

## **Entre population locale et migrants : exploitation minière et politiques d'appartenance dans la province rurale du Nord-Ouest en Afrique du Sud**

Sonwabile Mnwana

### *Résumé*

*S'appuyant sur des études ethnographiques détaillées menées dans les zones d'autorité traditionnelle de Bafokeng et Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela dans la province du Nord-Ouest, en Afrique du Sud, cet article démontre que l'expansion minière dans les régions rurales de la ceinture de platine tend à intensifier les oppositions entre la population locale et les migrants (particulièrement les mineurs). Ces affrontements sont lourds de revendications identitaires collectives exclusives et de notions d'appartenance contradictoires. Selon l'auteur, l'espoir de retombées économiques locales générées par l'exploitation minière, même s'il est souvent illusoire, a non seulement intensifié les tensions au sein des groupes ruraux défavorisés, mais a aussi considérablement modifié les relations sociales. L'appartenance joue un rôle central dans les tentatives pour déterminer qui bénéficiera des fruits de l'exploitation du platine, et qui sera tenu à l'écart.*

# Between ‘Locals’ and ‘Foreigners’: Mining and rural politics of belonging in North West province, South Africa

Sonwabile Mnwana<sup>1</sup>

## *Abstract*

*Based on detailed ethnographic research conducted in the Bafokeng and Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela traditional authority areas in South Africa’s North West province, this article demonstrates how mining expansion in rural areas on the platinum belt tends to intensify struggles between ‘locals’ and ‘migrants’ (mostly mine workers). Such contestation is fraught with claims to exclusive group identities and conflicting notions of belonging. I argue that, although infrequently realised, the hope of mining related local economic benefits has not only intensified tensions among the rural poor, but also significantly changed social relationships. “Belonging” becomes central to attempts to determine who benefits from the fruits of platinum mining and who does not.*

## **Introduction**

It has now become common knowledge that the platinum industry in South Africa has overtaken the gold industry as the major player in the mining sector, thanks to a “platinum boom”, which lasted for more than a decade (roughly mid-1990s to 2007/8). South Africa’s enormous rock formation, known as the Bushveld Complex – with over 80 per cent of the world’s known platinum group metals (PGMs) reserves – has been the basic source for the platinum boom (Cawthorn, 2010: 205; Mnwana, 2015a: 500-501).

Generally perceived to be a ‘major engine of job creation’, mining accounted for 524,632 direct jobs in 2012 (Chamber of Mines [CoM], 2013). The platinum sector accounts for nearly 60 per cent (CoM, 2013) of these jobs. However, like its gold predecessor, the platinum sector relies on a massive African migrant labour force, low wages, and poor working and living conditions to bolster its profits (Chinguno, 2013: 33). Although migrant labour in South Africa is no longer characterised by state compelled movement of men between rural ‘homelands’ and urban industrial centres, it

nonetheless continues, largely due to employment opportunities in the platinum industry and a few others elsewhere (Makgetla and Levin 2016). Continued labour migration comes with significant challenges, including overcrowding, violent labour unrest (Mnwana 2012, Chinguno, 2013; Makgetla and Levin, 2016) and contestations at local levels (Mnwana 2015a). So far, local struggles have received limited empirical attention. This article attempts to address this gap.

Since the decade-long platinum price boom ended with the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008-09, the platinum industry has faced challenging circumstances. In particular, it has drawn the world's attention as the centre of prolonged wage-related strikes by mineworkers. A five month strike in 2014 led by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) was the longest in South African mining history and dealt significant financial harm to both employers and employees (CoM, 2015). This strike was preceded by a period of violence which left 44 people dead, including 34 mine workers gunned down by members of the South African Police Service – the Marikana massacre – in August 2012. The major platinum producers – Anglo American Platinum, Impala and Lonmin – reported a combined loss of R24,159,010,320 (roughly US\$1,702,684,000) at the end of the 2014 strike, while striking mine workers lost R10,737,248,472 (roughly US\$756,742,000). The recent drop in the platinum price from a high of around \$2,000 in 2008 (CoM, 2015) to less than \$900 in 2015 adds another challenge.

The vast area spanned by the platinum-rich Bushveld Complex, often called 'the platinum belt', lies beneath rural communal land. Such land falls under the political jurisdiction of traditional – 'tribal' – authorities. Densely populated communal areas are the focus for a new expansion of the platinum industry, particularly in the North West and Limpopo provinces. Like all former 'homeland' areas in South Africa, these rural communities bear the legacy of apartheid, having fallen under the 'independent homelands' of Bophuthatswana and Lebowa respectively. Such historical labour sending areas are characterized by extreme poverty, massive unemployment, poor education standards, and near absence of basic services (Mnwana, 2014b).

Local chiefs have become mediators of mining agreements between communities and mine capital. Recent research shows that much local conflict on the platinum belt, especially in North West province, is rooted in grassroots resistance to local chief's self-

interested intervention in mine-community relations through control of mining revenues (Mnwana, 2014b, Mnwana, 2015a, Mnwana and Capps, 2015). Allegations of corruption and the unaccountability of local chiefs have culminated in protracted court disputes and violent protests. Groups of marginalized villagers are making strong claims on mineral rich land. They argue that their forefathers bought mineral-rich farms as private property, which should never have become tribal land in the first place (Mnwana and Capps, 2015).

