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Moratorium? Youth experiences of waiting on South Africa's 'platinum belt'

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ABSTRACT

The extraction of platinum group metals in South Africa's rural territories has increased the hope for development and employment opportunities among local residents. However, despite the increase in mining activities over the past decades, poverty and unemployment persist. Drawing on detailed ethnographic research conducted in a platinum-rich community on South Africa's rural 'platinum belt' – the Bafokeng – this article explores the experiences of unemployment and waiting among the local youth. Recent studies have highlighted the active agency of unemployed youth in devising and deploying strategies to engage with local and outside structural forces of waiting. The analysis, however, reveals the complex power relations in the local social landscape. The article shows that deliberate actions by platinum mining corporates working in cahoots with the traditional authorities (the chiefs) in the Bafokeng community result in the 'social moratorium' of the youth.

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Social moratorium; youth; unemployment; Bafokeng; platinum

Introduction

This article argues that the 'social moratorium' of youth in the Royal Bafokeng community results from a nexus of traditional authority and mining capital, the 'aegis of … new configurations of tribal authority and extractive capital' (Capps and Mnwana 2015, 609). This configuration and its exigencies enjoy a sophisticated empirical enquiry (Mnwana 2011). The literature focuses primarily on the political alliances among traditional leaders but not the impact of these alliances on the daily struggles of poor rural-based youth. Some scholars, such as Mnwana (2011), examined the limitations of fabricated spaces of participation for ordinary people in the Bafokeng community, but did not focus on the social moratorium of youth in this community as their subject of enquiry. We use social moratorium as a lens to examine experiences of unemployment and show how being unemployed places sharp limits on the youths' ability to attain social markers of adulthood.

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The 'social moratorium' of youth is precipitated by the nexus between tribal authority and extractive capital. This nexus flows from legislations such as the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (TLGFA) which have reinvigorated 'tribal' authorities to govern precisely the same geographic areas that had been hitherto demarcated as Bantustans by the apartheid government (Capps and Mnwana 2015). Using their newly assumed power to preside over their rural domains, several chiefs have entered into many contracts with mining companies on behalf of, but with limited or no consultation with, rural residents – their 'subjects'. These subjects include the youth who have found themselves on the receiving end of elite-mediated control of mineral wealth because they are the most marginalised social category in the RBN. Nested between the nexus of chiefly power and the mining corporations, which continue the cruel labour migrant system, the Bafokeng youth suffer a distinct typology of 'social moratorium'.

There exist extensive ethnographic studies on youth in Africa (see Gilbertet 2018; Honwana 2013; Johnson 2018; Masquelier 2019; Di Nunzio 2019; Stasik 2016; Turner 2015; Ungruhe and James 2017) and the structural forces that encumber their ability to attain 'adulthood' (see Stasik, Hänsch, and Mains 2020) or its social markers. Such social markers are commonly associated with a stable income, marriage, family and household formation. Studies further reveal how conditions of unemployment, poverty, unequal resource access and marginalisation accentuated by neoliberal structural adjustment policies result in their 'social moratorium' (Ferguson 2006; Vigh 2006a). 'Adulthood' is often defined in terms of social constructions and practices through which it is reproduced, that is, its social markers, such as stable full-time work, stable relationships, independent living and parenthood (Blatterer 2007).

Another set of literature foregrounds the impact precipitated by the widening gap between the hopes for social mobility and a reality of 'waithood' (Honwana 2013) or stagnation (see, for example, Archambault 2012; Cole 2004; Hansen 2005; Mains 2017; Masquelier 2005; Weiss 2009). This literature argues that the inability to attain the markers of social adulthood generates feelings of boredom, frustration and shame (Mains 2017; Masquelier 2013; Schielke 2008). These are illuminating and evocative renditions of waithood, but their pitfall is that they downplay the act of waiting as productive praxis (Stasik, Hänsch, and Mains 2020). The youth in different parts of Africa have also deployed the same language of sitting, waiting and doing nothing to describe their state of being (Hansen 2005; Mains 2017; Masquelier 2005; Mate 2014; Moyo 2019; Ralph 2008; Weiss 2009).

