

## **Territoire, peuplement et espace: conflits dans la portion ouest de la ceinture de platine d'Afrique du Sud**

Margot Rubin and Philip Harrison

### *Résumé*

*La portion ouest de la ceinture de platine d'Afrique du Sud a été le site de conflits intenses et violents. Comprendre ces conflits n'est cependant pas chose facile, car ils sont tributaires de multiples variables, dont certaines comportent des processus communs à toutes les régions minières, alors que d'autres sont profondément contextuelles. Cet article démontre qu'une structure complexe de revendications territoriales, ainsi qu'un ensemble de pressions de peuplement et de relations avec l'espace ont considérablement contribué à générer des conflits. Comprendre le lien entre le territoire, les relations spatiales et les conflits requiert un examen à diverses échelles. À ce titre, la première partie de cet article fournit le contexte macro, détaillant les débuts de l'occupation et du peuplement du territoire, le développement de l'industrie minière, et les répercussions de l'exploitation minière sur le peuplement. La seconde partie s'attarde à la mésoéchelle, offrant trois brèves études de cas (des colonies de Ledig, Chaneng et Freedom Park) qui illustrent diverses dimensions des conflits liés au territoire et à l'espace.*

# Land, Settlement and Space: Conflict within the Western Limb of South Africa's Platinum Belt

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## Abstract

*The Western Limb of South Africa's Platinum Belt has been a site of intense and violent conflict, however, understanding the conflict is not a simple task as there are multiple intersecting variables, some of which involve processes that are common across mining regions but some which are deeply contextual. This article demonstrates that a complex layering of claims to land, as well as a set of settlement pressures and spatial relationships that have contributed significantly to the generation of conflict. To understand the nexus between land, spatial relationships and conflict requires working across scales. As such, the first part of this article provides the macro context, outlining the early history of land occupation and settlement, the development of the mining industry, and the impact of mining on settlement. The second part extends down to the meso-scale, providing three brief case-studies (of the settlements of Ledig, Chaneng and Freedom Park) which illustrate different dimensions of land- and space-related conflict.*

## Introduction

The Marikana Massacre of August 2012 did not only draw attention to the venality of corporate strategy, fraught labour relations, inter-union rivalries, and the spoiling of public order policing, but also to the material conditions within which people live, and the consequence of the long history of settlement and land occupation along the Western Limb of South Africa's Platinum Belt (Government of South Africa, 2015).

The case of South Africa's Platinum Belt is consistent with an international literature that points to the prevalence of land-related (and other) conflicts in areas of resource extraction (e.g. Hilson, 2002; Hilson & Yakovleva, 2007; Andrew, 2003; Arellano-Yanguas, 2010, 2011; Kennedy, 2015; Verbrugge, 2015). Hilson (2002:65) wrote, for example that, "perhaps no single industry has precipitated more disputes over land use than mining". The conflicts

are especially severe where mining companies with formal rights to land and mineral resources, and new migrants, coexist with indigenous or other long-established communities which have a historical claim to ownership or possession.

Although mining may bring local benefit such as new employment, it is also often highly disruptive, with pressures including major demographic change, relocation of communities, negative environmental effects, and large cultural impacts (Hilson, 2002). With mining, these pressures are not merely cumulative but are also the consequence of a near-inherent instability. There is the overarching boom-bust cycle, with initial mineral discoveries and mining investments leading to huge growth pressures, but also the eventual collapse as reserves are depleted or their extraction is no longer viable (unless economies do diversify in time). But, within this broad cycle, there are multiple sub-cycles of expansion and decline as commodity markets surge and retreat, and as factors such as corporate strategy and government policy moderate or exacerbate the market effects.

This instability is, of course, extremely tough on the residents of mining areas. Bradbury (1984: 311), using case material from Canada, wrote of the “dramatic and traumatic impact [of the cycles] on the population”. He explains further that:

The rhythm of business cycles, closures and indefinite periods of work is incorporated into the everyday lives and lifestyles of the population. Men, women and children must adapt, and ultimately be adaptable to this form of uneven and temporal life (*Ibid*)

To understand conflict in mining areas it is necessary to layer the social effects of the unstable economic base on the history of land and spatial relationships. There is, in fact, a wide literature that explores the local effects of *decline* in mining, which include physical dereliction, rising unemployment, social stress, out-migration, and conflicts over increasingly scarce resources but there is also now a new literature which points to rising levels of conflict within periods of *expansion* in mining (Yanguas, 2010; Arellano-Yanguas, 2010, 2011; Kennedy, 2015; Verbrugge, 2015).

This is a literature which provides a critique of the now international New Extractive Industries Strategy (NEIS) that aims to improve the developmental image of the mining industry (Arellano-Yanguas, 2011). The NEIS incorporates a localist policy

which involves the re-distribution of some of the financial benefits of mining to communities living within mining districts and, in some cases also, makes formal provision for local participation in decisions around resource distribution (including, famously, in the Platinum Belt in South Africa, where the Bafokeng people have negotiated a direct stake in mining).

Arellano-Yanguas (2010: 6) observed that conflicts in the mining districts of Peru actually increased after the introduction of these strategies: “conflict became increasingly concentrated in the regions with the most profitable mines, which had therefore received the highest per capita transfers of mining revenue from the central government”. Arellano-Yanguas (2010) explains that these conflicts have to do with competition between local actors for benefits; uneven or unequal local allocations; corruption in the distribution of the resources; and, prioritising short-term redistributive advantages over long-term carefully planned expenditure. Verbrugge (2015: 449) uses case studies from Mindanao, Philippines, to illustrate the immense complexities and conflict potentials in negotiating local benefits from mining:

*Here, efforts to decentralize control over mineral resource wealth have resulted in a highly ambiguous institutional arena, wherein heterogeneous actor coalitions are attempting to influence trajectories of institutional change, and the associated distribution of mineral wealth. On the ground, this institutional renegotiation produces a diverse range of conflicts.*

This is a literature which provides a comparative framing for understanding conflicts along South Africa’s Platinum Belt which are at least partially rooted in long histories of spatial development and relationships to the land which have been exacerbated by the growth (and continual instability) of the mining economy. To understand the relationship between land, spatial relationships and conflict requires working across scales. There is clearly a need to understand the macro context of a long history, including during the period of mining activity. This analysis is necessary but does not always reveal the *local dynamics* of interaction. This comes from more detailed exploration at a meso- and micro-scale, which include specific accounts of the history of individual settlements but also ethnographies of contemporary processes within settlements. This

first part of this article provides the macro context, outlining the early history of land occupation and settlement, the development of the mining industry, and the impact of mining on settlement. The second part extends down to the meso-scale, providing three brief case-studies (of the settlements of Ledig, Chaneng and Freedom Park near the Impala Platinum mine) which illustrate different dimensions of land- and space-related conflict. Other contributions in this volume go further, by using ethnographic study to reveal micro-level dynamics.

### **Macro-context: Land, Settlement and Mining**

The macro-context outlined below is discussed in three sub-sections. First, there is a brief account of the period before platinum mining during which many of the spatial and land-related relationships were established. Second, there is the rollercoaster-type story of platinum mining and, thirdly, the discussion of the impacts of mining on the development of settlements within the district. The Bushveld Igneous Complex in South Africa is one of the world's most mineral-rich geological formations, including 90 percent of the known Platinum Group Minerals. The complex has two major sections – the Eastern Limb, mainly in Mpumalanga province; and the Western Limb in North West Province, centred on the town of Rustenburg. The Western Limb brings together a unique configuration of relationships between land, space and mining but, despite its distinctiveness, offers a valuable addition to the emerging literature on conflict in mining districts internationally.