Based on an ethnographic study conducted in the Bafokeng and the Bakgatla-ba-Kgafela (henceforth Bakgatla) traditional authority areas in the North West province, this paper reveals that mining has produced intense struggles and competition at the local level. Such struggles are fought through claims to exclusive group identities and conflicting notions of belonging. The politics and meanings of belonging and citizenship have hence become central to attempts to determine who benefits from the fruits of platinum mining and who doesn't.

Contemporary dynamics of social difference in mineral-rich rural areas in Africa remain poorly understood. For this article I focus on struggles over mining revenues in the Bafokeng and Bakgatla communities. My primary focus is on claims made by 'locals' who identify as ethnic 'Bakgatla' or 'Bafokeng' against migrants who come to work or seek employment in the mines.

### **Mining, rural struggles and belonging**

In developing countries, mineral policies tend to attract enormous investments for the mining sector and to exclude the interests of local communities. The tendency for states to focus mainly on promoting large-scale mining activities, to the neglect of the welfare of local communities produces serious social challenges. Community dislocation occurs. This is due both to dispossession of valuable farming land and a massive influx of migrants seeking employment in mining locales (Hilson and Yakovleva, 2007: 99).

Banks (2005: 189), for instance, examining "the effects of large-scale mining in Melanesia" (where Porgera Gold Mine operates), contends that local landowners complained that mining occasioned tremendous anxiety in their communities due to a rapid influx of migrants, referred to by locals as "people we do not know". Not only does the mine migrant influx lead to extensive breakdown of social cohesion, but Banks (2005: 189) also observes that migrants

are blamed for deterioration of traditional forms of governance and escalated drinking, gambling and prostitution. An equally challenging situation is found in the Cajamarca region of Peru (Bury, 2007), where rapid growth of new large-scale, multinational mining operations has led to enormous capital increases and an influx of migrants and new mining technology. Such developments have culminated in displacement of households and communities (Bury, 2007: 378). Studies such as Bury's underpin the importance of understanding shifts in social relationships, particularly notions of belonging and identity construction, in mine-hosting communities.

New rural identities and notions of belonging are thus emerging in South Africa and other parts of Africa and the globe, along with growing conflicts over access to land and natural resources. Literature addressing threats to rural identities and senses of belonging is mounting. Scholars have argued that neoliberal capitalism has laid the foundation for emphasis on social differences and a politics of belonging in contestations over rural resources in Africa.

Peters (2004: 269-270), for instance, uncovers increased struggles over land and landed resources. She locates commodification, market liberalisation and globalisation as leading to situations and processes that have excluded specific social groups in competition over resources. Peters questions the "flexibility" and "negotiability" of African customary land holding systems. She argues that their supposed flexibility and negotiability tends to be limited to certain social categories (the ruling elite, powerful groups etc.) and excludes others ('outsiders', 'foreigners', 'non-citizens', ethnic 'strangers', the poor, etc.). Thus, Peters urges a concerted empirical effort to identify classes of landed and landless, particularly where values of landed resources rise dramatically as a result of commodification and increased competition for such resources (Peters 2004: 269-270, 293).

Woodhouse (2003) details a similar argument. Drawing on several empirical cases, he suggests that, "wherever land values rise it is possible to identify processes of commodification and individualization of access to land – 'enclosure' – which reduce access to land for the poor" (2003: 1717). Although such studies focus largely on conflicts over resources, they connect significantly to the interface between resource struggles and notions of belonging such as ethnicity and citizenship.

Lund's (2011) work connects these issues well. He argues that rural land claims by individuals and groups in rural Africa are "partly defined by social identity and social identity is partly defined through property rights" Lund (2011: 72). Indeed, as he states, "the argument of belonging has been brought to bear by different groups as a claim to both resources and jurisdictions in Africa and elsewhere." Ethnicity and citizenship (as forms of belonging through which rights to property can be claimed or protected) become crucial in contemporary rural struggles. Therefore, belonging to a local or national political community – citizenship itself – becomes crucial in claiming rights. Lund explains, "while national citizenship rarely – if at all – formally discriminates between groups, or between men and women, local citizenships are often segmented to the detriment of certain categories of people" (Lund, 2011: 72). "Segmentation" of citizenship or the "narrowing" of definitions of belonging "is one of the key dynamics in the differentiation of land rights and access to resources" (Lund 2011: 74). It is on such segmentation of local citizenship – as a form of belonging – that this paper lays much of its focus.

Recently, rural struggles in platinum-rich communities in South Africa's North West province have intensified in tandem with mining expansion in the area. Studies have highlighted ongoing contestation on the platinum belt from various angles. With close analysis of the institutional legacy of the former homeland 'state' of Bophuthatswana, Manson and Mbenga (2012) argue that contemporary struggles in the North West province indicate a revival of previously suppressed ethnic identities. According to these authors, the post-apartheid era's termination of the exclusive "Batswana ethno-nationalism" that Chief Lucas Mangope (the then President of Bophuthatswana) imposed on black communities in his homeland, has led to a resurgence of local ethnically defined polities in the light of new platinum-engendered economic fortunes – thus "leading to forms of a better defined ethnic sense" (Manson and Mbenga, 2012: 109).