The rebuttal of this distorted view of waithood is a widely shared position (Stasik, Hänsch, and Mains 2020). Commonly, it is argued that 'idleness' and 'milling around' (Mate 2014) or 'motionless progress' (Jackson 2010; Vigh 2006a), epitomised by the conceptual paradigms of 'waithood'(Honwana 2013), 'nowhereness'(Jeffrey 2008; Jeffrey, Jeffrey, and Jeffrey 2008) and 'being stuck' (Hansen 2005), do not embody passivity or pointless waiting and a waste of time on the part of youth. It has been argued that the youth deploy 'situational living' (Blatterer 2010) or 'the culture of pragmatism' (Lockhart 2008) to plot and carve out multiple modal opportunities in deleterious conditions through 'opportunism, constant negotiation, trial and error, risk-taking, flexibility, improvisation and mobility and therefore transience' (Mate 2014, 5). The literature on youth praxis (agency) and their responses to economic and political marginalisation is well developed in South Africa (Dawson 2014; Makhulu 2010; Moiloa 2012). What is evoked

is the metaphor of South Africa's street corners (Moiloa 2012) as sites of gathering for the youth where they create shared 'cultures of waiting' and thereby engage in 'productive idleness' (Jeffrey 2010). Even though these gatherings are not as formal as conversation groups known as *fadas* (conversational groups) in Niger (Masquelier 2005), they embody the traits of 'productive idleness'. In South Africa, these experiences have fuelled the youth to turn collective waiting into a resource to fight for the prioritisation of their communities for service delivery (Dawson 2014). The youth do not just wait for an indeterminate future. They take active steps to shape developmental outcomes in their communities.

To be committed to the recovery of youth's agency in waithood and to foreground their pragmatics of situational living is commendable. However, there remains a lacuna in understanding the confluence of structural forces that reproduce the 'social moratorium' of youth in South Africa's platinum belt. This article analyses the micro-level structural milieu which generates the social moratorium of the youth in the platinum belt. It does so by looking at the complex interplay of power structures that result in the social moratorium of youth in distinct socio-economic and political settings in one of South Africa's mine host communities, the Bafokeng community.

This article is important for policy makers and development practitioners for several reasons. First, it illuminates the youth's contradictory life circumstances as underpinned by skewed distribution of power within a macro-political context in which traditional leaders wield unbridled influence.

Second, contrary to popular conceptions of youth as a 'lost generation' (Seekings 1996), 'slackers' and 'lazy' (Heiman 2001; RBEB 2004), and a 'ticking time bomb' (Chauke 2012; Mazwai 2012), this article promotes a focus on the youth's lived experiences in order to illuminate the complexity of their existence as a social category (Dawson 2014).

Third, this article illuminates the contradictory relationship between 'economic success' and development where the idealised notion of the Royal Bafokeng Nation as the most successful of South Africa 'traditional communities' (Manson and Mbenga 2003; Mnwana 2011) does not accord with the lived experiences of youth. These youths live precarious lives on the margins of platinum-rich economy unable to attain the markers of adulthood (Arnett 2007; Blatterer 2007). This article contributes to literature on the subjectivities of youth and their coming of age, albeit in a specific neoliberal context – that of a platinum mining economy. These subjectivities are subordinated by the idealised notion of a 'successful' Royal Bafokeng community.

Fourth, and building from the preceding articulation, the article shows that sometimes the dynamics of structural challenges that confront the youth are so intractable and beyond their control that they limit possibilities of existence available to them. Just as *Aguentas* (young people) in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa, who inserted themselves into irregular militia to plot trajectories of existence in an indeterminate situation (Vigh 2006a), the Bafokeng youth inserted themselves in social job recruitment networks which were sharply constrained by the intermediation of traditional leaders.

A note about the platinum belt

The platinum belt, also called the Igneous Bushveld Complex (IBC), defines both a geographical formation which contains about 80% of the platinum group metals (PGMs),

including platinum, palladium and a range of other minerals (Capps 2010); and rural communal lands which overlay this formation. These communal areas fall under the jurisdiction of traditional ('tribal') authorities which, in apartheid times, stretched across the 'independent homelands' of Bophuthatswana and Lebowa (Claassens 2014), and today straddle the North West and Limpopo provinces of South Africa.