#### *Before platinum*

The economic fluctuations, and the associated social pressures, are layered on a complex, historically produced, set of socio-spatial relations. The Bafokeng people, now also known as the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN), have a long history that is revealed, partially at least, in oral history and archaeological study. Some accounts track the history back to around 1100 AD, showing the lineage of a Bafokeng identity in a complicated story of tribal fissures, amalgamations, and spatial translocations. Currently the identity of the RBM coheres around the King or *Kgosi* but even traditional affiliations are complex with multiple sub-groupings of the Bafokeng, and also separate but possibly related clan groupings within the district. Beyond the multiple cleavages of traditional

society, there are, of course, the differentiating factors of class, occupation, political affiliation, gender, and ethnic origin (with a large minority of foreign migrants) (Huffman, 2007; Mbenga and Manson, 2010; Cook, 2011).

The Platinum Belt is a post-colonial context. Boer farmers moved into the district from the 1830s onward, establishing the administrative and religious town of Rustenburg in 1851. Until the 1880s there was an equivocal accommodation between the black and white agrarian societies. Neither was sufficiently dominant to displace the other. The Boer administration, however, was increasingly well resourced after the discovery of gold in the 1880s, and threatened the Bafokeng with land dispossession. Local African people responded by pooling resources to form syndicates to legally purchase the land they occupied. Twenty two farms were bought in this way in the late nineteenth century, and another eleven in the early twentieth century. When the Boer government acted to prevent further direct land acquisitions by black Africans, (mainly German) white missionaries served as intermediaries, holding land title on behalf of the syndicates (Mbenga and Manson, 2010; Cook, 2011).

With the death or departure of the missionaries, land title was vested in the Superintendent of Native Affairs, and later in the Minister of Native Affairs. The land was held *in trust* for the original owners. While local people no longer possessed the actual title deeds, there was nevertheless a strong memory, and continued sense, of *private* land ownership, which distinguished the settlement around Rustenburg from the “Native Reserves” elsewhere in the Transvaal where land was held in trust by the state for tribal communities. Over time, however, a tension emerged with the traditional leadership of the Bafokeng claiming that the land should be vested under its control on behalf of the broader tribal collectives but with descendants of the original syndicate owners maintaining their claims to possession and ownership (Mbenga and Manson, 2011).

In 1921, before the platinum discoveries, the district was overwhelmingly agricultural. The Rustenburg Magisterial District had a population of 88 760 people of whom 64 849 were black and 22 921 white, with small Indian and mixed race groupings. The urban population was 4 035, of whom 3 399 lived within the town of Rustenburg, and so the district was only 4.5 per cent urbanized (Government of South Africa, 1921). It was an agrarian society where the black African population had, somewhat unusually,

managed to retain a foothold through strategic engagement with the legal system of the white rulers.

### *The platinum rollercoaster*

In the “Roaring Twenties” (1920s), demand for platinum jewellery in the United States, especially, was growing but supply, mainly from Bolshevik Russia, was drying up. There was therefore frenzied speculation when platinum was discovered near Rustenburg in the Union of South Africa in 1924. Around ten local platinum companies were floated, and the first platinum mine in the district came on-stream in 1929. This, however, was the year of the Wall Street Crash, the end of “Roaring Twenties”, and the beginning of the Great Depression. The price of platinum plummeted from \$26 per ounce to \$6, forcing the small platinum producers to amalgamate to form Rustenburg Platinum Mines (RPM) which was to be South Africa’s only platinum producer for decades (Bruce, 1996; Davenport, 2013). South Africa did not become a major platinum producer until the late 1960s, although there was a mini-boom locally from 1948 to 1955 when platinum was introduced into processes for refining oil. In 1958 platinum prices collapsed as a result of a global oil glut, and the fortunes of the emergent Platinum Belt in South Africa were temporarily reversed (Bruce, 1996; Davenport, 2013).

The platinum market recovered in 1964 and a collaboration between RPM and Great Britain’s Johnson Matthey supported a large expansion project around Rustenburg, with South African production of platinum increasing from around 200 000 ounces of platinum in 1964 to 850 000 in 1969. In this decade the leading corporations in South Africa’s mineral-energy complex moved into platinum: Johannesburg Consolidated Investments took control of RPM and also gained a majority shareholding in Johnson Matthey, the British company which processed the platinum ore and Union Corporation, (eventually bought out by General Mining to become the Afrikaner dominated mining company, Gencor) established Impala Platinum (Implats) which commenced production on Bafokeng land in 1969. Somewhat later, the British company, Lonrho, through its subsidiary, Lonmin, also established a foothold in platinum mining near Rustenburg. Amplats, Implats and Lonmin were to control production along the Western Limb – where more than 90 per cent of South Africa’s production was concentrated throughout the twentieth century - in an effective oligopoly (Capps,

2012).

These expansions and new market entrants led to overproduction. There was a severe slump in platinum prices in 1971, with South African production tumbling from over one million ounces to less than 500 000 (Bruce, 1996). However, as Capps (2012) explained, the platinum giants were active participants in the market, themselves creating and growing demand. In the early 1970s, American scientists convinced US automobile manufacturers that platinum was the best ingredient to use for autocatalytic convertors which were in huge demand from 1974 after the United States and Japan introduced stringent vehicle emission controls. The nominal price of platinum soared from US\$175 per ounce in 1975 to US\$1070 in 1980 (Bruce, 1996; Davenport, 2013). The South African producers entered into long-term supply agreements with American and Japanese companies and, by 1980, South Africa was producing 1.75 million ounces of platinum annually (Capps, 2012; Davenport, 2013).

Market turbulence continued however. In the early 1980s, platinum prices plunged suddenly from over \$1 000 per ounce to \$274 in response to both overproduction and a decline in global manufacturing output (Davenport, 2013). There was a recovery to around \$400 per ounce in early 1985, with improved conditions leading to further expansions in the late 1980s but, again, expanded production led to reduced prices, with a difficult period in the early 1990s ( Jollie, 2008; Capp, 2012).

The next real boom began in the late 1990s with platinum prices rising almost relentlessly to 2007, peaking at \$2000 per ounce in May 2008; the result of booming car production and demand for jewellery in China. For post-apartheid South Africa, platinum was a boon, and the real growth sector in mining, compensating for the steady decline in gold. While gold production declined by 63 per cent between 1994 and 2009, platinum production increased by 67 per cent, and by 2010 there were 24 000 more workers in platinum than in the gold industry (Capps, 2012). By 2003, South Africa was producing more than eight million ounces of platinum per year, an extraordinary six-fold increase over 1993 (Department of Minerals and Energy, 2003).