Some analysts have nonetheless identified serious challenges that cast this phenomenon – which Manson and Mbenga (2012: 96) also identify as "mineral-based ethnic assertiveness" – as bypassing the rural poor. Recent research reveals new forms of rural contestation on the platinum belt. Claassens (2014), for instance, connects such rural struggles to distortions promoted by post-apartheid "traditional

authority” legislation<sup>2</sup> in South Africa. She argues that these laws have not only re-established old apartheid boundaries but also enhanced the powers of local chiefs over local communities and “imposed tribal identities that undermine [poor local residents’] right to equal citizenship and constrain their capacity to enforce and protect their land rights” Claassens (2014: 777).

Recent studies have found that local chiefs have assumed exclusive control over land and mining revenues (putatively communal property) (Mnwana, 2014b; Mnwana, 2015a; Claassens and Matlala, 2014). Since most disputes between local elites and disgruntled community members are fought in courts of law, the economic advantage the chiefs enjoy, coupled with distorted versions of custom used by courts and the ‘new’ legislation, make it difficult to challenge corrupt chiefs. Downward accountability is often impossible to realise (Mnwana, 2014b). Disputes are also rooted in exclusive *group* claims over property. Village groups claiming mineral-rich farms argue their forefathers bought the farms as private properties, and, as such, they should never have become tribal land in the first place. Villagers thus tend to contest mining contracts that are signed by local chiefs supposedly on behalf of rural residents (Mnwana and Capps, 2015).

Anthropologists Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) provide one of the most detailed and influential recent theoretical accounts of shifting ethnic identities and the rural politics of belonging. In what these authors conceptualise as “Ethnicity, Inc.” they observe that in many parts of the world (including South Africa) the politics of ethnic identity culture and tradition are rapidly being “moved to the market place” (commodified) (p.7). Among key elements of “Ethnicity, Inc.” discourse is a process of “incorporation of identity, the rendering of ethicised populations into corporations of one kind or another” (p.21). With huge business empires worth billions of rand, built through mining investments (joint ventures, shareholdings etc), the Bafokeng and Bakgatla “tribal communities” aptly fit the phenomenon of successful ‘rebranding’ of ethnic identities into large corporate brands.

In fact, Comaroff and Comaroff cite the Bafokeng case as a prime example of the ‘incorporation’ of ethnic identity through investments in mining capital (p.98-116). But how do these “commodified” ethnic corporate bodies deal with rapidly changing social landscapes engendered by rural-based mining expansion?

How is membership of a ‘corporatized’ ethnicity defined, redefined and claimed when mining benefits are mobilised and distributed? How do claims over belonging get expressed in such contexts and by whom? Most importantly, which social categories become privileged and which marginalized or excluded when the politics of belonging and identity are ‘taken to the market place? Answers to these questions remain poorly understood.

There has been limited empirical analysis of the dynamics of social relationships and struggles at micro level. So far, very little is known about how local politics of belonging intercept with struggles over the economic benefits of platinum mining among the rural poor. A closer analysis of social relationships at village level is required to understand less-reported conflicts between rural ‘locals’ and migrants on the platinum belt.

## **Methodology**

This study is a product of several years of field research in the Bafokeng and the Bakgatla traditional authority areas in the North West province. I have spent varying durations of time (one week to four months at time) in both communities conducting fieldwork intermittently between 2008 and 2015. I began this work in 2008 (2008-11) as part of my PhD fieldwork. I returned in 2013 to the research site, as a researcher (with the Mining and Rural Transformation in Southern Africa project) with two research assistants<sup>3</sup> and we conducted detailed ethnographic fieldwork in the Bakgatla area from 2013 to 2015. We have also made more than ten follow-up visits to the study area. We conducted key-informant and group interviews with a total of more than 80 respondents from the two villages to understand the social impact of the adjacent mining activities. Respondents were purposively selected from a range of members of traditional councils, mine officials, village activists, youth, mineworkers, and municipal officials.

For this article I draw on selected in-depth interviews and unstructured observations conducted in two villages in the study area: Ga-Luka in the Bafokeng region and Sefikile village in the Bakgatla region. These two villages were selected mainly because they host some of the oldest and largest platinum mining operations in South Africa. Impala Platinum (Implats) has operated numerous deep shafts around Ga-Luka village for many years while Sefikile village adjoins one of the oldest and largest operations of

Anglo American Platinum (Amplats), the world's largest platinum producer. Proximity to mining operations makes the two villages more likely to experience an impact from mining than other villages. During the different stages of data collection we recorded detailed observation notes while participating in a range of local activities and cultural ceremonies during fieldwork. These included *makgotla* (village meetings), youth gatherings, weddings, funerals, and court disputes on land and succession.

### **The study area: a portrait**

Nowhere else in South Africa is the word “platinum” more ubiquitous than in the North West province. In this province the “platinum” tag is everywhere. As one moves from the fast-growing town of Rustenburg and travels north-westwards through the newly renovated Boshhoek Road, which connects to the world-famous Sun City resort, engulfed within the magnificently towering Pilanesburg mountain range, almost every corporate identity, street name, municipal property, community building, youth organisation and sports club bears the “platinum” tag. These include “Platinum Stars” (the football club of the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN)), “Platinum Municipality”, “Platinum School”, “Platinum Clinic”, “Platinum Furniture”, “Platinum Shoe Stores”, “Platinum Street”, “Platinum Youth Organisation”, “Platinum Tavern”, “Platinum Cash Loans” etc. There is hardly a street that does not have a “platinum” identity. In 2009 there was even a huge billboard along the Boshhoek Road near Phokeng village (Bafokeng area) declaring “Platinum made the world our stage”.