The lived experiences of the South African youth were compared with those of the *Aguentas* in Guinea-Bissau because both inhabited social spaces of restricted possibilities. In Vigh's terminology, they constituted a 'community of experience' (Vigh 2006a, 19) which exemplified the interaction of structure and agency within a neoliberal context. Studying the youth in Guinea-Bissau and in the platinum belt unearths, in Colby's terms (2002), a youth who are predisposed to act on their beliefs to realise their dreams. However, the exercise of their agency is sharply circumscribed. A deeper analysis of youth agency illustrates that the platinum belt constitutes a space of possibility, as did war-engulfed Guinea-Bissau. In the platinum belt, the possibilities were conditioned by the traditional leaders while in Guinea-Bissau, 'big men', influential politicians or charismatic leaders simultaneously enabled and circumscribed them. This article is concerned with the lived experiences of poor and unemployed Bafokeng youth in the platinum belt, just as Henrik Vigh (2006a) was concerned with the poor *Aguentas* in Guinea Bissau.

Methodological approach

This article draws on case narratives of the youth in the Bafokeng community to demonstrate how their experiences epitomise the notions of social moratorium, and how this stagnation emerges from the nexus of mining capital and traditional authorities. These case narratives emerge from the ethnographic interviews that were conducted by the author as part of his PhD research during 2015 and 2016 in the Bafokeng community. The PhD research drew from 18 youth aged between 20 and 32 years interviewed individually, and four focus group discussions, each of which lasted two hours on average. The youth were purposively selected from across 11 villages in the broader Bafokeng community, namely Kanana, Mafika, Serutube; Luka, Chaneng, Robega; Bobuanjwa, Phokeng, Lefaragatlhe, Potsaneng and Maile-Kopman. The author spent three months deeply immersed in the local youth politics in these villages and gained a keyhole understanding of instabilities and contradictions facing the youth in these communities. None of the youth was coerced in participating in the research. All of them gave full and voluntary agreement to participate in the study and speak about their lived experiences. Inductive coding was used in combination with qualitative analysis to find themes and patterns in the transcripts of the interviews.

The following section outlines the definitional parameters of moratorium in general and social moratorium in particular by largely drawing on Henrik Vigh's (2006a) empirical work, which usefully demonstrates the social milieu that produce social moratorium.

'Social moratorium' explained

The notion of moratorium enjoys a well-developed academic enquiry with variations of this concept (Wulf 2009; Erikson 1968; Cote and Allahar 1994). This section is concerned with the concept of 'social moratorium' (Vigh 2006a). Vigh explores how the youth in

Guinea-Bissau negotiate trajectories to adulthood in the context of war. This scholar's explanation of the condition of young people in Guinea-Bissau adds to a burgeoning ethnographic literature on 'youth in Africa' that examines their contradictory experiences in the wake of transformations accompanied by neo-liberalism (Hobsbawm 1994; Makhulu, Buggenhagen, and Jackson 2010; Mizen 2004; O'Grady 1993; Rogers et al. 2004). Vigh's (2006a) approach is, however, unique because it posits youth as *becoming*, that is, a point in a continuum of social being in which young people plot trajectories to adulthood (Vigh 2006b). It is in this plotting in which the agency of youth is encumbered and in which Vigh (2006b, 37) argues that being youth:

> … protrudes as a predicament of not being able to gain the status and responsibility of adulthood and thus as a social position that people seek to escape as it is characterised by marginality, stagnation and a truncation of social being … a *social* moratorium …

For Vigh being youth bequeaths a locus of a socially desolate state of being that is underpinned by social marginality and liminality (2006a, 36–37). This locus conforms to the discursive stereotype of a 'lost generation', a group of 'young people [who] have finished their schooling, are without employment in the formal sector, yet are not in a position to set up an independent household' (O'Brien 1993, 57). The *blufo,* the youth who, despite being old enough, had not yet gone to their 'feinadu' (common Creole term for a circumcision ritual) were locally referred to in Guineau-Bissau as *being* and *unbeing*. It reifies *being* in that it locates the youth in a situation of disadvantage and *unbeing* in that it codifies the disablement of the youth to gain the authority and status of adulthood because they are symbolically and literally stuck 'in the position of youth' (Vigh 2006b, 32). Thus, argues Vigh (2006b, 46) that:

