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# Infrastructures as ethnographic objects of inquiry: a study of development in Agnes Rest, Eastern Cape

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**2021**

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# Infrastructures as ethnographic objects of inquiry: A study of development in Agnes Rest, Eastern Cape.

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Research report

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of

a Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report

in Social Anthropology

University of the Witwatersrand

Johannesburg

March 2021

# Declaration:

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Social Anthropology, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

……  ……

Zikhona Necolette Ngqula (1062278)

March 2021

# Dedication:

This research report is dedicated to my family; my mom and my aunt, thank you for always supporting my dreams and believing in me. My siblings, Sanda, Ta'X and Liyema, I hope this paper will teach you also about where our heritage comes from. Thank you all for your patience with me.

# Acknowledgements:

I am eternally grateful to God for His provision throughout this degree. The Holy Spirit for giving me this research topic inspiration and the grace to continue writing and learning.

Thank you to my family for everything you have done to help me in this research, the conversations, the connections, the transcribing – I would not have research participants without you all, so thank you!

I extend a great appreciation to all my research participants. Your stories have been heard and written down.

I am indebted to my supervisor Prof Eric Worby, you have in many respects steered this project. I am thankful for your patience, tremendous support, your valuable suggestions that have made me read more and broaden my gaze throughout this project. Prof, thank you for always making me go the extra mile at being analytic, it is your dedication to my work that has left me full of gratitude and gratefulness for having you supervise this project.

To the rest of the staff of the Social Anthropology Department, thank you for the support you gave the MA cohorts and me during such a difficult time to conduct research. To Dr Matthew Wilhelm-Solomon especially thank you so much for helping me with my writing, your classes and consultations helped bring my excerpts to life.

## Abstract

Development discourse is grounded in the assumptions of modernisation theory. The basic assumption comes from European ideology – that so-called 'traditional' and 'primitive' societies are changing in to more advanced, modern, and industrial societies through a process known as 'modernisation'. But how well does this discourse allow us to understand the social context and processes of change in a rural settlement? This research report provides a window into the lives of the residents of Agnes Rest, a village in the Eastern Cape, by investigating their relationship to water and electricity, thus beginning the work of treating elements of infrastructure as ethnographic objects. Focusing on the nature and delivery of infrastructure, in this case water and electricity, the report explores how these residents understand "development" in this form. I explore how the delivery of infrastructure affects interactions among residents themselves as well as their interactions with the state, both in terms of relations of governmentality and their perceptions of change in the world around them. Through telephonic interviews and archival research, I show how infrastructure connects and differentiates people, how infrastructure constructs social spaces, how infrastructure constructs locally constructed meanings of change and development, and lastly how inequality is emerging in relation to the differential ability of residents to choose a level of service, thereby producing changes within the community their access to shared spaces for communal activities. Despite the post-apartheid government's attempts to improve service delivery through laws and policies intended to combat this inequality in access, I argue that it is the individual initiatives taken by local households to better their livelihood that achieves a transformation of their circumstances. The report unfolds this argument, by first recounting these and attempts at infrastructure provision by government, then by detailing the materiality of infrastructure itself in the village, then by unpacking, the discourses of social inequality that have arisen in relation to infrastructure provision and access, and finally by analysing the different perceptions of 'development' that are consequently held by the residents of Agnes Rest.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

Throughout my childhood, I have made visits to the birthplace of my grandparents, a village called *eMgqukhwebe*, formally known as Agnes Rest. Agnes Rest is 21 km away from Lady Frere in the Eastern Cape, and both these places are connected by the R392 which is a regional route. Lady Frere is the nearest rural town that Agnes Rest is close to. Agnes Rest has widespread rondavels and brick houses, with their kraal (fenced enclosure where they keep livestock) within the same yard. With gravel roads that are only user friendly for a 4x4 truck and no Kia Picanto, the unpaved road surface in the entire village makes it unbearable to drive around in a small car. I am drawn to this village because of my heritage and personal desire to learn more about it while also contributing to the growing body of knowledge on the Eastern Cape rural communities.

Besides the fact that I was born and raised in Queenstown, Eastern Cape, and visited Agnes Rest numerous times, I am still unaware of the overwhelming differences and similarities you find in townships and villages in the province relating to services such as the toilet facilities, the type of housing, the roads, the water supply, and electricity. But it is only now that I reflect on the trips to Agnes Rest with my family and I am struck by the transformation that took place throughout the years. Central to these transformations were infrastructural developments, which started appearing in post-apartheid South Africa because of the incorporation of the villages into the municipalities. Transformations such as having toilets in their yards, centralised water supply through communal taps and JoJo tanks, electrical wiring in the village, these small differences have taken years to arrive at, but they make a difference in the lives of the people who stay there.

Infrastructural developments in the village have helped me rethink conversations around development, subjectivities, and techno-politics within Agnes Rest. My research journey has thus been difficult, regarding trying to make sense of how I can use “infrastructure” both as a conceptual tool and as a central object of ethnographic engagement as I sought to understand techno-politics and development perceptions in Agnes Rest (Larkin 2013).