This ostentatious interpolation of platinum as ‘the saviour’ has done little to change the situation on the ground. Most villages surrounding the world's largest platinum mining operations are characterized by extreme poverty, severe inequality and high unemployment (Cook, 2013; Mswana, 2014a, 2015).

The Bafokeng and Bakgatla are leading traditional communities in South Africa in terms of mining investments with access to mineral revenues. These largely Setswana-speaking communities fall under the Rustenburg and Moses Kotane Local Municipalities, respectively. Both communities have strong traditional institutions of community governance. The top echelon of power in both communities is occupied by the *Kgosi* (Setswana term for chief or king). The current *Kgosi* of the Bafokeng is Kgosi



and Bakgatla ‘tribes’ – is deeply connected to the recent history of platinum mining expansion in their territories. As historical recipients of mining royalties for minerals extracted on their land, these traditional authorities have since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century entered into significant business deals with mining companies. As a result, it is local chiefs who manage and control complex investment portfolios and business empires worth billions of rand on behalf their ethnic citizenries (‘tribes’) (Mnwana 2014a, 833). Chiefs and their traditional councils in both communities have channelled these dividends and other forms of mining revenues towards local infrastructural development projects, including schools, clinics, sports stadia and shopping centres. When this study was conducted, the Bafokeng traditional authority, in particular, through its corporate entity (the Royal Bafokeng Administration) even provided tap water to most locals who owned residential plots<sup>4</sup> in the Bafokeng area (Mnwana, 2015b). However, as we shall see later, distribution of mining revenues has become more contested, exclusive and challenging due to the influx of migrant miners.

When this research was conducted most people in the study communities lived in poorly built, dilapidated houses, even though some lived very close to the beautiful road infrastructure and the world-class football stadium in the Bafokeng area or the new shopping mall in the Bakgatla area. Poor housing conditions reflect the poverty in these communities despite considerable mining revenues the local chiefs receive, control and supposedly distribute on behalf of the local populace.

Ga-Luka is in many ways an ordinary village. Although there are some beautiful, well-built modern houses visible along the main road, corrugated iron sheet-built shacks and dilapidated old houses are scattered all over the village. Sefikile also presents an unsettling scene of raggedly dotted about, small homesteads with generally poorly-built iron shacks and mud structures. Of course, if one takes a walk through the narrow paths inside the village it is possible to spot a few homesteads with well-built houses. Homesteads are clustered around a small rocky mountain also called Sefikile. Sefikile is a conspicuous model of a neglected mine-hosting village. There are massive informal settlements on the north-western and south-western margins. Migrant miners who work for the Union Mine reside in these shack settlements. The village is extremely overcrowded. It must take a daily miracle for one small

primary school and one secondary school to cater adequately for the education needs of scores of children from the village and surrounding informal settlements. When we conducted this study the two schools were the only visible public service facilities in Sefikile. Were it to be completed, the abandoned, half-built structure of a village clinic would have been another public service facility.

Both villages are targets for scores of job hunting migrants, many of whom end up working for the local mines and staying permanently. Although most migrants are from the Eastern Cape of South Africa, there are also many from Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland.

### **Tensions between ‘locals’ and ‘foreigners’**

The main finding of this study is that expansion of mining in the impoverished villages of Ga-Luka and Sefikile has significantly altered local social relations. In both study communities, claims to belonging were differently expressed by different social groups. The study demonstrates how belonging in platinum-rich communities gets articulated and reaffirmed through claims to autochthony and ethnicity. Due to the complexity of the politics of difference in these traditional authority areas I mainly focus on conflict between two social categories that dominate the social landscape in Ga-Luka and Sefikile villages: local villagers (autochthons) and migrants. In both study communities Setswana speakers expressed strong autochthonous claims that sought to exclude from mining revenue migrant miners regarded as ‘foreigners’.

Autochthonous claims were primarily expressed in terms of property – land and ethnicity. ‘Locals’ specifically premised their claims – over belonging – on being descendants of the original inhabitants and owners of the local territory – land. Along with such group identities went strong exclusive claims to land and landed property. This finding came out especially strongly in interviews conducted at Sefikile village.

#### *Sefikile*

The impact of the mining operations is more visible in Sefikile than in any other village in the Bakgatla area. All around the village, pastoral and agricultural land has been lost to mushrooming informal settlements which provide homes to thousands of migrant mine workers and job seekers.

Just like elsewhere in the post-apartheid South Africa, mine workers at the Union Mine (near Sefikile) have no longer been confined to overcrowded single sex hostels. Under the new mining regime workers receive an incentive called a ‘living-out allowance’ if they opt to live outside the mine premises. In 2013 the majority of workers at Union Mine had left the hostels: most resided at Kwecheza informal settlement, massively encroaching on former communal farming land, while others rented backyard shacks in and around Sefikile. Amplats did not provide alternative accommodation for workers who had left the hostels – indeed, it forbade settlement on mining land adjacent to the mine shafts. Workers who spoke to us said that they left the single sex mine hostels because they wanted to live with their families. They thus built their own shacks ‘illegally’ on communal land alongside Sefikile village. This deepened ethnic tensions.