The global financial crisis of 2008 was a blow but there was recovery peaking at US\$1 800 in September 2011. Since then, however, there has been a decline in platinum prices by nearly one-



## Nominal Mid-Year Prices of Platinum USD

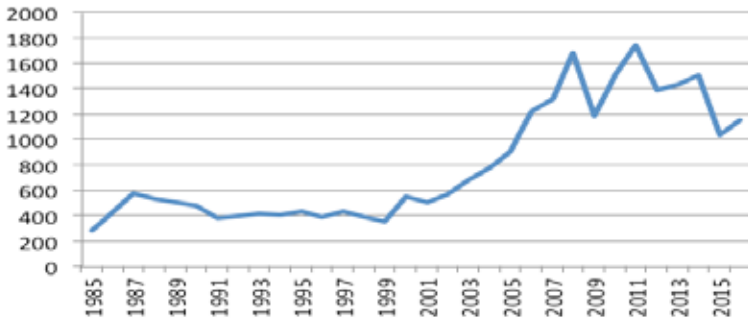


Figure One: Mid-Year nominal platinum prices, 1986-2015

Source: Data from Macrotrends (2016)

third with a low of around US\$ 830 in January 2016 but with a recovery to a mid-year US\$ 1060. The social tensions and violence on the Platinum Belt in South Africa affected confidence in the supply-side of the industry, but global demand was apparently affected by the slowdown in the growth of China, and by sales of platinum from private vaults (World Platinum Investment Council, 2016). In South Africa there was a “perfect storm” with the Marikana Massacre of August 2012, coinciding with the downturn. In 2014, the longest wage strike in South African mining history occurred with social conditions on the mining belt deteriorating severely as miners lost income (*Financial Mail*, April 10, 2014). Since then there have been significant job loss.

Figure Two provides a summary of the uneven spatial history of mining expansion on the Western Limb which was a response to the intermittently upwards expansion of production. It reveals a spreading out of mining from the core around Rustenburg into the eastern and western edges of the limb. These spatial changes have also been associated with shifts and pressures in human settlement, which we turn to in the section below.

### *Settlement pressures on the Platinum Belt*

Volatility invariably placed enormous socio-spatial pressures on the Platinum Belt. It is difficult to establish a direct correlation between industry cycles and population change as the national population census is only conducted once every ten years. Also, under apartheid rule, division between South African and Bophuthatswana meant that there were no comparable population statistics across the mining belt. Also, categories such as “informal

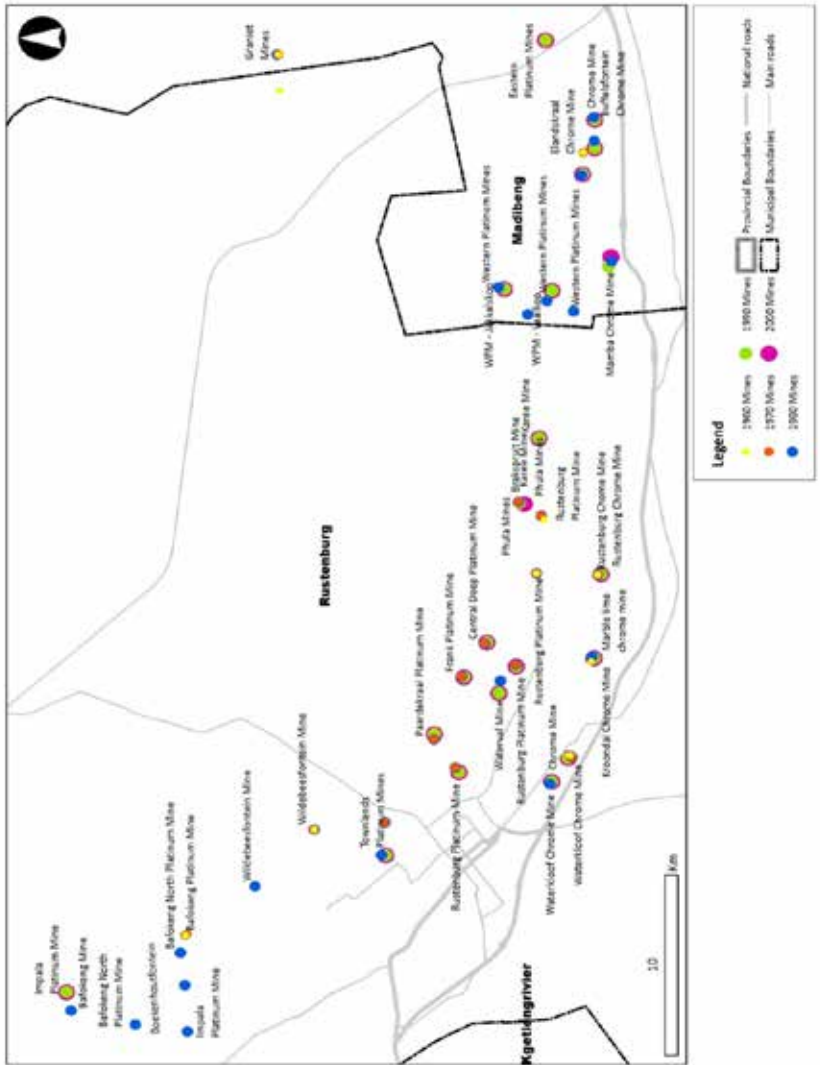


Figure Two: Growth of platinum mines along the western limb of the Platinum Belt, 1960-2011

settlement” were only introduced into census reports from 1996. Nevertheless there is a scattered mix of sources – local newspapers, aerial photographs, municipal data and archival references – which provide some insight into possible links between change in the mining sector and the socio-spatial configurations of the mining belt.

After the discovery of platinum, the population of the town of Rustenburg grew steadily, doubling roughly every decade. In 1921

there were 3,399 inhabitants in town increasing to 6,103 in 1936, and 11,549 in 1946 (National Population Census, various years). The increase began from a low base so urban pressures were modest. Even in 1946, the Rustenburg Magisterial District was only 11.3 per cent urbanised. However, in the still demographically dominant rural component of the district, mining was introducing new pressures. Higginson (2014) writes that there was violent opposition from within communities to local chieftaincies in the 1920s linked to local unhappiness at traditional leaders leasing out land to prospecting and mining companies as this was reducing acreage available for local agricultural production. In 1925, the traditional leader of the Bafokeng signed land lease agreements through the Department of Native Affairs with a number of prospecting and mining companies. These leases were to lapse or be taken over by RPM during the Great Depression. RPM itself found engagement with the Bafokeng leadership difficult and developed its mines outside Bafokeng territory (Capps, 2012; Moletlegi, 2013).

Tracking the growth of the town of Rustenburg from the 1950s is complicated by the disjuncture between municipal boundaries, and the edges of actual urban agglomeration. For example, over time, the traditional village of Phokeng, the capital of the Bafokeng, became increasingly urban in character and physically linked to the town of Rustenburg, although it fell outside the jurisdiction of the municipality until 1996. For this reason, we have used the data of the UN Population Division published in its *World Urbanisation Prospects, 2014*, which tries to measure the population of actual urban agglomerations rather than of municipalities (United Nations, 2014).