> [a]s decline has halted the flow of resources between generations and crippled the state's ability to provide routes to social mobility, urban males have become locked in the social position of youth without the possibility of achieving adulthood. They are unable to attain the momentum and progress of life that is socially and culturally desired and expected, resulting in (temporary) social death – in a social moratorium.

The unemployed Guinea-Bissauan youth depended on the 'economy of affection' – which describes a reliance on family members, friends, and religious and ethnic networks in times of need – to get by (Vigh 2006b, 37, 47). With all horizons for possibilities (tangible resources and land) of transitioning into adulthood diminished, the Guinea-Bissauan youth could not become a complete man. So, the cause for youth stagnation was as much underpinned by 'generationally asymmetric control over access to resources that greatly reduce their space of possibilities' as it was caused by a general state of economic decline that has come to characterise most post-colonial African polities (Vigh 2006b, 37). The same fate confronted Bafokeng youth who had no resources to attain adulthood due to the uneven distribution of platinum wealth. The following section documents and critically analyses the experiences of unemployment and waiting among the local youth in the Bafokeng community.

Youth experiences of social moratorium in South Africa's platinum belt

This section describes how lived experiences of the youth in the Royal Bafokeng community epitomise social moratorium. We focus on the Bafokeng community in the North

West Province of South Africa because this community has carved for itself a lofty position as both a community and quasi-municipality, a mine operator, mine owner, 'the richest tribe in Africa' (Manson and Mbenga 2003, 29–47),the 'quintessential incarnation' of Ethnicity Inc. flourishing as a 'business-like ethno- nation that manage[s]' its symbolic and material assets (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009, 116) to bring the development of infrastructure (roads, utilities, schools, clinics and other public amenities) to its people while most of South Africa's 800 traditional communities (communities presided over by traditional leaders or the chiefs) continue to be desolate (Horner 2012) and agriculturally devasted. Does the phrase, richest tribe in Africa accord with the lived experiences of the youth in the RBN (Mnwana 2011). This section argues that the material conditions of the youth are defined by social moratorium which is a result of power shifts that have taken place at local level in communities in which they have co-existed with large-scale extractive industries (Mohlala 2017).

The lives of these youth are underpinned by poverty, unemployment (with 44%, 22 008 out of 50 538 of youth aged 18–35 years unemployed), marginalisation and being stuck doing nothing (Moyo 2019). These findings are in harmony with the position of those who have reviewed the impact of mineral wealth exploitation in this community who posit that mineralised wealth has not benefitted most ordinary Bafokeng people but privileged the traditional leaders (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009; Cook 2013), thereby inviting the anthropologist, Inger Kriel to characterise the Bafokeng community as a 'rich nation of poor people' (2007). Yet, a focus on youth and an experiential account of their daily struggles has not been investigated through the lens of social moratorium. Adopting such a lens is key for it enables a study of our interlocutors in the continuum of social being in which they plot their way to adulthood, along multiple trajectories. In the sections that follow, the narratives of unemployed youth in waithood are presented in a thematic fashion.

Parental homes as sites of waithood

There is consensus that global capitalism, which is characterised by economic down swings, has radically transformed the transition from school to work by young people (Mains 2013, 2017; Maira and Soep 2004). Global capitalism is struggling to create sufficient job opportunities for young labour market entrants, condemning them to liminality. The resources at their disposal are those which enable them to get by but not sufficient to execute responsibilities socially associated with adulthood (Cole 2004), such as establishing independent families. The Bafokeng youth form part of a vast swathe of Africa's youth whose futures remain an 'elusive good and the present is a chronic state of waiting' (Stasik, Hänsch, and Mains 2020). The studies (e.g. Mchunu 2016) that analyse the youth subcultures in South Africa's townships valorise youth agency and focus on their practices of waiting but do not cast the gaze into their experiences in their household. Informants for the study pertaining to this article were interviewed at their homes and were interrogated about what it was like to be unemployed and to live in a context where their agency was sharply curtailed.