It was in the early 2000s that migrant miners forced their way onto Sefikile’s communal land. The largest informal settlement, Khwecheza, straddles the land between Union Mine and the original village of Sefikile. As a result of heightened tensions about their loss of communal land, residents of Sefikile generally refer to Khwecheza residents as ‘foreigners’.

Villagers who expressed strong autochthonous claims against migrants, insisted that land in and around the village was theirs and had been from time immemorial – they are the original inhabitants of the land at Sefikile. As such, they viewed the occupation of the land both by the mine and its migrant workers as significant violation of their property rights. At times villagers tried to summon the authority of the chief to defend their land rights. They told how, trying to stop the development of Khwecheza, they had pleaded with *Kgosi* Nyalala to intervene. Despite several attempts to get the chief’s intervention, however, he never acted. Some alleged that “foreign” occupants of Khwecheza had paid the chief to get residential plots.

An elder from Sefikile narrated his experience:

*Foreigners are mainly the Xhosas from the Eastern Cape and Basotho from Lesotho. I was here when they started to occupy our ploughing fields by force. It all happened just under my nose. The chief did nothing to stop it (Interview: Sefikile, 14 August 2013).*

A village activist in Sefikile who was also a Union Mine

worker narrated the events that led to the establishment of the informal settlements:

*Foreigners are the mine workers ... who are occupying our land illegally. This all started when these guys began moving out of the hostel and occupied the land behind this mine hostel [pointing through the window], the A Hostel. Unfortunately, the management of this mine removed them. Police came and demolished their shacks. That was when they began to occupy our ploughing and grazing fields at Sefikile. We tried to stop them. That's how the conflict started. (Interview: Union Mine, 7 September 2013).*

Figures in Union Mine's Social Labour Plan (2009-13) also point to the geographical origin of the migrant workers. Although, according to this document, most workers come from the North West, migrant labour forms a significant portion of the labour force. The Union Mine Categorises its labour force mainly into two categories (albeit quite a problematic categorisation):

1. Local employees: "those who originate from the mine community."
2. Migrant workers: "those employees who originate from the rural labour-sending areas, who live in hostels [provided by the mine] ..., and who have no formal local dependents". The mine further subdivides this category into three categories: provincial, South African, and foreign migrant workers ((RPM - Union Mine SLP, 2009, 4). See Table 1 below.

Table 1: Union Mines Labour Force

Labour Force	Foreign migrants from SADC (Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana)	Migrants from South Africa (mainly Eastern Cape)	Provincial Migrants (North West and Limpopo)	'Locals': Within 50km radius	Totals
Numbers	711	2029	1521	2985	7246
Percentages	9.8%	28% (22.1% from EC)	21%	41.2%	100%

Source: (RPM - Union Mine SLP, 2009 (2009-13))

Combined, the three subcategories of migrant labour accounted for 59 per cent (4261) of the Union mine's permanent workforce in 2009. The figures of workers employed by contractors in this mine also revealed the same trends. For instance, of the 2318 contracted employees 1546 (66.7 percent) were migrants (RPM - Union Mine SLP, 2009). More than 40 per cent of all migrant workers in this mine were IsiXhosa speakers from the Eastern Cape – one of the poorest provinces in South Africa. Most of these migrants lived at Khwecheza and other surrounding informal settlements.

At the time when this study was conducted, there were no services at Khwecheza except for a few communal taps and pit latrines in every small yard. There were no roads, electricity, health care centres, or even a school. Khwecheza remains an uncomfortable scene of poorly built, overcrowded shacks. Scores of little children run around narrow paths where droves of men drift slowly to and from the Union Mine.

The fading edges of what used to be ploughing plots were the only sign that there had once been productive agricultural land in the area now occupied by this informal settlement. One Saturday afternoon I visited Khwecheza together with four residents from Sefikile. They were eager to show me where they used to plough on the farm Spitskop. As we drove through this massive informal settlement we saw a small herd of goats foraging on the remaining patches of what used to be dense shrubs behind the shacks. An elderly woman who was part of the group that accompanied me lamented:

*Every time I see these goats I feel like crying. I used to own more than 40 goats. These people [the residents of Khwecheza] stole them all. Now they are farming goats. These are the goats they stole from us! (Informal conversation: Sefikile, 20 July. 07. 2013)*

Due to ethnic tensions, Khwecheza had been nicknamed by its inhabitants 'Thula Mswana' – isiXhosa for 'Shut up Tswana'.

### *Ga-Luka*

In the Bafokeng area claims over belonging also projected a strong ethnic mode. Ga-Luka remains one of the most overcrowded villages. When this study was conducted almost every yard had a row of small one-roomed flats (mostly shacks) in the backyard. These were rented out to migrant mine workers. Rental amounts

ranged between R80 and R150 (approximately US\$11-\$20 in 2009-2010) a month for a shack and R350 and R600 (US\$47-\$80 in 2009-2010) a month for a single-roomed brick flat. For many ethnic Bafokeng, rental income was the only form of income. Indeed, there was an implicit agreement in the area that only ethnic Bafokeng could own plots and thus could be 'landlords'. Respondents in Ga-Luka generally referred to this type of economic advantage as the 'hanging fruits' of mining or the "Jabulisa Specials". This term also referred to other small business opportunities that Impala Platinum and other local mining companies occasionally offered a few ethnic Bafokeng individuals in the community.