Brian Larkin’s (2013) work has been instrumental in my research. Given the numerous ways to study and investigate infrastructure, Larkin notes that “discussing an infrastructure is a categorical act” (2013:330). His statement is based on the premise that infrastructures are not just out there to be discovered; rather the act of defining an infrastructure is a categorising

moment. By this he simply means that deciding what to look at when examining the category of things that one might count as "infrastructure," one has to make an analytical choice to include some things and leave out others. And it is this approach I adopt from Larkin for my research, although I do so slightly differently by focusing on the entanglements of people's lives with water and electricity and how that informs Agnes Rest residents' local notions of 'what is development.'

## 1.1. Rationale

One of the big shifts since the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 has been political and social changes with regards to multiracial democratic elections and the introduction of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). This process has included the implementation of municipal developments and policies surrounding the development of rural areas. There are social and cultural factors that development initiatives must always recognise before introducing infrastructural changes in rural communities in provinces such as the Eastern Cape. Because of such considerations that need to be accounted for, we need to be interested in the grounded perception of development. By using the material infrastructure of water taps and electricity, studying the engagements and interactions of people with these infrastructures, this study will investigate how development is understood in Agnes Rest. While assessing the mismatch that exists in the village as to why some residents do not grab hold of the new infrastructural developments bought by the state government while others do, I found myself asking, – could it be that these individuals are not buying into the teleological idea of development? For example, how do you begin to understand why, despite having electricity wired in their houses and electric stoves, some women still prefer to cook outdoors?

My research seeks to explore, at the community level, alternative ways of thinking about local development understanding among residents of the rural village of Agnes Rest in the Eastern Cape through a close study of the provision, utilisation and interpretation of infrastructure (in the form of centralised water through the communal tap and electricity). I am approaching infrastructure as an opening to understand the reasoning behind the people's understanding of 'what development means to them' and the government's approach to development in this area.

My research is therefore intended to highlight some of the difficulties of understanding the rural context of development and social change. My research aims are thus: to generate emerging knowledge and ways of thinking about, (a) discourses of development, (b) ethnography, (c) subjectivities in a local South African context post-apartheid; and lastly (d) engaging the everyday politics of access to infrastructure in rural Eastern Cape. My overall aim

is to benefit local Anthropology by offering an alternative conceptualisation of development in a post-apartheid former Transkei homeland social context.

## 1.2. Research Question

What roles do water and electricity play in the conceptions of development that people in Agnes Rest have and how does access or lack of access to these infrastructures affect their lives?

**Sub research questions:**

- What understandings of and relationships to water and electricity do people in Agnes Rest have? What significance do they attach to them? In what ways are they dependent on these infrastructures?
- How do residents of Agnes Rest understand how various levels of the government (whether national, provincial or, the local municipality) determine the form and, distribution of infrastructural development in Agnes Rest?
- What do the people in Agnes Rest understand by the term 'development' and in what ways does their understanding of it reflect the way they live in community with each other? Do they associate 'development' with a different way of living outside of their usual norms and routines, and if so, why, and how?

## 1.3. Methodology

It was my wish to be more immersed physically in my research site, to actively see for myself how my research participants engaged with the infrastructure specific to this research. Participant observation is effective in the way that it gives me as the researcher an insider's view rather than an armchair perspective. I wanted to adopt participant observation as my foremost methodology for this type of research because it seemed befitting to give the ethnography more depth. However, the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic posed a hindrance to my initial methodology. As the world in 2020 had to adapt to the new norm caused by Covid-19, academia and research had to change as well to meet the demands of the pandemic. Therefore in this section, I will further elaborate on the changes I went through to the losses entailed in this shift and finally the new opportunities and benefits of this shift.

*This pandemic ruined everything – well, almost everything, luckily, I could still conduct my fieldwork – Thank God for technology!!!*

Words that I said to myself as I recall the anxiety and stress that I felt with this research report especially at the beginning stages – stress that was mostly caused by the pandemic and lockdown. Journaling my feelings throughout the whole experience helped a lot too. In May

earlier this year (2020), I thought I was going to redo my entire research idea to better accommodate my new reality because of the lockdown regulations that were implemented. However, technology came to my rescue! The greatest difficulty I faced with my data collection was distancing myself as a researcher and member of the community, my viewpoints, and knowledge systems on the subject matter. However, I had to overcome and let the ethnography shape itself without my pre-existing opinions and prejudices interfering too much. Journaling my feelings and positionality assisted me in this regard as well.

### 1.3.1. Interviews

Initially, before the pandemic, I wanted to conduct interviews face-to-face. The ethnographic fieldwork for this research report, therefore, comprises a collection of recorded telephonic interviews, WhatsApp conversations, voice calls, and collections from my visits to the research site. My 'virtual field site' is the small rural village Agnes Rest in the Eastern Cape. I began my data collection in earnest from the end of July to September 2020. Additionally, I used a collection of raw fieldwork notes from my Honours research report (done on Agnes Rest) in 2019.

Regarding the photography used in this research report, I used images from my Honours research fieldwork visit and others were captured by my research participants from their environments when they engaged with the physical infrastructure.

As I could not conduct contact interviews (physical) with my research participants because of the lockdown regulations, I resorted to telephonic interviewing and WhatsApp messenger. This was a struggle because it was costly for me to buy airtime and have lengthy interviews.