In examining individual participants, a recurring lexicon of being stuck was deciphered, which encodes a dual state of being physically at home and living with one's parents and

being unable to get married and establish one's own independent households. As a result, the youth periodically relied on their kith and kin for sustenance. As such, they typified the experiences of the Guinea-Bissauan youth about which Vigh (2006b, 37) noted:

> As I commenced my fieldwork none of my informants held a paid job, none had economic possibilities beyond everyday survival, and none had their own household sharing instead rooms with friends or living at the mercy and expense of fathers, mothers, uncles or aunts, or others from the older generations.

Just like the Guinea-Bissauan youth, the Bafokeng youth were locked between childhood and adulthood. They lived either with their parents or guardians and, on some occasions, were unable to afford the necessities of life such as adequate accommodation and food because they were unemployed and waiting for jobs. They were locked in the social moratorium (Vigh 2006b) of youth because they were unable to realise their social becoming and social adulthood. One of these was Mandisa, a 24-year-old woman, reported as having been the only of the four siblings who remained stuck at their parents' home (interviewed 16 October 2016). Sello faced the same predicament and reported being stuck at his mother's homestead (interviewed 16 October 2016). Mandisa and Sello's experiences exemplify the lives of many young people in the Bafokeng community who feel left out of the development grid in a platinum-mine-dominated local economy. This life is underpinned by what is termed 'waiting in envy', watching one's peers progress in life while one lives in a state of immobility (Dawson 2014).

> It is pretty much the same. As I wake up in the morning, I watch people going to different places. I either sit at my corner here or sell airtime. If I do not have stock, we just sit to chat and share jokes with my friends. I apply for jobs, and they don't even call you back, weeks, months and even years, it sucks (sic). (Interview with Sello, 16 October 2016)

> I cannot just get married. I have no money for lobola to get married. If I get a good job that pays good money, I will go and lobola my girlfriend and get married. (Interview with Monde, 17 October 2016)

> An unemployed person is like me right now, who stays at home, doing only house chores, looking after their kids, doing nothing in life. Apparently, I am doing nothing, nothing at all … I am stuck (sic). (Interview with Wendy, 25 October 2016)

These citations show that our youth participants' lives embodied suffering from the 'stigma of inter-generational immobility and social stagnation: that is, of being confined to a social and generational position that they ideally ought to transcend' (Vigh 2006a, 46). This suffering encases being being stuck, an existential experience which connotes a state of dissonance 'where beliefs and expectations are defied by social reality: being educated and of age but still dependent on parents because of unemployment where the opposite is expected' (Mate 2014, 19). Evidently, the youth predicated their social being on the economy of affection, but 'it is important to note that family relations are used to cover one's immediate needs rather than offering a way out of the social moratorium' (Vigh 2006b, 47). Thabang (interviewed 20 October 2016) and the respondents already cited exemplify the inability of most youth in the Bafokeng community to acquire sufficient resources from family networks to secure themselves a future. Thabang's idea of asking for a protracted period suggests the insufficiency of

the familial support he had been receiving over the years and which drew him to a point of defeatism.

> The thing is, for a long time I was asking and asking, I have come to a point of saying, this is enough, I have been asking all the way, I must come up with my own things now, […] the real issue now is that I am tired of asking and asking from people that do not have themselves, their sacrifices, eish (sic). (Interview with focus group participant 21 October 2016)

The scarcity of opportunities for a new set of cultural practices and the paucity of support systems from families in the Bafokeng community led young people to draw on their own aspirations and hope for a better future; a resource to fight frustration, a finding already made by other scholars (see Markus and Nurius 1987; Zegeye and Maxted 2002). The following viewpoint from a focus group participant (interviewed 25 October 2016) corroborates this:

> We know that we tried, … , we have stood up, we have tried all things possible, we have dealt with disappointments, discouragements … , we have dealt with too many things, emotions – anger, frustration, hopelessness, etc. … we are going to keep on trying to do something with our lives with the hope that things will improve. We are taking what life dishes to us; we are also moving on (sic).