Backyard dwelling (another "hanging fruit" benefit) came at a price, however – namely, overcrowding. The renting out of backyards seemed lucrative to ethnic-Bafokeng stand owners, so much so that, despite reported objections by *Kgosi Leruo*, the practice seemed entrenched. The financial incentive of the 'living-out allowance' fuelled this practice. Most mines were phasing out hostels to meet the requirements of the Mining Charter. An elderly woman warned:

*If he (Kgosi Leruo) wants to have a riot in his hands, let him dare to remove our tenants from our backyards. We do not have income; our children are not employed by the mines. This [backyard dwelling] is the only way we can raise an income for ourselves from these mines. (Interview: 27 August 2009)*

Although expressed mainly through ethnic assertions, claims over belonging had a strong connection to landed property. Ownership or occupation of land in the form of a residential plot or a ploughing field in the study village was reserved only for the members of the ethnic Bafokeng 'tribal' community. The right to own a residential plot was subject to the approval of local power holders at various levels of the traditional authority structure, from local headmen to the traditional council. As such, non-Bafokeng migrants could not lay any claims to land. Ethnicity and property rights were thus inextricably linked and were fundamental to claims over belonging and claims over mining benefits.

As pointed out earlier, the traditional authorities in the study communities championed mineral-led development. This meant that chiefs used mining revenues to pursue public infrastructural

development projects among others, schools, clinics, sports stadia and shopping malls, and some services. Local chiefs saw mining revenues as a significant mining benefit (Mnwana 2014a). But benefits of this kind were fraught with challenging distributional issues.

Although local schools and health facilities, built through mining revenues (such facilities were generally lacking in the Bakgatla area), were available to everyone, there were some benefits that seemed to target only ‘locals’. For example, bursaries issued by traditional councils (in the case of both Bafokeng and Bakgatla) only targeted children of ethnic locals – non-Bafokeng and non-Bakgatla youth could not benefit from such study bursaries.

In the Bakgatla area, as another instance, when the new shopping mall was about to open in 2014, the chief ensured that traditional structures at village level were in charge of the hiring process for workers there. Village headmen collected the names and other details of job seekers in each village. They carefully screened them to ensure that non-Bakgatla did not get recruited. Names of and application details of job applicants from each village were sent to the Bakgatla Traditional Authority offices in Moruleng (the main village) for the final selection. This ensured that that traditional council prioritised the ethnic Bakgatla in the selection process. These are some of the mining benefits from which authorities in the study area favoured the ‘locals’ and explicitly exclude migrants.

As we shall see later, migrant influx in the Bafokeng villages challenged the provision of piped water. One outcome was that the chief and his traditional council were against the practice – by local Bafokeng residents – of renting out backyard shacks to migrant miners.

The mines had a different approach when dealing with their corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects – they focussed on ‘local communities’ close to the mines regardless of who they were or where they originated. “The communities we are impacting on”, as one of the mine officials at Impala Platinum (Implats) put it (Interview: 22 September 2009). Implats, for instance, explained that they prioritised local companies when procuring small businesses. They were also involved in other projects in various villages located close to their operations, including vegetable growing projects, piggery projects, a primary school in Freedom Park (an informal settlement in the Bafokeng area), roads, school library renovations

and multipurpose centres (Interview: 22 September 2009). The companies saw these as some of the benefits they were providing to local communities. According to Amplats, also, anyone residing in the area was eligible for such CSR benefits (Mnwana, 2012).

Tensions were also driven by competition over mine jobs between migrants and village youth. In both study villages, young people expressed strong disapproval about the hiring of non-Bofokeng/Bakgatla migrants by the mines: they felt that youth who were descents of ethnic Tswana locals should be prioritized when it came to job opportunities in the mines, and that migrants, even if they were living in the village (renting backyard flats) or in the surrounding informal settlement, were not local. A young man in Ga-Luka explained:

*We have a lot of immigrants in our village who come with their families and they take our jobs [at the mine]. But most youth of this area are unemployed. They end up committing crime. They steal wire cables in the mines in order to survive (Interview: 10 September 2009).*

The definition of the word ‘local’ varied considerably, depending on who was using it. The mines define ‘local’ as South African citizens in “towns, villages and settlements that fall within 50 km radius or greater to the mine” (RPM - Union Mine SLP, 2009: 3). Local tribal authorities define ‘local’ in terms of ethnic affiliation and identity. As a result local chiefs do not issue a ‘proof of residence’ (required by the mine when recruiting) to non-Bafokeng or non-Bakgatla even when they reside in their villages. A Xhosa woman in Khwecheza explained:

*Our children do not get hired by the mine [Union Mine] because they are not Bakgatla. The mine requires a proof of residence before they can hire someone. The traditional council won't give you that if you have a Xhosa [not Tswana] surname (Interview: Khwecheza. 06 December 2014).*

To some extent, the Union Mine may have contributed towards these exclusive autochthonous claims over belonging in Sefikile. For instance, the mine defines local employees as “those who originate from the mine community” (RPM - Union Mine SLP, 2009: 3). As a result, villagers expressed their claims to ‘local

belonging' by invoking exclusive ethnic identities and legitimising these through local political institutions – traditional authorities.

