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Green gold refining the post mining landscapes of Kwathema

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2019

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/28840

Filliano, Malaki Alfie (2019) Green gold:refining the post mining landscapes of KwaThema, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/28840>

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ABSTRACT

Dormant gold mining practices of the Witwatersrand have embedded the landscape with scars of derelict infrastructure and polluted waste. This mining inheritance and the legacy of Apartheid has braided a fabric of misfortune that shrouds neighbouring townships environmentally, socially and economically.

To the east of the mining belt lies KwaThema, a discarded community founded in what was the largest gold producing location of the world, as a 'model' for township development. Despite the closure of surrounding mines in the 1960's, relentless urban migration has continued to expand the township beyond its envisioned capacity, resulting in the challenges of high levels of unemployment, poverty, crime, poor schooling, weak service delivery, and surrounding pollution from decades of irresponsible mining.

With little understanding of the health risks they open themselves to, the growing community has appropriated reclaimed mine tailings that border them, but socio-spatial segregation continues to marginalise them from surrounding industrial activity and neighbouring 'white' communities.

To address this requires a deep understanding of the historic foundations of the problem, an examination of viable solutions, and ultimately a multi-faceted approach that addresses the economic, social and environmental nature of the dilemma in a way that actively involves and benefits the community.

Refining the post-mining environment of KwaThema requires a fresh cloth, braided from new ways that landscapes are curated into a structured ecology and new ways that communities are engaged in their rehabilitation, with the capacity for ongoing hybridisation and growth. The new fabric of KwaThema, sewn from **Green Gold**■