Figures One and Two tell the story of a small town which grew moderately fast from 1950 until the end of the 1980s, when it was still a modest-sized centre with a population of less than 50 000 people. From the late 1980s population growth accelerated, reaching an extremely rapid 13.26 per cent growth per annum in the late 1990s, and remaining very high until recently. It emerged as the first “new city” of the post-apartheid era. At its peak, Rustenburg was reported to be the fastest growing city in South Africa (Muller, 2015), and was also one of the fastest growing urban agglomerations in the world (UN, 2014). Faster growing cities at the time were almost entirely in China, with the exception of a small city in Nigeria and (greater) Palm Springs in the USA (UN, 2014). The data tells, of course, only

Figure Three: The Population of the Rustenburg Urban Agglomeration

Year	Estimated Population
1950	14 000
1955	15 000
1960	18 000
1965	20 000
1970	22 000
1975	27 000
1980	32 000
1985	38 000
1990	47 000
1995	75 000
2000	146 000
2005	217 000
2010	290 000
2015 (predicted)	383 000

Source: United Nations, 2014

Figure Four: Annual Population Growth Rates for the Rustenburg Urban Agglomeration in Five Year Segments

Year	Average Annual Growth Rate
1950-54	2.45
1955-59	2.45
1960-64	2.45
1965-69	2.49
1970-74	3.54
1975-79	3.54
1980-84	3.57
1985-89	4.05
1990-94	9.49
1995-99	13.26
2000-04	7.94
2005-09	5.79
2010-14	5.57
2015-19 (predicted)	3.62

Source: United Nations, 2014

Figure Five: Percentage population change by year in the Municipality of Rustenburg, 1972-84

Year	Population Change as %
1972/73	9
1973/74	16
1974/75	13
1975/76	7
1976/77	4
1977/78	3
1978/79	3
1979/80	5
1979/80	5
1980/81	6
1981/82	4
1982/83	3
1983/84	1

Source: Rustenburg Municipality Mayoral Reports, 1983-1989

part of the story, as growth is averaged in five year segments. Also, in a mining district, volatile growth often happens in settlements in or around the actual mines, and not in the town itself.

Marx et al (2008: 2) report that Rustenburg was a virtual “ghost city” during the mining recession of the late 1950s, a reality not captured in widely spaced census data. Local newspapers and municipal records point to new growth pressures from the late 1960s as mines expanded and new mines were built. The government was concerned mainly with the local shortage of housing for the white population, and loans were provided to white households to build or buy their own units. At first, the mining companies were also active in residential development, purchasing and developing land in the town, with RPM, for example, buying 1780 stands in Rustenburg between 1964 and 1969 which it developed for both individual houses and apartments. This investment, however, soon slowed, planting the seeds of a future housing crisis. The local authority failed to keep pace with the delivery of bulk infrastructure in the 1970s, with the national government placing a moratorium on new housing development in the town until sewer constraints had been resolved (Marx et al., 2008).

The Rustenburg Municipality collected data on local

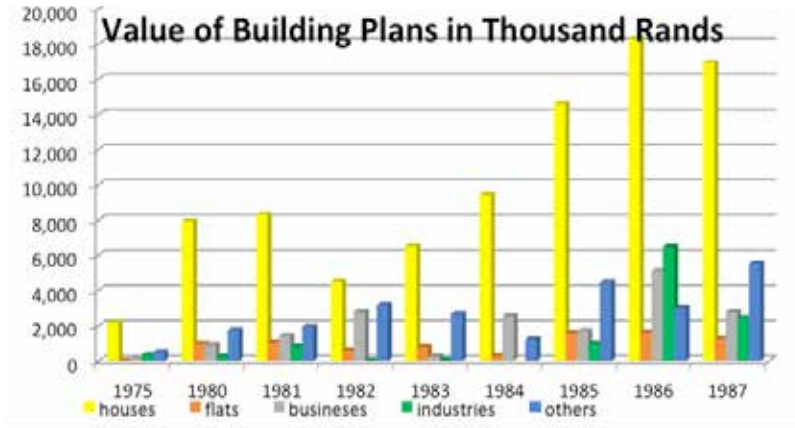
population growth during the 1970s and early 1980s, as indicated in Figure Five. This data demonstrating annual variations suggests far greater volatility than the five year averaging provided by the UN data. There is no direct correlation between platinum prices and population change, as there are significant lags between changes in the mining industry and both investment in the residential environment and in-migration. There was, for example a peak in 1973/4 as the Lonmin mine opened, even though the market was already depressed at the time, and a depression in 1983/4 about two years after the platinum price bottomed out. The overall connections between market performance and residential growth are however clear.

The volatility is also indicated in extreme swings in the value of building plan approvals and completions. As an indication we provide the figures for the period 1980 to 1987 which indicate both the slump early in the decade and the later recovery; again with a lag between market performance and investment in property.

We turn now from developments in the town to trends in the wider district. As indicated, RPM kept out of Bafokeng territory. In the 1950s RPM did attempt to purchase Bafokeng land in which it still held mineral rights but, ironically, apartheid legislation protected the Bafokeng people as white-owned companies were not permitted to own land in the homelands (Molotlegi, 2013). From the 1940s other companies were prospecting in the area, and in the 1960s Gencor's Implats was granted a mining lease in Bafokeng territory with a requirement to pay royalties to the traditional leadership, although these were set at a low level, and the first royalties were only actually paid in 1978 (Capps, 2012).

The establishment of the Bophuthatswana Territorial Authority early in the 1970s, and the ostensible independence given to Bophuthatswana in 1977, changed socio-spatial relations in the region. Bafokeng land fell within Bophuthatswana as did the urban township of Tlhabane which was effectively part of Rustenburg. This geopolitical divide impacted severely on mining communities, allowing for a state and company tactic of divide-and-rule (Molotlegi, 2013). For example, while the labour regime was gradually modernised under late apartheid rule in "white South Africa", the labour regime in Bophuthatswana remained repressive with the newly established National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) banned from operating. Companies with operations both inside and

Figure Six: The value of buildings completed in the Municipality of Rustenburg, 1980-87



Source: Rustenburg Municipality Mayoral Reports, 1983-1989

outside the homeland could control labour by moving workers from mines outside, to inside, the homeland (Moncur and Jones 1999).

\*(INDENT) Trusteeship over the Bafokeng territory passed from the South African to the homeland government which used the leverage it gained to extract larger revenues from mining. Sharp tensions emerged along the mining belt as the benefits of mining by-passed local communities and even by-passed the local traditional leadership as it flowed into homeland coffers (Capps, 2012; Molotlegi, 2013). The mining companies, and especially Impala Platinum, benefitted from homeland support in a mutually beneficial relationship, and there was a significant expansion in mining under homeland rule. There was however a slowdown from the early 1990s as the homeland faced reincorporation into South Africa, and uncertainties emerged over the security of mineral rights. Impala Platinum responded strategically by negotiating the famous 1999 deal with the traditional leadership which secured its access to mineral rights for forty years in return of increased royalty payments to the RBN. In 2003, the RBN, directly entered the mining industry with its joint venture with Anglo American Platinum to establish Bafokeng Rasimone Platinum Mine (Molotlegi, 2013). Cook (2011) describes this process of growing involvement of the RBN in mining in terms of a traditional patriarchy pursuing modern corporate strategies in response to shifting global commodity markets.

The Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002 (the MPRDA) established the state as the custodian of mineral resources in South Africa, although past deals made by the mining companies were recognised within the new order. An internal dispute emerged among the Bafokeng with the Supreme Council of the RBN (the traditional leadership) approaching the Minister of Land Affairs in 1997 to transfer land title (surface rights) to the King but with descendants of the original land owning syndicates registering counter claims. The Minister turned down the request of the Supreme Council which then approached the High Court in 2006 to force a transfer of title. The application was opposed by the Minister and by the descendants of the land owners who collectively formed the Bafokeng Land Buyers' Association (BLBA). A legal dispute continues. Although the right of Supreme Council to approach the courts was confirmed in a 2016 High Court judgement the land claims are still contested (SAFLII, 2016).