Historically I have learned how the discipline of anthropology has been traditionally centred on the study of the Other, but I have noticed that as aspiring researchers, we often forget or overlook our environments as sites of study because we are too familiar with them. Hence, I wanted to study in my own home. Agnes Rest is my family home. Conducting fieldwork here came with a lot of implications and issues.

I encountered issues of familiarity and power relations between me as a researcher and being a child to the community. Because of my family connections, it became an asset for me to get numerous participants to be involved in my research. However, this also had the limitation that the participants felt free and open to ask for incentives for their participation, despite being explicit about my not being able to do this in my participant information sheet, which I provided to them before conducting the interview. The fact that I conducted the interviews on WhatsApp,

and I called them assisted me with trying to avoid paying anyone incentives. I did so by making sure I bought them data for WhatsApp.

The advantage of familiarity I had was that as a researcher, I had easy access to the people. Though the pandemic shifted how I wanted to conduct my interviews, it did not affect my selection of individuals to participate in my research. Covid- 19 taught me the importance of keeping connections with people outside of my family even though my family initially introduced me to them. The experience of researching during a pandemic made me realise that relations with people who were once strangers can benefit a researcher in the long run as well, especially for someone like me who is interested in studying this community in depth.

My research participants were all full-time residents of Agnes Rest comprising a mixture of adult men and women. Their ages were varying from as young as 30 years old to the elderly. I managed to get the participants that I wanted initially – which are people who have been residing in the village for more than twenty years. The reason for this selection is because they would have lived through the different stages of transformation the village has undergone. I was fortunate in that, through the assistance of my family members with gathering community members for my research, I got a variety of people to interview. An important thing to note about my relationships with my research participants was that some were distant family members or family friends, while others had no relations with my family at all.

I had to maintain a balance of power between my informants and my relationship with them. I did so in a way that I had respect for all my informants in terms of their consent and availability for interviews. As such, I became more aware of the differences in access that each of them had, in terms of leisure time to spare for the interview, and that shaped my data collection period.

While WhatsApp acts as technological infrastructure to sustain numerous activities, in my case it served a purpose for my interviewing process (Cruz and Harindranath 2020). The app mediated between the social life of my research participants and the interview schedule that was convenient for them. The advantage of using WhatsApp is that it can facilitate real-time interviews with its instant messenger for synchronous conversation despite being in different locations (Barratt and Maddox 2016). Not forgetting that a participant can decide to respond later to a text and make the process asynchronous. Kaufmann and Peil (2020) write about how the technical features and specifics of WhatsApp such as the read and delivered checks when doing interviews, help a researcher decide whether to proceed with a conversation or not and

basically how to structure their questions. This was the case with my interviews over WhatsApp. I relied on the read check to allow me to know when a participant is available to talk, despite them agreeing beforehand to their preferred interview time.

I struggled to work with WhatsApp also because it represented an informal approach to data collection in my preference and I often got carried away with our conversations; I had to go through lengthy texts looking for 'valuable' data from the chats. An advantage was that I was able to build rapport and curate the conversation as I wanted to, I thought this was something I would lose because of the lack of face-to-face interviewing.

The advantage I had with the telephonic interviews was that I could be more 'straight to the point' with my questions because I was constrained by the airtime minutes I had.

In total, I conducted eleven interviews inclusive of telephonic interviews and WhatsApp interviewing.

The type of interview questions I asked the residents of Agnes Rest were intended to firstly understand the knowledge systems of the people thus how they make sense of their world and how it influences their understandings of social growth or development. This meant exploring their experiences of going to collect water; of living in a *dark village (*see more in Chapter 6) as caused by load shedding or a lack of electricity. This overall aided me in retrieving their perceptions of 'what is development according to them' by having a microscopic look at their discourse and rationalities of their engagement with water supply and electricity.

### 1.3.2. Archival research

I used archival research for Chapter 2 – History of Infrastructure and Service Delivery in Agnes Rest and partially in Chapter 5 – Sonke asilingani: How social inequality is understood. I resorted to archives because of the difficulty I faced with resourcing the policy and legislation documents and historical data on the Transkei along with development projects from Agnes Rest's history. I made use of NGO archives, public research institutes, Wits Historical Papers, the National Library (online), and Stats SA archives as my resources. Additionally, after expressing my struggles of retrieving some archival documents (again, because of the lockdown regulations I was not able to physically go to the national library) with my Masters class in the Department of Social Anthropology through a workshop that was held, I began to see how I can even use my life histories data as a 'Living Archive.' This was exciting for me to implement and consider how I could explore and use data I already collected inclusive of

the experiences and stories I heard from my participants as a basis for my historical background chapter.