The condition of waiting generates social and personal costs among those who wait (Schwartz 1974). It forges an injurious feeling of helplessness in the 'waiter' thereby encumbering their ability to explore possibilities for disentangling themselves from the condition of waiting. This is what is referred to as passive waiting rather than active waiting (Bandak and Janeja 2018). Minnegal (2009) does not find the distinction between passive and active waiting useful. Since waiting 'indicates an inability to act, a lack of agency', a deliberate decision to wait becomes an 'an explicit expression of agency' (Minnegal 2009, 89–96). Waiting is seldom inactive for it often combines passive acquiesce to a state of doing nothing and thus is an expression of agentive capacities; but can also be expressed as an engaged activity, an active choice to be doing nothing (Mujere 2020).

'Get out of my office, there are no jobs!'

In trying to escape the 'world of rags' (poverty), the youth confronted their abjection, 'a process of being thrown aside, expelled, or discarded' arising from job distributional networks, which robbed them of a place in the idealised notion of a prosperous Bafokeng community through waged work (Ferguson 1999, 236) as exemplified in the following citation.

> I also went to North Shaft because they were hiring; and there was a guy called Thulo [alias]. However, I arrived late. A guy called Thulo [alias], told me 'out, get out of my office'. He told me 'out, there are no jobs!'. Oh, that pain I felt, I went out and literally cried (sic). (Interview with Nomsa 25 October 2016)

This abjection was also precipitated by nepotistic and unfair job recruitment practices where some royal surnames were associated with better employment outcomes, as one focus group participant interviewed on 2 November 2016 put it: 'If you have a royal surname, ja; If your surname is tops, then you are right, you are given opportunities'. The 'top surnames' were mentioned as Mokgatle, Diale, Senne, Petlele, Tumahole and Magano. Another respondent (Wendy interviewed on 25 October 2016) concurred:

> There are office politics when it comes to surnames. Dealings are based on surnames where you will be asked, who are you? You are a Modise from where? Who are your grandparents? What did they do for this community? Something like that; questions like those. It is all about surnames …

What accompanied accusations of nepotistic labour recruitment against local leaders was a constant reference to the fact that information that people were being hired was always said in hushed tones, especially by *dikgosana* (Setswana for headmen). The *dikgosana*, in connivance with mine recruitment personnel, first ensured that the information reached their 'own people' before other unconnected people could apply. This was narrated by some Bafokeng youth.

> Our *kgosana* is a Petlele. He puts his family first. If there is something happening or being offered or opened for the whole community, our *kgosana* will always look out and see that his family is the first to benefit […] People take care of their own first and then give the remainders to those below. The *kgosana* is there for his family and no one else. (Interview with focus group participant 2 November 2016)

> When there are events, Mme Mmakgosi [the *kgosana's* wife] informed my dad about all that was said by *kgosana*. So, it is not just about having the same surnames. People take care of their own first and then give the remainders to those below. The *kgosana* is there for his family and no one else. (Interview with Polly 24 November 2016)

The Bafokeng youth were also marginalised in local job recruitment processes. Preference was given to migrant labourers as shown in the following interview citation.

> It is said that we don't have skills or knowledge about the things they do in the mines. Yet, you find people coming from Mozambique who cannot even speak English or did not go to school to learn about those things … , they [the mining companies] are taking them to adult schools to teach them how to write, but we are told that they have gone to school to learn how to use those machines. Similarly, all they need to do for us is to help us get the skills they [mining companies] want so that we can feed our families. (Interview with focus group participant 2 November 2016)

These claims must be understood within the context of South Africa's history of racialisation where black immigrants were preferred over indigenous South Africans. However, these vignettes menace the common view that local leadership is best suited to respond to the local needs of the people. The claims of chiefly improprieties as alleged by the youth need to be seriously interrogated, especially taking account of the fact that, in addition to the Employment Board of Africa (TEBA), which was established to supply South Africa's gold mines with cheap labour, the *dikgosana* played, and continue to play, a central role in recruiting local labour for the mines.