The split between South Africa and homeland data, and also the deficiencies of homeland data, from the early 1970s until 1994, makes it difficult to track socio-spatial change associated with the geopolitical transformations. The 1980 homeland census indicates that around one-third of the population had moved into the area from elsewhere, mainly from the Eastern Cape and Lesotho. The data suggests that, at the time, most mine-workers lived in hostels and were not accommodated in local villages or informal settlements (as inferred from sex ratios across the district and as there was no category "informal settlement" or "backyard rental" in the census data) (Republic of Bophuthatswana, 1982).

This was to change in the 1980s, a result of the intersection between growing union pressure and strategic responses by mining companies. It was in the hostels where the newly formed NUM could mobilise most easily, so a shift away from hostel accommodation was in the corporate interest. In 1988, the NUM reached an agreement with mining companies for a Living Out Allowance that would enable workers to choose their own form of accommodation. The consequence was growth of a diversity of forms of accommodation, including backyard rental in townships and traditional villages, and informal settlements (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu, 2011).

There were, however, other reasons for the change which included: the increased use of sub-contracting for non-core – and eventually, also, core – services, with sub-contracted workers denied



access to benefits including housing; the removal of direct controls on urbanization in 1986 which allowed women to move into mining areas to be closer to male workers; the displacement of communities by construction of mines; displacement of farm workers from the land; the rapidly increasing cost of formal accommodation in boom-time Rustenburg; and, the use of Corporate Social Responsibility by mining companies to invest in education, health and business development, rather than in housing which would have required more responsibility for spatial development (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu, 2011; Hamann, 2004; Higginson, 2014; Khulumani Support Group, 2015).

Aerial photographs and census data point to a gradual densification of transitional villages with some in-migrants housed in formal backyard and other rental accommodation. However, social controls remained strong in areas under traditional control, and many migrants preferred to move into new informal settlements or into informal backyard accommodation within urban townships. Figures Seven and Eight reveal shifts in settlement type which have occurred through the post-apartheid era, drawing on data from the National Population Census reports for 1996, 2001 and 2011 (Quantec, 2015). The figures are for the Rustenburg and Madibeng Local Municipalities (LMs) which form the current core of the Western Limb of the Platinum Belt. The Rustenburg LM was the initial centre of mining but the Madibeng LM has become increasingly significant with the development of Lonmin-owned mines within its areas of jurisdiction.

It is clear that already by 1996, residential informality was a significant feature of the Platinum Belt. In 1996, 37.7 per cent of households in the Rustenburg LM lived in shacks in freestanding informal settlements or in backyards, with a figure of 36.5 per cent for Madibeng. Overall, the *proportion* of households living informally has not changed significantly over the post-apartheid years, although the real numbers have increased rapidly, in line with the overall increase in population and households. There have also been differences across time between the two municipalities.

Between 1996-2001, the focus of new growth was in the Rustenburg LM, and it was here too that informal settlements grew fastest, expanding at twice the rate of formal settlement. This changed however after 2001 as the rate of building formal accommodation in the Rustenburg LM accelerated significantly, even outpacing overall

Figure Seven: Dwelling Types per Household in the Rustenburg and Madibeng Municipalities, 1996, 2001 & 2011

Housing Type	Rustenburg Local Municipality						Madibeng Local Municipality					
	1996 Units	1996 %	2001 Units	2001 %	2011 Units	2011 %	1996 Units	1996 %	2001 Units	2001 %	2011 Units	2011 %
Formal (excl. backyard/flatlet)	36 773	48.5	58 292	50.0	124 129	62.4	37 357	49.8	55 882	55.8	87 891	54.7
Formal backyard/flatlet	7 454	9.8	6 544	5.6	12 537	6.3	6 533	8.7	2 153	2.1	7 253	4.5
Informal backyard	14 110	18.6	15 582	13.4	30 594	15.4	5 087	6.8	7 889	7.9	15 095	9.4
Informal settlements	14 444	19.1	30 185	25.9	28 726	14.4	22 298	29.7	25 501	25.5	48 206	30.0
Traditional	1 615	2.1	2 465	2.1	1 248	0.6	2 224	3.0	3 147	3.1	1 172	0.7
Other & not specified	1 373	1.8	3 593	3.1	1 770	0.9	1 565	2.1	5 478	5.5	1 107	0.7
TOTAL	75 769	100.0	116 661	100.0	199 024	100.0	75 064	100.0	100 051	100.0	160 724	100.0

Figure Eight: Change in Number and Percentage of Dwelling Types per Household in the Rustenburg and Madibeng Municipalities

Housing Type	Rustenburg Local Municipality			Madibeng Local Municipality		
	Change in Units, 1996-2001	Percentage Change, 1996-2001	Change in Units, 2001-2011	Percentage Change, 2001-2011	Change in Units, 1996-2001	Percentage Change, 1996-2001
Formal (excl. backyard/flatlet)	21 519	58.5	65 837	112.1	18 525	49.6
Formal backyard/flatlet	-910	-12.2	5 993	91.6	-4 380	-67.4
Informal backyard	1 472	10.4	15 012	96.3	2 802	55.1
Informal settlements	15 741	109.0	-1 459	-4.8	3 203	14.4
Traditional	850	52.6	-1 217	-49.4	923	41.5
Other & not specified	2 220	161.7	-1 823	-50.7	3 913	250.9
TOTAL	40 892	54.0	82 363	+70.6	24 987	33.3
					60 673	60.6

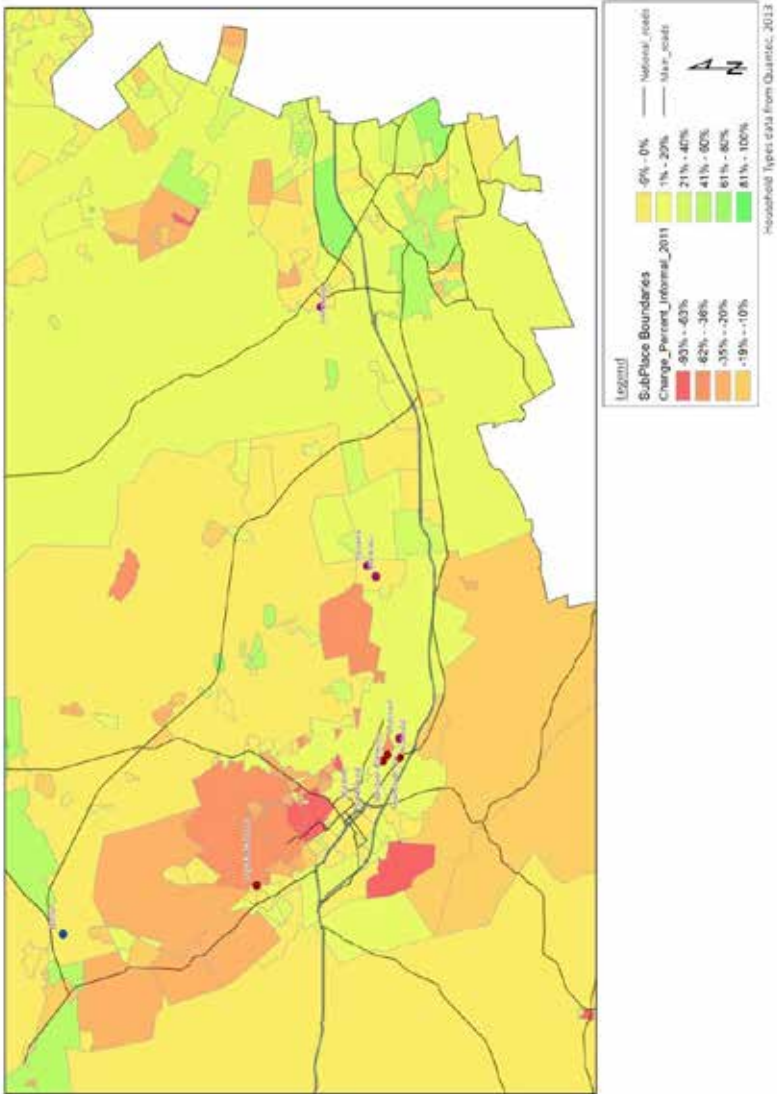
household and population growth. In this period, there was both a proportional and (modest) absolute decrease in the size of informal settlements in the Rustenburg LM, although this was partly countered by the growth in informal backyard accommodation. The proportion of households living in informal accommodation (including in backyards) dropped markedly from 39.3 per cent in 2001 to 29.8 per cent in 2011. This was corroborated by information provided to the Marikana Commission of Inquiry and by the Rustenburg LM which pointed to the effects of the Rustenburg Development Strategy of 2006 which supported urban densification (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2012a; Government of South Africa, 2015).