I felt it was crucial for me as a researcher to share an account of the history of Agnes Rest because this would help me to highlight the significance of history in understanding the governmentality and the colonial history of development understandings in scholarship, thus highlighting the western ideology that informs it. Also, to give a vivid contextualisation of Agnes Rest for the reader. To reiterate, history is a crucial tool in understanding people's viewpoints. I have seen that focusing on the history of the different individuals of my research reveal different experiences and viewpoints of the main objective of this research. Some had instances of diverse memories like those of Mamike, because of her travels as well as her experience as a teacher in Agnes Rest teacher. While younger participants like Buthi G had limited memories that I could engage with. In essence, the history of this village has been shaped by the different types of people you find there; therefore I could not rely on the factual history alone, but also the lived history and experiences of the people and their distinct 'positionalities' and how they related it to me. What became important in this research was the various ways in which 'history' is narrated and reconstructed thus revealing the differences in the ways that people take a point of view on the past in the present.

## 1.4. Ethical considerations

I was able to maintain confidentiality because the interviews I conducted were remote and because I was able to use pseudonyms to represent my interviewees in this research report. My main ethical consideration was anonymity. This was because the village is small, and members of the community know each other so I was not sure that I could fully guarantee anonymity, especially considering that I was using some of my family members and people they are familiar with. Despite using pseudonyms in this report, I have to explicitly point out that I had to change minor details of my research participants, such as their gender and age so that they could not be easily identified.

I sent electronic consent forms and participant information sheets over WhatsApp to those with the App and I read the information over the phone to those I did telephonic interviews with. This is where my home language posed a barrier to me. I realised this last year already while conducting my Honours research, that the dialect of isiXhosa I spoke was slightly different from the one they spoke in Agnes Rest. There is a difference between urban IsiXhosa and rural IsiXhosa, I am familiar with urban IsiXhosa because of having grown up in Queenstown. A majority of the residents in Agnes Rest communicated with me using rural IsiXhosa, as such I

opted to record (with their knowledge and approval) our conversations and later transcribe the interviews. I required the assistance of my aunt to help unpack phrases and words that may have hidden meanings that I did not understand. I also explicitly asked my research participants to explain some words to me. This language barrier issue revealed to me how discourse was so vital in the village. In such a way that the spoken and written words that came up in my research became the pivotal research turning points, and I had to unpack these phrases to support my argument. For example, the phrase Chapter Five is focused on -'sonke asilingani' ('we are not all equal') - revealed many positionalities in the village and how access is differentiated; therefore the dialect of IsiXhosa I spoke I needed to overcome so that I could grasp the fullness of the dialect of IsiXhosa spoken in Agnes Rest.

I deliberately chose not to include the local ward councillors or municipal officials in my research because of the time constraints and the difficulty that obtaining a consent agreement from the relevant government officials could impose upon my research journey. The fact that we were in a pandemic also influenced my accessibility to these officials.

All data collected has been stored in my computer and the recordings in my iCloud and Google Drive, which both are password protected.

Lastly, I organised and thought about my ethnographic data thematically (Emerson et al. 1995). After I coded my raw field notes from my interviews, I organised them into clusters of common themes or topics. Focusing on a thematic narrative assisted me with my data analysis as well. Emerson et al. (1995) mention the strategy of conducting a repetitive action when writing one's coding; navigating from open coding and then focused coding. This repetitive action refined my themes more clearly and I was able to cluster my data into themes according to the focused coding they represented.

As I reflect on how I organised my data, themes emerged after I compared two interviews with one another, that is, placing interviews parallel to each other and analysing the emerging theme from the fieldnotes written down. The reason I used this approach was that it was easier for me in terms of taking participants that share similar life stories and using common emerging themes from what they shared with me during our interviews. After doing this with two people, I developed the same approach with other participants. Through this approach, I managed to get different views or perspectives from placing two interviews in parallel. However, I did single out other interviews and analysed them thematically on their own, such interviews brought different perspectives as opposed to others. Threads that I saw emerging that will

further be shown with the chapters to come were awareness of inequality, JoJo tanks, the health impact of centralised water, and the fragility of infrastructures.

## 1.5. Thesis map

My report is about exploring patterns of thinking about development among residents of the rural village of Agnes Rest in the Eastern Cape. I analysed water supply and electricity as mediums through which to understand the ideas and practices that the local community members use to conceptualise development locally

I discovered the various subjectivities, rationalities and experiences, and types of governmentality in the village through the discourse and phrases used by the people. Along my research journey, I became aware that I cannot infer an overall perception of 'what is development' because of the significant social categories and social inequality among the people. Therefore, the argument I make in this research report is that, among community members in Agnes Rest, there are distinct subjectivities and rationalities caused by the social inequalities in access to water and electricity, so the modern universal teleological idea of development does not translate into this social context. Rather than depending on the state and public infrastructure, this community takes issues of access into its own hands by taking measures of self-sustainability through its resources.

In this research report, I map out this argument through the subsequent chapters that detail and contextualise Agnes Rest in broader relation to rural Eastern Cape and South Africa. I do so first by describing the materiality of infrastructure and then by discussing social inequality locally.

In Chapter Two, I start by setting the scene for my research site – Agnes Rest. I discuss the questions of: What is this place? Where is this place? What kind of place is it? I discuss what has been significant in the development of Agnes Rest historically and I rely on life histories as my living archives from my research participants, while also relying on the literature findings in the public archives. I start to unpack the main argument by discussing the policies and legislation on water and electricity in rural South Africa and Eastern Cape. Also, I stress the fragility of the village's facilities and water shortage and the role of the society in combating water scarcity, electricity, and load shedding. In this way, I try to provide an initial view of the social dilemmas caused by service delivery in South Africa and the ways that they contribute to the different perceptions of the people.