Local elected municipal councillors, however, did issue proof of residence to migrants who resided in the study villages. Indeed, migrants from other parts of South Africa, especially Xhosa people from the Eastern Cape, claimed to belong by invoking their South African citizenship. This became apparent in the contestation over who is 'local' enough to qualify for the economic benefits of obtaining mining jobs. When their claim to belonging ('locally') was refuted by the tribal authorities (who refused to issue them 'proof of residence'), Xhosa migrants, in particular, utilized their national political identity – as South Africans – to claim employment opportunities in the mines. They approached local municipal councillors. The latter recognized all residents in the area as 'locals' regardless of their ethnicity and origin as long as they were South African citizens and eligible voters. It was clear that the ANC (African National Congress) councillor at Sefikile enjoyed a lot of political support from migrant workers. In return for this support he acted as a 'channel' to economic benefits available to 'locals' (issuing them with documents required for mine jobs, providing social services etc.) that the chiefs were preserving as exclusive privileges for members of their local ethnic polities. It could be argued that the political dominance of the ANC in the North West province, especially in Moses Kotane and Rustenburg municipalities, was partly an outcome of this symbiotic relationship. Migrant mine labour provided a convenient boost of rural votes for the ANC while the ANC in return tried to shield migrants from at least some forms of social and economic exclusion. This argument requires an empirical examination of its own, however.

The ethnic discourse which distinguished 'locals' from 'outsiders/foreigners' was also rooted in struggles over provision of public services. In Sefikile, most migrants in the informal settlements did not have stand numbers, which made it difficult for them to get services from the Moses Kotane Local Municipality. Migrants also could not get services from the Bakgtla-ba-Kgafela Tribal Authority because they were not members of the tribe. Many local Tswana residents in Sefikile were in favour of this exclusion. For instance, a woman in Sefikile complained one day about the local municipal councillor's intention to connect tap water and electricity "to plots occupied by 'foreigners'". According to her,

by doing so the councillor was “inciting war between Xhosas and Tswanas” (Informal conversation: Sefikile, 10 August 2013).

The notion of ‘foreigners’ originated in the 1980s during the reign of former Bophuthatswana leader President Lucas Mangope. Mangope enforced a distorted version of collective Tswana identity to all sub-ethnic groups in his homeland – what Manson and Mbenga (2012: 98) term “Pan-Tswana ethnic nationalism”. It is said that Mangope used to deal harshly with non-Tswana migrant miners, referring to them as ‘foreigners’. Miners frequently went to Sefikile for beer drinking and women. Some residents narrate nostalgically how Mangope’s Bophuthatswana police used to chase and arrest non-Tswana miners if they were found ‘wandering’ in the village. The fact that these migrants did not possess Bophuthatswana passports validated their ‘foreigner’ status. The arrested miners were at risk of losing their jobs and of being deported back to their ‘homelands’.

It is worth noting that ethnic rivalry is also rooted in the history of labour mobilisation and the modalities of labour unrest in the study area during late apartheid years and the years soon after the 1994 democratic transition. As Dunbar Moodie’s (2015) work has shown, ethnicity was always central to workers’ mobilisation mechanisms and violent strike actions in the Bafokeng and Bakgatla areas during the said period.

Around 2009 the chiefs in the study area and other members of the tribal elite were concerned that the influx of migrant miners into their areas was creating a population crisis. In the Bafokeng area, for instance, infrastructure and services (electricity, water, education, and health) seemed overstretched. While mines, by their nature, tend to attract labour from all over South Africa and beyond, local communities such as Bafokeng and Bakgatla are saddled with the huge social burdens of inbound migration. According to a survey conducted in the Bafokeng area, the percentage of non-Bafokeng migrants in RBN is likely to escalate from 49 per cent in 2008 to 55 per cent in 2035 (RBN, 2009). The ‘inclusive’ character of the mines and municipalities and the exclusionist character of local tribal authorities seems like an unmanageable dilemma.

It is worth noting, however, that the Bafokeng leadership in particular has a long history of intolerance toward non-Bafokeng miners and other job seekers. It is reported that *Kgosi* Lebone, the father of the current *kgosi*, had during his rule “instituted a reign of terror” on the non-Bafokeng groups, particularly Xhosa and Sotho

migrant mine labourers who were backyard tenants to Bafokeng plot owners (Khunou, 2009: 96). Lebone's tribal court in Phokeng often tried the migrants, including their wives, and gave them fines. When they failed to pay the fines they were "sjambokked" (flogged) by the "Bafokeng tribal police force" (Khunou, 2009: 96). Most of this occurred during apartheid, when Mangope's "Batswana ethno-nationalism" was at its peak. In September 2010, Kgosi Leruo reportedly gave orders for the demolition of tuck shops in Ga-Luka and after seven tuck shops were effectively destroyed, the RBA-hired "demolishers allegedly also threatened to stop water supplies to the village and to demolish backyard rooms because villagers rented them out to foreigners" (Kotlolo, 2010: 1).

## **Conclusion**

The rapid expansion of platinum mining on communal land conjures a paradox of hope and conflict among impoverished villagers on South Africa's platinum belt. Case studies of two villages in South Africa's most prominent mining traditional communities – the Bafokeng and Bakgatla – reveal the complexity of social relations in such situations.