The situation was however very different in the Madibeng LM where growth of informal settlements, and overall growth, was initially slow but accelerated after 2001. After 2001 the growth of informal settlement exceeded the rates of formal development with the proportion of households living in shacks increasing from 33.4 to 39.4 per cent in 2011. The expansion in informal settlement was happening around the shafts of the Western Platinum Mines (Lonmin), and further east towards Brits, creating pressures that were identified as contributing to the tragedy of August 2012 (Government of South Africa, 2015). Khulumani Support Group (2015) reports that in 2012, 28 000 of Lonmin's workers lived in informal settlement, excluding the almost 8 000 sub-contracted workers who were also likely to be informally accommodated.

Figures Nine and Ten provide a more fine-grained analysis of what happened with freestanding informal settlement and backyard shacks across the two local municipalities in the period 2001 to 2011, using sub-place data. The green and yellow shading indicates real growth in the percentage of households living in informal settlement or backyard shacks respectively, while the brown and red indicates a decline.

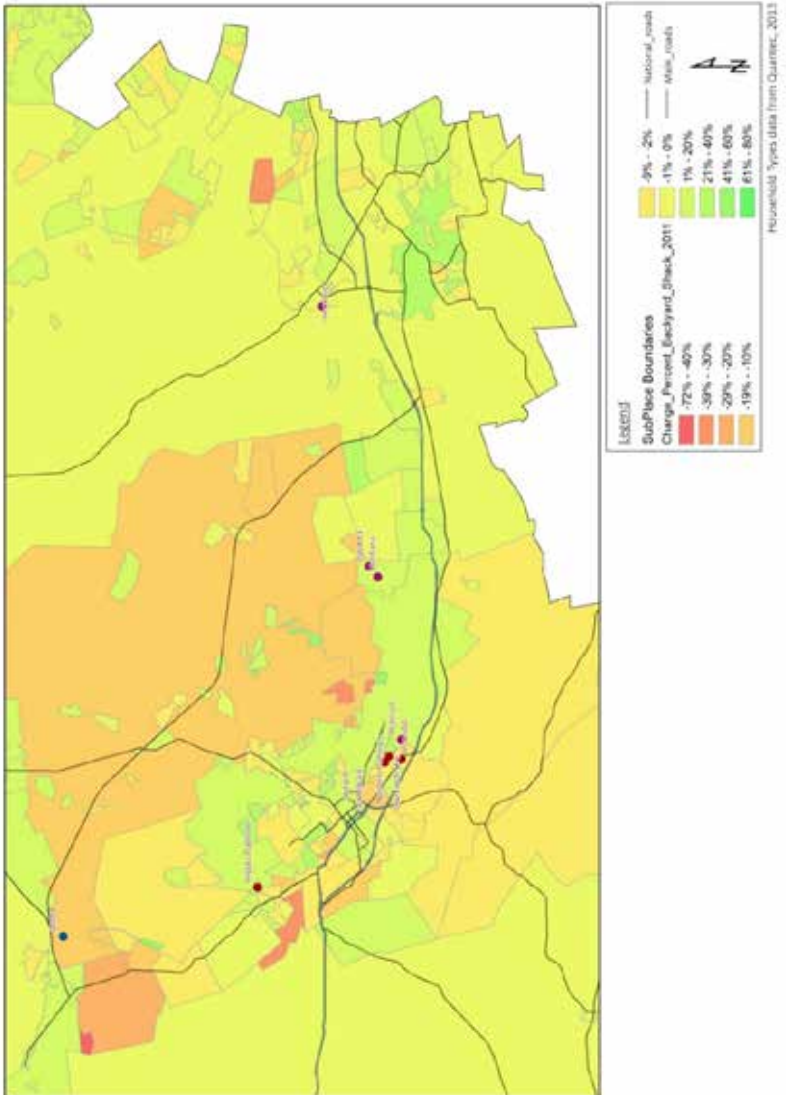
The maps give a strong indication that local authority boundaries make a difference, with growth in informality to the east of the boundary line and decline to the west. In the Rustenburg LM, for example, there was a decline in informal settlement in the central areas around the town of Rustenburg, along with a modest decline in Bafokeng territory, which may have been a result of the active policy by the RBN to eradicate shacks, although there was a growth in informal settlement around the Sun City entertainment complex and the Pilanesberg National Park, reflecting pressures other than

those of mining. With some exception there has been growth in Figure Nine: Percentage change in informal dwellings in informal settlements by sub-place, 2001–2011



Source: National Population Census 2001 & 2011, derived from Quantec, 2013

Figure Ten: Percentage change in informal backyard dwellings by sub-place, 2001–2011



Source: National Population Census 2001 & 2011, derived from Quantec, 2013

informal settlement across the Madibeng LM, but concentrated in the south around the Lonmin mines and close to the fast growing town of Brits. There is a more general pattern of growth in backyard shacks with the notable exception of land within the Rustenburg LM under Bafokeng traditional administration, reflecting perhaps strong social controls on in-migration that persist in this area.

What emerges from this analysis is a complex picture of post-apartheid socio-spatial transformation. While it is incorrect to generalise about the relative growth of informal settlement, shacks are clearly a persistent reality on the Western Limb. Some of the reasons for this emerged during the finger-pointing before the Marikana Commission. The local authorities argued, for example, that they were severely restricted in their ability to provide housing and upgrade services by mining companies who had an interest in keeping options open for the use of informally settled land in the future. In return the companies contended that traditional authorities were resistant to formalizing settlements, as they were opposed to anything which would imply recognition of migrants as permanent occupiers (Government of South Africa, 2015).

There were other reasons too why co-ordinated development in the post-apartheid era has proven to be difficult. For example, there was no legal requirement for Social and Labour Plans (SLPs) prepared by mining companies to be aligned with Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) of municipalities. There is also an ambiguous relationship between elected local authorities and traditional authorities, with a powerful, well-resourced traditional authority existing alongside, and within the boundaries, of the Rustenburg LM. These complications were illustrated when both the Rustenburg LM and the RBN produced spatial master plans for the development of their (overlapping) jurisdictions without reference to the other (RBN, 2007).