In Chapter Three, I present my literature review. I will be grappling with quite a dense theoretical orientation and conceptual framework. I provide a discussion of the relationship of development history to subjectification; modernisation theory; techno-politics as modes of governance; infrastructures as objects of inquiry; and the much-criticised concept of 'ethnodevelopment' advanced by some development scholars. I offer it as a potentially useful alternative to understanding the western ideology of development as being universal by showing that, far from being a universal scheme for understanding social change, it is informed by a set of culturally and historically specific assumptions.

I discuss the physical objects of my research in Chapter Four, as such I chose to title the chapter *Materiality of Infrastructure*. This chapter is rich in description and ethnography as I detail the materiality of water tanks and electrical wiring in Agnes Rest, exploring the meanings the residents ascribe to the communal tap sites and their use of electricity. Much of this section draws on urban anthropology for contextualisation, personal observations from my trips to Agnes Rest, and my research participants' vivid descriptions. This chapter argues how infrastructure (specifically my two chosen types of infrastructure) are generative sites of engagement and studying the subject matter. I show how dynamic the material layout is in terms of the communal taps and electrical wiring in households. This exposes the spatial differences in terms of the village structure and how these differences affect an individual's experiences of access. Then I move on to illustrate the different interactions and rationalities of the people and essentially how these spatial differences in the village symbolise certain things for the residents.

Chapter Five is titled, – '*Sonke asilingani'* and it is concerned with how people understand social inequality. This chapter is framed somewhat differently, using the contrasting anthropological approaches of an emic viewpoint and an ethical perspective. I centre my argument on how some people in Agnes Rest are more resourceful and privileged because of their financial means to facilitate access to better infrastructure such as the JoJo tank and this generates more inequality in the village I first discuss the emic perspective – here I will draw on the discourses through which the residents reveal the social categories that they recognise and the ones with which they self-identify. I focus on the language they use to express their socioeconomic status concerning one another and how it affects their access to water and electricity in the village. And secondly, I tackle my argument by presenting the etic perspective. This will provide data from the government surveys and databases on social classes and

incomes sources in rural Eastern Cape and Agnes Rest to indicate how social inequality and social categories in the village are portrayed and evident in the eyes of the outsiders.

In Chapter Six, I explore the complex perceptions, experiences, and subjectivities of the question, 'what is development?' as heard from my research participants. I attempt to provide insight into how access has become politicised in the village and drive the conversation into the development perceptions and subjectivities in the village expressed by my research participants, highlighting how new subjectivities are created – through forms of governmentality. This chapter will significantly discuss Foucault and his idea of governmentality – exploring its relevance or nonrelevance in Agnes Rest and engage with James Ferguson's influential work *The Anti-politics Machine.*

In my concluding chapter, I summarise my main argument. I suggest that South Africa is a unique site to study development, however, our country is still very much divided, and the hierarchy is devastatingly evident when you hear from the people living in rural towns or villages how different their accounts of development and transformation are. Therefore, we need to rethink this question of 'can we confidently claim that development is a universal concept?' Thus, my reflection brings attention to issues of generalisation and the mismatch between etic knowledge and emic knowledge.

# Chapter Two – History of Infrastructure and Service Delivery in Agnes Rest

## Introduction

The Eastern Cape is the second poorest province in the country today; the areas that formerly were known as the Transkei homelands are in this province (Mitchell et al. 2008). Transkei was the first Bantustan to receive juridical independence from the National Party government (Pollock 1969, Southall 1982). It was on the 26th of October 1976 that the Transkei received independence from South Africa (Schrire 1997). This disarticulation of Transkei from South Africa was achieved by shifting the governing sovereignty to the homeland alone, with little or no intervention from any external colonial power (Southall 1982). This implied that they could be self-governing and have political freedom. Despite being granted independence and full sovereignty, Transkei remained economically dependent on the broader South Africa. They remained dependent because the homeland lacked an independent economy to stand on its own (Schrire 1997). Local society and economy in the Transkei had been transformed through relations with European powers – and eventually, the white-ruled South African state - over a period of two centuries, and that it was, therefore, ridiculous to imagine that Transkei could exist autonomously, without continuing to depend on the maintenance of those relations.

However, the irony of this independence was that the Transkei economy was useless because it was economically dependent on the white-area factories, not overlooking that the Transkei was inhabited by Black people – Xhosas to be precise (Southall 1982). Since this was the apartheid period, the division of Transkei was based on racial distinction.

Research conducted by Westway (2012) depicts that both the Ciskei and Transkei areas today are marked by widespread poverty, low levels of economic activity resulting in lack of job opportunities, including high levels of welfare dependence in the form of social grants. Evaluating Westway's study I have found similarities with the current residents of Agnes Rest (composed exclusively of indigenous IsiXhosa-speaking people) who depend on social grants for their primary source of income and who have access to few if any employment opportunities in the village. I use this as an identity label for the natives to separate them from the 'Somali' or 'Pakistani' shopkeepers in the village. It is important to note that the social identities in this rural contexts are similar to 'red people' and the 'school people' in Bank (2002). Essentially there is a majority 'red' Xhosa (or traditionalists) and the minority, Christianised 'school' Xhosa (or modernisers) in this village. These identities affect their

perceptions and the gendered responses to social change and development initiatives in the village.