The role of *dikgosanas* as purveyors of information about job vacancies in local mining shafts and as decision makers about who gets hired, places them distinctly in the interface between mining capital and the communities which fall under their juridical control. Local headmen, sitting at the locus of the global platinum value chain, were enabled to invoke blood kinship, placing their kith and kin at the head of job queues. This reifies what O'Shaughnessy (2009, 14) describes as collective affluenza or:

> Symptoms of a nation […] that has abandoned many of the values […] and intimacy in relationships [and] […] embraced more materialistic items, selfishness, and instant gratification, and less to do with self-restraint, good will, creating strong relationships and communities.

The conflicts witnessed in platinum mining host communities and the Bafokeng community reflect contradictions between the interests of ordinary inhabitants for whom land is a source of livelihood, and mining corporations with business interests for whom land is a source of profit (Du Preez 2015). The Bafokeng community's participation in the mining economy, through its mining arms such as the Royal Bafokeng Platinum (RBPlat), represents the entanglement of the local and the global (Du Preez 2015).

It is imperative to understand how the chiefs came to sit at the locus of global value chains in the Bafokeng community. Chiefly authority in the Bafokeng community and their participation in platinum mining should be understood in the context of the reification of traditional leadership, which has reproduced apartheid-era jurisdictions and has entrenched colonial versions of its 'customary' powers in post-apartheid South Africa (Claassens and Cousins 2008). Seizing a moment of relevance enabled by a new legislative framework, the Bafokeng chiefs took advantage of the prescription of the Minerals and Petroleum Resources Act (MPRDA) of black shareholding levels as a requisite for licensing of mining corporates. They converted the mining royalties they had been receiving into direct equity stakes in local mining operations, in the name of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and 'community participation' (Capps and Mnwana 2015). This transformed them from the custodians of their people's 'tribal assets' into 'a new BEE elite that has formed at the interface between the ANC party-state and the mining multinationals' (Capps and Mnwana 2015). Rather than being the custodians of their community aspirations, the 'chiefs have increasingly acted as 'land brokers' for the platinum corporations, unilaterally signing over the surface rights to tribal farms in their capacity as the representatives of the 'community interest'' (Capps and Mnwana 2015, 610).

The role chiefs played was 'juridically strengthened through a parallel set of legislative developments' (Capps and Mnwana 2015, 610). Yet, in their enclosing role in the mining operations, the chiefs were incorporated as junior partners (Capps and Mnwana 2015) responsible for such operational obligations as labour recruitment. They were used as a convenient buffer against community rumblings about unfair distribution of mineralised wealth, an obligation that placed them at the coalface of community-mining capital conflict. This reifies Mamdani's schematic framework in articulating the role of traditional leadership in colonial South Africa (1996). The administrative role assumed by the chiefs in this platinum mining host community is different to that traditionally attributed to them (Mamdani 1996, 40). In actuality, the chiefs have become a BEE elite which, together with the pliant *dikgosana*, form a distinct class of accumulator–consumers in a distinct mining capitalist economy.

What is at play in the Bafokeng community is what Henrik Vigh finds in West Africa: asymmetrical control over and access to resources resulting in 'smouldering intergenerational tension' due to stifling economic hardships for those left out of the resource distribution grid (Vigh 2006a, 97), the *Aguentas*, able-bodied but unskilled and jobless young people who, because of alienation, were ready to take up arms in exchange for small amounts of money to manoeuvre their way into 'emergent possibilities in order to direct their lives in an advantageous direction' (Vigh 2006a, 8). Doing so required *dubriagem* (social navigation) (Vigh 2006a, 10) with which the youth inserted themselves in reciprocal networks. Vigh (2006a, 107) posits that

… [the] youth […] to enter[ed] patrimonial networks […] by trying to gain a reciprocal relationship to a patron, at any point in the patrimonial network, who control[ed] a flow of resources exceeding that needed to fulfil his family obligations.

