

SECTION TWO

‘Development’ and Distributive Struggles

The quarries come and go without consulting the people about the piece of land that is being utilised. We would like that this be paid attention to, especially that word ‘community’ – that doesn’t mean to be ‘represented’. ‘Community’ is the homes that are in that area where the quarry is going to be opened, not a representative, nor a councillor or traditional leader, but the land belongs to the people.

– BORDER RURAL COMMUNITY, HIGH-LEVEL PANEL EASTERN CAPE PUBLIC HEARINGS, 16 AUGUST 2016, p. 43

There are two traditional councils in Babanango that have coexisted for many years. When COGTA imposed councils that process development, a lot of problems and strife started. Even the regent was stripped of her powers.

– THOKOZANI NDAWO FROM BABANANGO, HIGH-LEVEL PANEL KWAZULU-NATAL PUBLIC HEARINGS, 20 OCTOBER 2016, p. 28

Where I stay is 45 km away from Rustenburg. When you go look for a job, for example, we are surrounded by mines, mines that are in royal villages. I am not a Mofokeng unfortunately. When I went to go look for a job at Impala mine, they told me to go and get a letter from the chief. I then went to see the headman. The headman asked me from which kutla am I from. I do not even know what kutla is Mr Motlanthe. Now like a child from Rustenburg I have a right to minerals in Rustenburg Mr Motlanthe. I can't work anywhere because I am not of any kutla.

– KAIZER MOEME, HIGH-LEVEL PANEL NORTH-WEST PUBLIC HEARINGS,
1–2 MARCH 2017, P. 97

The next two chapters consider the role of traditional leaders in contemporary struggles over land and resources – particularly mining. Post-1994 government policy offers traditional leaders a central role in local development, in which land and mining revenues are seen as important instruments of wealth redistribution and economic growth. Each of the quotations above deal with the role of traditional leaders in ‘development’ – serving as gatekeepers of minerals and economic opportunity, but also having to work with (and sometimes for) state institutions. Contemporary chiefs are often positioned as custodians of mineral-led development, premised on their ‘historical’ role in land administration.

Drawing on a case study of the Bakgatla Ba Kgafela, Sonwabile Mnwana’s chapter explores the historical processes that have entrenched chiefs’ control over land, making them central figures in these distributive struggles. In doing so, he illustrates that the Bakgatla’s power over land long precedes post-apartheid legislation and new mining interests. Sithandiwe Yeni’s chapter then offers a detailed case study of a group of residents in Makhasaneni, KwaZulu-Natal, who resisted collusion between senior traditional leaders and mining companies. The story of activists in Makhasaneni resonates with struggles recorded in other parts of the country, which have seen rural people suffer losses rather than gain benefits from mining,

and some traditional leaders collaborating with elites to override local participation. It is worth highlighting that, in the Makhasaneni case, the local headman performed a powerful role in representing community interests, even at his own risk. Indeed, as this case shows, a rejection of certain instantiations of traditional leadership need not amount to a wholesale rejection of the institution or its role in a contemporary democracy; while the people of Makhasaneni may have resisted the actions of their senior traditional leaders, they also drew on the institution of traditional leadership in their struggle, attributing significant import to the role of their headman.

With land being such a vexed question for a South African democracy, this is likely to be the issue on which the future role of the country's traditional leaders is tested, contested and re-invented.