## 2.1. Agnes Rest

Agnes Rest is a rural settlement, situated on the mountainous terrain of the Eastern Cape. It is surrounded by gravel roads and rondavels that date back more than 50 years. A now outdated description of rural settlements that Carter and May (1999) provide is that these are homesteads that have rustic roofing, such as plastic sheeting or cardboard which has high occupation thicknesses. This is accurate for rondavels in Agnes Rest as they are made from roofs made of dry straw most of which were built during the apartheid era. However, most families currently have extended their households to include newly built houses made from metal zinc roofs and face brick.

Agnes Rest falls under the Emalahleni Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape (not to be confused with the municipality of the same name in Mpumalanga). This municipality was established in December 2000 after the district's local government elections. It is important to note that this municipality is a Category B municipality that falls under the north-eastern part of the Chris Hani District Municipality in the Eastern Cape. The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Chapter 7, advocates for local government autonomy, allowing municipalities the right to govern based on their local affairs affecting their community, thus the constitution identifies a Category B municipality as one that shares municipal executive and legislative authority in its area with a category C municipality within whose area it falls.

The areas that compose this municipality are formerly the Transkei areas and are composed of three rural towns, and more than 200 villages. Agnes Rest is one of these villages and the rural town that the village is attached to by municipality officials is Lady Frere.[1]

Agnes Rest is roughly 21 km away from Lady Frere, and they are connected by R392 which is a regional route. The village has a population of approximately 4 187 according to the department of health Eastern Cape provincial government in 2010[2]. The economic activities include agriculture and livestock, with most households farming their crops for their consumption and taking care of their cattle. Although the village is small it is full of wholesome

[1] Eastern Cape Municipalities information retrieved from https://municipalities.co.za/overview/1020/emalahleni-local-municipality
[2] Source: Department of Health, Eastern Cape Provincial Government http://www.ecdoh.gov.za/

family living[3]. Families are familiar with each other, partially because of the numerous *umcimbi*[4] that frequently happen in the village, ranging from the elders gathering for rituals and ceremonies to the young children playing in shared spaces.

## 2.2. Legislation and policies on rural development in Eastern Cape

When the African National Congress (ANC) became the democratic government of South Africa in 1994, it faced the challenge of transforming the economy (Mosala, Venter and Bain 2017:327). The new dispensation in 1994 in South Africa bought new initiatives to improve the lives of the people. One of them was the Spatial Development Initiative (SDI) which is based on local economic development; it was established in 1995 (Mitchell et al. 2008). Also, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was the policy instrument that was implemented in 1994 to direct the progress of the transformation strategy. It was a programme of policy development and implementation procedures coordinated in the Office of the President and founded in the Government of National Unity (GNU). RDP was an integrated, coherent socio-economic policy framework. It claimed that it sought to mobilise all of South Africa's people and our country's resources toward the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future (AP RDP Framework 2018).

The underdevelopment and marginalisation of the "Bantustans" and structural inequalities in the country has enabled political instability as social and economic divisions widen (ECSECC report 2011). Therefore, South African government policies and legislation have been established to address inequalities that were created by apartheid history (Macanda 2017). Our history has been a bitter one dominated by colonialism, racism, apartheid, sexism and repressive labour policies (AP RDP Framework 2018). There are laws and policies promulgated to redress economic imbalances in the country. Mosala (2017), evaluated how the ANC, through its democratisation and de-racialisation policies, has adopted legislation such as the Employment Equity Act, 1998, the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA), and the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act (B-BBEE). The B-BBEE Act has made provision for the economic empowerment of all black people, including women, workers, youth, people with disabilities and people living in rural areas, through diverse but integrated socio-economic strategies (RSA 2003 as cited in Mosala 2017:336). The Employment Equity Act has been intended for the country's national transformation

[3] sisi'Sisphokazi remarked during an interview that Agnes Rest is full of family life and living and makes it more beautiful for her.

[4] Events – ceremonies (weddings, coming of age rituals)

programme, namely the RDP. Section 153 (A) of the South African Constitution denotes that in a developmental state (arguably South Africa can be said to be one) the municipality plays a pivotal role as the local government in the social and economic development of that area; the role it has is to deliver basic needs and to satisfy the interests and expectations of the communities (see, e.g., Williams 2014). All these pieces of legislation and policies are drawn from the principles of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and Freedom Charter.

Specific to the Eastern Cape rural development institutions post-apartheid has been the Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Council (ECSECC). It was established in 1995. The ECSECC is a Schedule 3 public entity registered in terms of Section 21 of the Companies Act and Treasury regulations. The ECSECC has the vision to make a poverty-free Eastern Cape where everyone benefits equitably from the economy (ECSECC report 2011). It is involved in programmes and project design - for example, GEAR and RDP. Despite these initiatives, and the improvement of people's lives in Agnes Rest specifically has been slow.