Mandated by the 'new' democratic Constitution (Section 25) and the principles of the Freedom Charter (1955), the post-apartheid government has sought to address the racially discriminatory laws of the past and inequitable distribution of the country's mineral wealth. The state has attempted to do this through various minerals policy interventions. The key piece of legislation in this regard is the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Development Act of 2002 (Act 28 of 2002, or the MPRDA) and its accompanying regulations. This Act promotes economic and social benefits to local communities through a range of measures including black economic empowerment (BEE) mine-community partnerships, continued royalty payments, and social labour plans (Mnwana, 2015: 502).

The study demonstrates the complexity of social relationships in communities that host large scale platinum mining operations in the North West province. These lay bare new modalities around the politics of belonging and claims over mining benefits.

Findings in two mine-hosting villages – Ga-Luka and Sefikile – reveal a general pattern of preoccupation by villagers not only with preserving the economic benefits of mining, but also using autochthonous and ethnic claims to exclude migrants. Although

most migrants are South African citizens, autochthonous and ethnic claims by Tswana locals challenge their citizenship rights on the platinum belt. Geschiere (2005) encountered a similar paradox in a study conducted in different rural areas in Cameroon. For Geschiere, the mounting obsession of autochthonous groups with the exclusion of strangers was due to “the renewed importance of elections”. The so-called autochthons were concerned that the immigrants, who had a numerical advantage in rural Cameroon, would outvote them “in their ‘own’ region” Geschiere (2005: 47). The resurgence of politics of belonging in South Africa’s platinum belt bears some similarities to the dynamics of the politics of democratisation in rural Cameroon. Indeed, the rural poor tend to devise their own ways to negotiate their social and economic position amidst shifts in local and national economic and political landscapes. The resurgence of the politics of belonging in rural South Africa should be seen in this light as well as the baleful effects of claims by “traditional chiefs” and other authorities.

Mujere’s (2011) analysis of rural struggles in Zimbabwe’s land reform also sheds lights on the findings of this study. According to Mujere, conflict “between autochthons and migrants over the control of the new resettlement areas and over the authority of village heads and chiefs” (p.1123) reveals complexities and significant policy gaps in Zimbabwe’s land reform programme. Among such gaps is the fact that for local tribal authorities land reform was about reclaiming their ancestral territories and graves and re-establishing the exclusive boundaries of traditional authority, whereas the state understood the process as giving back land in hands of the white minority to a black majority that had virtually no land (Mujere 2011: 1141-42). It is through the analysis of competing claims over belonging by different groups of autochthons and migrants that Mujere is able to point out the analytical lacunae in the policy.

The analysis of the politics of belonging in platinum rich rural communities in North West province provides a similar opportunity to identify some of the less reported paradoxes around South Africa’s minerals policy reform. These include the question of who should benefit from mining benefits that are targeted for ‘local communities’ in terms of current legislation.

Our study shows that, despite these villages hosting some of the oldest and largest platinum mining operations and despite the fact that local chiefs control significant mining revenues supposedly

on behalf of communities, the trickle-down economic benefits of mining for ordinary people are extremely limited. Indeed, the tendency for mining and migrant mine employees to encroach on traditional farm land may actually cause harm. As a result, narrow, exclusive forms of identities and belonging come to dominate the 'landscape' of social relations. This is exacerbated in a context where the mines' "community relations" largesse uses definitions of national citizenship to provide for the social well-being of communities of migrant mine workers and their families as well as ethnic "locals". Traditional authorities and local villagers use autochthonous and ethnic forms of belonging to make it difficult for migrants to get jobs in the mines and indeed limit social service provision to the informal settlements where most migrant workers live.

Although these challenges are rooted in mining expansion on rural land, the mining companies seem to take little responsibility for confronting the challenge of deplorable living conditions for migrant miners in rural North West province. Therefore, as I have observed elsewhere (Mnwana 2015), better understanding of the challenges of dealing with rural-based platinum mining expansion in South Africa emerge as a topic to be carefully investigated and analysed, taking into account complex social dynamics and relationships at a micro level.

Finally, the persistence of migrant labour in South African mining since apartheid tends to undermine the radical policy reform mission of the post-apartheid state. It is surely essential for the state to confront ambivalences in policy compliance by mining capital and weak local institutional capacity (or reluctance) to carry out social provisioning services to migrants. At an analytical level, examination of rural struggles over mining benefits between 'locals' and migrants in the North West province, particularly the emerging modalities of belonging, seem to point beyond what other scholars have seen as the resurgence of formerly suppressed ethnic identities (Manson and Mbenga, 2012), or commodification of ethnic identity (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009), or even continuation of the state's denial of effective citizenship rights to black South Africans living in the former homelands (Claassens, 2014). A more systematic, micro-level, case-based empirical analysis of rural social relations and mining expansion is essential.

## Endnotes

1. Deputy Director, Society, Work and Development Institute, University of the Witwatersrand. mwanasc@gmail.com
2. 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).
3. Mr Gregory Maxawulane and Mr Stanley Malindi.
4. 4 Residential plots are allocated by village headmen only to the ethnic Bafokeng subject to the approval of the traditional council.

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