Unlike in Guinea-Bissau where the war offered young people without patrons the opportunity to escape stifling social moratorium (Vigh 2006a, 112), the conditions in the Bafokeng community are such that access to power has become the only avenue to social becoming. However, the Bafokeng community, to use Vigh's phraseology, has become 'a rusty grid, cross-cut and intertwined by patrimonial networks' impenetrable to the youth with little political and structural power (Vigh 2006a, 111). The social moratorium of Bafokeng youth results from the skewed distribution of mineral resources, which privileges the chiefs and their headmen but sidelines young people's mineral wealth distributive claims and their broader developmental priorities. The local chiefs in the Bafokeng community, just like many apartheid-era mineral claim holders, have managed to attain relative autonomy from the South African state through the property protection clauses granted as part of negotiations to end apartheid in South Africa. The state features in this dialectic as the custodian of mining licences, without which no digging and excavation for minerals can occur. The chiefs and the mining corporations form a thick labyrinth of patrons of the state on the ground, beyond which the youth must navigate to disentangle themselves from social moratorium.

Conclusions and proposed solutions

This article concludes with highlighting that the social moratorium of youth is a result of power shifts that have taken place at local level in communities in which these communities coexist with large-scale extractive industries. This coexistence has resulted in asymmetrical power relations defined by the contours of generation and patriarchy. The continuing control over resources (platinum) and decision-making (political) power in the Bafokeng community have resulted in the social moratorium of youth. This power is derived from the post-apartheid legislation which has reified the colonial version of chiefs as village despots devoid of checks and balances.

This article makes four recommendations. First, it proposes the need to radically rethink the question about whether platinum-rich traditional communities like the RBN can be 'effective engines of decentralised rural development'? (Platteau and Abraham 2002, 106–136). The Royal Bafokeng case does not bequeath the assurance '… that communities, defined by their tight spatial boundaries of jurisdiction and responsibilities, by their distinct and integrated social structure and common interests, can manage their natural resources in an efficient, equitable, and sustainable way' (Blaikie 2006, 1942). What is experienced in the RBN is witnessed elsewhere in South Africa where traditional leaders control the land in which mining occurs, and where there is an uneasy co-existence of wealth and poverty. The decision-making platforms such as the *Kgotha-Kgothe* (the bi-annual mass meeting) which are ostensibly supposed to give expression to popular voices are instruments of authoritarian control by the traditional elites (Mnwana 2011) and must be rethought. The traditional leaders and their authoritarian control of rural communities should be decommissioned. Their legislated control of South Africa's rural communities perpetuates

Mamdani's (1996) duality of rural subjects and urban citizens which is anathema to the democratic dispensation.

Second, and in relation to the above, there is need for individual focused developmental interventions in mine hosting communities such as the RBN. The RBN is the classic candidate for the application of Sen's Capability Approach (CA) (Robeyns 2005). This is so because the CA places the radar on the character of individual youth, their aspirations, and the extent to which they act on their agency to realise their aspirations, and the structural limitations to the exercise of this agency. The provision of basic services such as water, roads and clinics does not itself translate into individual flourishing because personal heterogeneities require the obtainability of more than just resources for people to generate their valuable functioning, as Sen posits (1999, 73–74). The starting point should be the youth as the unit of moral concern in the assessment of individual affairs (Robeyns 2005, 107). Expanding the capabilities of youth through education would improve their employability beyond the RBN mining economy whose labour absorptive capacity is increasingly becoming constrained.

Third, poverty, unemployment, and marginalisation have become a ubiquitous theme in mineral-rich traditional communities. The paradoxical antimony of poverty and wealth in the RBN encourages a rethink of models of wealth distribution. These models have been implemented in many countries to improve the management and governance of the mining sector. South Africa's Black Economic Empowerment model and Social Labour Plans (SLPs) are one example of such models. The SLPs could be used to enforce the recruitment of local labour by mining corporations and thus improve the welfare of mine host communities.

Fourth, the allegations that traditional leaders are corrupt and that they embezzle finances meant for their communities' development have been raised in South Africa. These allegations are prevalent but have been raised *sotto voce* in the RBN. The seriousness of these allegations in the RBN should be understood in the context of this community which has organised itself as a *universitas persona*, a not-for-profit institution that operates in the interest and benefit of the community (Cook 2005). These allegations must be investigated.

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