Macanda's (2014) study is based on an in-depth analysis of rural development in a different municipality, but still within the Chris Hani District in the Eastern Cape. His findings showed that the Department of Rural Development and local government was established to speed up service provision in rural areas, however, the pace of the rural development has been slow because the local government does not place emphasis on and prioritise rural areas as opposed to urban areas. The provision of grants is set in place but the main issue Macanda (2014) found within this municipality district is the leadership – he specifies the election of councillors as needing special attention. He further states that the limited education of the elected people and their lack of skills affect the implementation of services to the rural community. What is needed to combat the slow pace of rural development, in his view, is accountability and transparency. These should be a priority in service delivery as should be the participation by the local people to fast-track service delivery (Macanda 2014:5). The introduction of infrastructure has been slow in Agnes Rest, centralised water only came through the introduction of the municipality as a structure of rural governance in 2000. Electricity is fairly new.

## 2.3. Living Archive

The 'Living Archive' is a compilation of short excerpts from life histories I collected through interviews in 2020 for this research and field notes from 2019 when I conducted my Honours research (which was about the study of the political imagination of the residents in Agnes Rest). By this living archive, I reflect on the history of the village from the recollections of the people who have been staying there for many years.

*'We have not always felt interconnected to the main towns or cities because we stay so far. For years even before democracy in 1994, we have been used to travelling long distances for us to buy things we need, such as furniture or even food. Agnes Rest many years ago wasn't connected to South Africa as compared to now. When we were just known as the Transkei or Ciskei depending on where you stay; we were on our own in every way. We had our way of doing things, our government was by us and for us, our chief and kings had more power than they do now. Back then not everyone wanted to rule and lead, it was only if you were from a certain tribe, there was not a lot of democracy.' - Tata uBen, a 69 – year-old lifetime resident of Agnes Rest.*

*'If you lived here in the '50s you would hardly recognise the village. Most of us grew up in the rondavels, just a 'one' bedroom. With no electricity and the same roads, you see today. The tar road ends on the R392 the only proper road we have known then once you see a sign pointing right into Agnes Rest, you've entered gravel road throughout.' - Gogo uThabi, a 74- year-old lifetime resident of Agnes Rest.*

*'KwaMkulu[5] has better gravel because they have somehow put layers of some type of material that levels the ground and removes the 'potholes'. I guess the reason they did this was when they had to build the clinic up there and it made sense with the construction vehicles and everything being transported up there. I have been happy with this especially because I stay in KwaMkulu, it makes my driving easier.' – Buthi G.*

*'For my two sisters and me, when we were younger we were used to walking through the steep mountainous slope of the village to get to the other side where idama was. Idama was where we all collected water, before school, after school and in the evening. At least three times a day. In our household, we were many so we consumed a lot of water. I remember being so excited as years went by, the distance got shorter because they made centralised taps and there were windmills around the village. Yoh! I remember when they installed the first tap in KwaMkulu before it reached my area. This was in the early 2000s. We would wake up very early, I think 3 am to make sure we were the first people there. Because for several*

[5] 'the better-off part of the village on the mountain slope'

*months there was this one-tap in KwaMkulu the queues were so long because no one wanted to go to idama anymore. Not to mention that the water was clear and clean to drink. It was worth the long wait. But, it was slow for new taps to reach ezantsi kwaseMkulu[6] – but look, we endured so how much more walking even during that time, KwaMkulu is far and it is a steep walk getting up there.' – Sis Asanda, a 56-year-old lifetime resident of Agnes Rest.*

*'What kind of place is Agnes Rest? I'd say it isn't as bad as many people commonly say villages are like. I hate how people always say, these places don't have electricity, no life, no water, no toilets – like so many things that have honestly changed for us who stay here. For example, we do not have rondavels that are nearly falling apart with no roofs and no windows. No, I'd like to think our homes are beautiful and we are trying to make sure they are maintained well. I think the one thing I have noticed is most houses have been getting renovated in the last ten years, now it's like there's the old rondavel and a face-brick house next to it. As a people, we are trying our best to make it a beautiful village for us. Although safety is an issue as like with any other place in South Africa, robberies at night occur a lot at night and I think it is also because it becomes so dark here (there are no streetlights) if your house doesn't have a light outside, in the veranda, then your life will be difficult with these nyaope boys.' - Tataumkulu uAbraham, a lifetime resident of Agnes Rest.*

These excerpts tracing the living archive reveals that the people have had challenges in the village for many years but it is their endurance, resilience and positive attitude that resonates with me the most. The residents' recollections showed me that they value where they come from, their history is not clouded with poverty as I initially thought. The different accounts I shared intentionally reveal that the recollections of their home have progressively seen changes and although the pace has been slow their endurance for these transitions is admirable to point out.

