transvaal Consolidated Lands.) NTS 3536 442/308, Native Commissioner, Potgietersrust to The Secretary for Native Affairs, 16 July 1926.
- ³⁰ SANA NTS 3536, 442/308, Statement of Receipts and Payments on Account of the Langa Tribe.
- ³¹ SANA NTS 8979, 199/362(2) Mapela Tribal Authority

estimates 1957 - 1960. Also see A. O. Jackson, *The Ndebele of Langa*, Ethnological Publications No. 54, Pretoria, Department of Co-operation and Development, 1978, p. 61.

³² See SANA NTS 3696 1674/308

³³ Servitude K216/38S

³⁴ Online: Mine Profile: Mogalakwena
www.angloamerican.com/media/our-stories/mine-profile-mogalakwena on: 01 August 2015

³⁵ A Canadian company specialising in minerals exploration and development of mining projects based in Vancouver, British Columbia.

³⁶ A Japanese consortium owns 10% of Platreef and diverse Black Economic Empowerment hold a 26% stake (residents in 19 villages of Mokopane hold (20%).

³⁷ These include the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act of 2003 (Act 41 of 2003, or the TLGFA), the Communal Land Rights Act of 2004 (Act 11 of 2004) and the Traditional Courts Bill (B15-2008).

³⁸ Ntona - Singular.

³⁹ Section 21 companies are non-profit entities formed in terms of South Africa's Companies Act No 61 of 1973 ("the Companies Act"). Such companies or associations are incorporated in terms of Section 21 of the said act 'not for gain'.

⁴⁰ Not his real name.

⁴¹ Also not her real name.



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