There has, of course, been some change after the Marikana massacre as local government, traditional authorities and mining companies had to be seen to be working together. In 2014, for example, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the King of the Royal Bafokeng and the Executive Mayor of Rustenburg which included a provision for integrating the two plans (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2014). Mining companies, too, have expanded their housing programmes in collaboration with municipalities, with

Impala Platinum, for example, implementing a 5 000 unit housing scheme. With the panic over settlement in mining areas that followed from the Marikana crisis, the national government has also launched a plethora of state initiatives to deal with mining towns and informal settlement, which involve new funding streams and platforms for collaboration (Rustenburg Local Municipality, 2012b).

The difficulty, of course, is that the spatial patterning of the mining belt is deeply entrenched, with conflicts rooted in an historical layering of social relationships in land and of unequal settlement formation. This broad context has been examined above but a question remains as to how such contextual conditions are actually translated into conflicts. This we discuss below using case-based material.

### **Meso-context: settlement histories**

In this section of the article we use three cases to illustrate how spatial relationships have participated in the construction of conflict on the mining belt. The first case is the settlement of Ledig, is encircled by Sun City, the Pilanesberg National Park and the Wesizwe Platinum mine. Ledig was established as an apartheid resettlement site, with sudden spatial relocation fundamentally transforming an existing community, and producing conditions for a new set of conflicts. The second case is Chaneng whose residents are embroiled in conflict with the traditional leadership of the RNB over historical claims to land ownership, and the impacts of Bafokeng-owned mining operations which adjoin the village. The third case is of Freedom Park, a large informal settlement, mixed in with formal development, alongside the shafts of the Impala Platinum Mine. Unlike Chaneng, the history of the latter is recent, but the new spatial relationships are fraught with violent tension.

### **Ledig**

Ledig is a settlement of around 21 000 people and was established in 1966 by the apartheid government to accommodate the Bakubung-ba Ratheo community which had been forcibly relocated from Molotestad around 80 kilometres to the south. The Ledig case is one of a history of conflict going back at least to tensions produced by apartheid removals, but it was the arrival of mining, and conflicts over distribution of benefits which provoked the violence of recent years.



Molotestad had been a largely self-sufficient agricultural village since the late nineteenth century and, despite the decline of the African peasantry (Bundy, 1979), was apparently still agriculturally sustainable in the 1960s (Van Onselen, 1996; Platzky and Walker, 1985). This was the settlement to which the African agriculturalist, Kas Maine, moved in 1957 after the possibilities for sharecropping on white-owned farms ended, and the narrative of his life provides unusual insight into conditions in this period (Van Onselen, 1996; Nkadimeng & Relly, 1983). Molotestad was however a “black spot” outside the designated homeland for Tswana-speaking people and in 1965 its residents were ordered to move to Ledig. The community was divided, with a segment resisting, but the state used a heavy hand to force compliance, including deposing the chief. One consequence, however, was that the community was never again united, with an unfolding history of factionalism (Platzky and Walker, 1985; Mohlamme, 1989).

As Kas Maine affirmed, Ledig was a poor site for agriculture. It was not suitable for ploughing and lost even the grazing land in the hills to the north with the establishment of a game reserve there in the late 1970s (Nkadimeng & Relly, 1983). The community however knew only agriculture as a livelihood, and so struggled on. Within a decade of relocation, however, there was a dramatic transformation initiated by the proclamation of the Pilanesberg National Park in 1979 and the opening of Sun City, a mega entertainment complex, in the same year (Carruthers, 2011). The arrival of mass tourism drew the people of Ledig into the wage economy but did not make them wealthy, as their employment was almost entirely in the low end service sector. Van Eeden (2007) explained how black African communities living adjacent tourist resorts were exoticized, with Sun City International, for example, arranging “cultural tours” of Ledig. Mochechela (2010), however, has offered a more positive perspective on this juxtaposition, arguing that it not only provided wage labour but also encouraged entrepreneurial responses to tourism from the people of Ledig. There was a complex intersection between the traditional leadership of Bakubung and both the conservation and tourism authorities (National Parks Board and North West Tourism) and Sun International, although this mainly had to do with distributing the benefits of fairly limited corporate responsibility programmes (*The Sowetan*, 3 September, 2007).

While there were monetary benefits from new proximity to

economic activity, new resources increased the potential for conflict in a community that was already divided historically. The arrival of mining in the area dramatically expanded this potential. Until the 2000s, Ledig was marginal to the Platinum belt. Although the mines were not far, they were on the land of the Royal Bafokeng Nation, and the Bakubung were excluded from the negotiated benefits.

Wesizwe Platinum was established in 2004 to extract the last remaining ore bodies on the Merensky Reef, with the mine on Bakubung land immediately adjacent to Ledig to the south. Wesizwe was set up as a Black Empowerment Company. The Bakubung of Ledig were granted 33 per cent of the shares through the Bakubung Community Development Corporation (BCDC) and were also given direct representation on the board of the mining company. By any account, this was an extraordinary opportunity for the community, with the prospect of a large inflow of new resources if the mine were to prosper.

The BCDC appointed Musa Capital to manage the shareholding but this firm sold off Bakubung shares for around R700 million, using a confusing subterfuge of subsidiary and related companies to dispose of the proceeds. Effectively, the money belonging to the Bakubung people disappeared into a corporate investment maze, leaving the community still living in dire circumstances, but feeling desperately cheated. There was legal action but no effective remedy (*Business Day*, 27 May, 2014; *Mail & Guardian*, 7 June, 2013; *Mineweb*, 1 June, 2010).

The community was further divided, with allegations that some members of the traditional council, and also a certain elected ward councillor, had connived with Musa Capital, and had benefited financially. Conflict spilled into violent protest, beginning in 2009 and continuing through 2015. On a number of occasions the main road to Sun City was barricaded, creating anxiety in the resort, and bringing a strong police presence to Ledig (e.g. *Taung Daily News*, June 20, 2012). There was an especially serious flare-up of violence in April 2015, which also involved the burning and looting of foreign-owned shops. A degree of order was finally restored when allegedly corrupt leaders were forced to resign their positions on both the BCDC and the board of Wesizwe Platinum (*The Citizen*, 17 April, 2015; *DailyVox*, April 17, 2015; *eNCA*, 16 April, 2015; *Platinum Weekly*, April 10, 2015; SA Government, 2015).

In the meanwhile, a bitter struggle for control over the

mining company ensued, with factions of the Bakubung pitted against each other, placing the entire mining operation in jeopardy. In 2011, however, a deal was concluded with Jinchuan Group Co. Ltd., a large Chinese investor, which bought 45 per cent of Wesizwe Platinum, with capital from the China-Africa Development Fund (Wesizwe, 2010). Mining employment was secured but dreams of a Bakubung-owned mine with profits directed into the community were finally extinguished. The tensions in Ledig – coupled with its high visibility alongside Sun City – may, however, have had a positive spin-off for the community. Early in 2016 it was announced that Ledig was to benefit from a housing project of around 5 000 units, as the first phase of a major “rural development programme” (*SABC News*, 23 January, 2016).

### **Chaneng**

The village of Chaneng, 45 kilometres north of Rustenburg and Phokeng, and directly south of Ledig, has a population of around 4 500, although it is part of a much larger clustering of Bafokeng settlements (Census 2011). Like its sister villages, Chaneng is almost entirely surrounded by the mining operations of Royal Bafokeng Platinum, Impala Platinum and, now also, by Wesizwe Platinum. Chaneng is part of the broader Bafokeng nation, but it has, historically, had a degree of autonomy in traditional matters (Mokgatle, 1971).

It was a syndicate of the Chaneng community which initially purchased the 4 500 hectare farm, Styldrift 90 JQ, from a white farmer in 1873 to secure a future when there was a real threat of dispossession. With restrictions on black land ownership the syndicate had eventually to cede the actual title of the land to the German missionary Christoph Penzhorn, who held the land in trusteeship for the community (Motene, 2014). After Penzhorn died, the trusteeship passed to the Superintendent of Natives, and then the Minister of Native Affairs (Mbenga & Manson, 2010). The idea that these farms were part of a Bafokeng collective was apparently contested from as early as 1906 when a land owners association provided evidence to a government Commission of Enquiry on land matters in the Rustenburg region (BLNA, 2010).

Tensions over land rights have rematerialized with vigour in the post-apartheid era as a result of both the possibility of actual title to the land being restored, but also of the high stakes at play with

growth in platinum mining. Simmering tension over claims to land ownership erupted into open conflict between the people of Chaneng and the traditional leadership of the RBN when a new platinum mine was developed on the Styldrift farm as a joint venture between Royal Bafokeng Resources and Rustenburg Platinum Mines. The community of Chaneng expressed extreme dissatisfaction at the lack of consultation and at the negative impacts of mining on the village, including damage to houses from blasting operations, and air and water pollution (Biyase and Mtongana, 2016; Bench Marks Foundation, 2011). There were further concerns that labour in-migration would increase pressures on local facilities and eventually lead to the villagers being outnumbered by imported mine workers (*Daily Maverick*, 24 May, 2013).

Conflict however has largely been channelled through legal processes, with the community of Chaneng affiliating with the BLBA (Bafokeng Land Buyers Association) in opposing the claims of the Supreme Council of the RBN to land ownership. As the legal process has gradually unfolded there has also been a battle of rhetoric. Both the Supreme Council and the BLBA explain their positions as a continuation of land struggles under apartheid, with the BLBA, for example, referring to the current arrangement as a “highly sophisticated colonial-apartheid oppressive system” (BLBA, 2015). The BLBA petitions historical memories and records of early land transactions and agreements, while the Supreme Council appeals to a sense of communal solidarity; to the idea of the Bafokeng as a single nation. An RBN spokesperson, for instance, “lambasted the Bafokeng Land Buyers Association for putting its interests before those of the entire Bafokeng people” (*Sunday Times*, 31 January 2016).

In December 2013, the North West High Court ruled that the King of the RBN would have to prove that he had the right to have the land re-registered in his name, and would also have to prove that the Supreme Council of the RBN (which is not the officially recognised Traditional Council but rather an extension of the royal family) has the authority to authorise the land claim. In May 2016, the High Court did, in fact, confirm this right although the decision did not end the ongoing legal conflict over the land claim (SAFLII, 2016).

However, while open conflict has been contained by legal options available to the people of Chaneng, violence has erupted

periodically in Chaneng and surrounding villages, including in response to allegations that migrants were being bussed in at night into the area by the mining companies (BLBA, 2011).

### **Freedom Park**

The final case is of the informal settlement, Freedom Park. While Marikana has attracted considerable attention and investigations (e.g. Government of South Africa, 2015; Chinguno 2013) there are other informal settlements which have become hotspots of violent conflict. The broad phenomenon of informal settlement formation and growth has been explained above drawing on census material but there is a variegated reality of different settlement histories and dynamics.

Freedom Park was formed around 1986, adjacent to the shafts of Impala Platinum mine. It was occupied first by women drawn by the concentration of male mineworkers in hostels. Some women sold liquor to the mineworkers while others earned a living through sex work. The women migrated to the Platinum belt to escape dire material circumstances as well as social controls in rural areas, and settled in the informal settlement rather than in the Bafokeng villages, because of the freedoms offered in new settlements (Akileswaran and Lurie, 2010).

Freedom Park had a tentative beginning as women battled the homeland police who frequently raided the settlement, often knocking down shacks. As the numbers of people grew in the early 1990s and the homeland authorities weakened, tenure became more secure. In 1994, with the dissolution of the homeland government and its incorporation into a democratic South Africa, the residents felt a sense of freedom, naming their abode “Freedom Park” (Tsholofelo Community, 2013)

The settlement was multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic, with roughly equal proportions of Setswana, Sesotho and isiXhosa speakers, as well as many other groups. In December 1996, for reasons still inadequately explained, 32 men were killed in Freedom Park in factional fighting between isiXhosa and seSotho speakers (*Mail & Guardian*, 13 December 1996). While inter-ethnic conflict on this scale was never repeated, other tensions emerged, whereby Freedom Park became a site of endemic violence. Over time, a portion of the settlement was formalised but informal housing has remained as a socio-spatial divide between the increasingly

formalised north and the informal south of Freedom Park.

Tensions turned into antagonism towards the ruling ANC. In April 2014, for example, a national government minister was physically chased from the settlement, while the community eagerly welcomed the leader of the Economic Freedom Front, Julius Malema (*Platinum Weekly*, 30 April, 2014; *Daily Maverick*, 29 April, 2014). Anger was, however, also being directed against foreign nationals. During the mineworkers' strike in 2012, there was violence in Freedom Park which included attacks on foreign-owned shops (*SAPA*, 23 February, 2012). There was violence again during the strikes of 2014, and once again foreigners were targeted (*ANN7*, 10 February 2014). The conflict seems to be rooted in deprivation, inequalities and the resentments mentioned above, detailed ethnographic work may be needed to confirm this.

## **Conclusion**

Until very recently the Western Limb, or Rustenburg district, was one of the most outwardly successful regions of South Africa, with a rapidly expanding mining economy at a time when South Africa's mining was in overall decline. This was also a region where innovative arrangements had been put in place to ensure a distribution of benefits from the mining industry to local communities in line with the apparently progressive locality approach of the New Extractive Industries Strategy (NEIS). Nonetheless, the Western Limb of the Platinum Belt has emerged as a hotspot of post-apartheid antagonism and violence. This seems to confirm recent international literature (e.g. Arellano-Yanguas, 2010, 2011; Verbrugge, 2015) which reveals how regions of expanding mining production where NEIS strategies have been introduced are also, often, places of extreme conflict.

Understanding the conflict is not a simple task as there are multiple intersecting variables, some of which involve processes that are common across mining regions (for example, the application of NEIS) but some which are deeply contextual. We have not attempted to deal comprehensively with the causes of conflict, but rather to show that a complex layering of claims to land, and also a set of settlement pressures and spatial relationships have contributed significantly to the generation of conflict. Land, settlement and spatial factors have operated in interplay with the turbulence and volatility that is commonly associated with mining.

Finally, we have shown that an understanding of conflict requires analysis that crosses scales of investigation. We must understand land history, the development of mining, and settlement pressures across regions of mining. To show how these intersecting factors produce conflict, however, requires contextually-rooted local investigation. We have moved from a macro- to a meso-scale, but further work must look in a more detailed way at how these wider pressures translate into the lives of households and individuals.

### **Endnotes:**

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