## 2.4. Service delivery

### 2.4.1 Electricity

Since 1994, the new South African democratic government has made universal electricity access one of its primary goals. 'The control of electricity distribution by the system of racially separate local government has resulted in a fragmented industry currently unable to finance or

[6] 'the less developed area of Agnes Rest'

sustain a large-scale electrification programme in an equitable fashion. At present, there are around 430 electricity distributors and more than 1,000 domestic electricity tariffs in South Africa. Rural electrification has been largely ignored except for commercial white farms' – (RDP, section 2.7). This influenced the development of its energy policy to meet the enormous expectations regarding the provision of services, including electricity (DME, 1998). Formed by the South African Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) in 1999, the rural non-grid electrification program seeks to broaden access to electricity (through solar power, generators, wind, geothermal, all these make it possible to live "off the grid").

Households in rural areas are typically sporadically situated, which makes the extension of grid networks to connect those areas economically unviable. The electrification programme would not be able to ensure grid electrification of all remote rural areas in the short or medium term, therefore non-grid electrification was identified as an alternative. The non-grid electrification programme is designed to temporarily give deep rural communities access to limited electricity until such time that grid connections are possible (Department of Energy 2012).

In the five years from 1994 to 1999, 2.74 million new grid connections were made for R7 billion as part of the accelerated national electrification programme, in line with the RDP goals decided by the government and the electricity industry (AP RDP Framework 2018). A massive electrification programme under the RDP led by the national electricity utility, Eskom and the municipalities, achieved an increase in the national level of household electrification from 36% to about 68% by the end of 1999 (Kotzé (1999) as cited in Energy Research Centre 2004:1). Additionally, the government introduced free basic electricity to both non-grid and grid electrified households in some rural areas of the Eastern Cape. Every poor household is entitled to free basic electricity which is subsidised monthly. In 2003 a free basic electricity (FBE) policy was introduced to support the low-income households as a key strategy for improving availability and access to energy services for the poor. The FBE is offered to both the grid and off-grid customers.

Electricity access is free for (some) of the community members of Agnes Rest, while some need to pay. According to the FBE policy, consumers accessing non-grid systems, installed through the Integrated National Electrification Program (INEP) will receive a subsidy of up to 80% (or R48.00 per month) of the monthly service fee to provide access to non-grid systems for their households (Department of Energy 2012:11). An important thing to note is

that there are no streetlights in the entire village, so the electricity is only for household usage.

Load shedding affects the community as it does with any other community in South Africa, remarks Mamike. She further says, ‘Our biggest worry here is when we have heavy rains, normally the electricity cuts out for long hours which can extend to days, but there’s nothing we can do about it because those municipality people are slow at everything.’ Although it causes people to stress when they do not have electricity when it goes off due to the weather conditions, several participants I spoke to share the sentiment of that since for several years they have survived without electricity, a few days is not something too much for them to endure. Their past reality of being familiar and accustomed to cooking with paraffin, gas and fire contributes to their cheerful outlook towards load shedding and electricity cut-outs.

### 2.4.2. Water

Section 27(1) of the South African Co The fundamental principle of our water resources policy is the right to access clean water - 'water security for all'. RDP section 2.6 includes

The RDP recognises the economic value of water and the environment and advocates an economically, environmentally and politically sustainable approach to the management of our water resources institution of 1996, states that “everyone has the right to have access to sufficient water.”

The Water Services Act 108 of 1997 (WSA) acknowledges the “rights of access to basic water supply and basic sanitation necessary to ensure sufficient water and an environment not harmful to health or well-being.” Furthermore, the WSA by way of Sections 3 and 1 of the Constitution read with regulation 3(b) confers on everyone a right of access to a minimum quantity of water of 25 litres per person per day or 6 kilolitres per household per month. This is regarded as the minimum needed for eating, food preparation and personal hygiene. For a complete, balanced, and productive life, it is not considered sufficient, which is why it is regarded as a minimum. The water supply has to be within 200 metres of a household. This means the government outlined additionally in the WSA that people should not walk for more than 200 meters to collect. In so much as these are the policies and legislation in the country, which is supposed to be applicable for every citizen, it would seem to be especially consequential for remote villages like Agnes Rest where residents previously had to travel more than 200 meters to collect water. In relating the shared experiences of collecting water

from idama,[7] sis'Siphokazi and sis' Nocebo remarked that it was a long walking distance, especially for people who stayed further up in Agnes Rest in KwaMkulu. In retrospect, the WSA was effective in gradually helping the government to start centralising water through introducing windmills, borehole water and communal taps. All these initiatives were an upgrade of the earlier water supply, the common aspect has been that water is a free basic service for the residents in this village. The distance has shortened with the introduction of communal taps; however, water scarcity is still an issue in Agnes Rest. The lack of rain, the fragility of the built infrastructure of the windmill, water pumps and taps have led to weeks of no water in the village. For those households that own them, the usefulness of JoJo tanks has been to combat water scarcity and the uncertainty of relying on the municipality for fixing water taps once they stop working. It has provided those households with a 'back-up plan' when the shared water taps stop working. However, because it is not a free service nor one that is provided by the government, only a few households with financial means can afford to buy one. This contributes to the division in access in the village, an issue which will further be looked at in Chapter Five.

## 2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to highlight the history of infrastructure and service delivery in the Eastern Cape and it shows evident negligence in rural development especially concerning the pace of the municipality in implementing the necessary changes. The history of the segregation and disconnection Transkei experienced during apartheid influenced how the villages in the homestead have continued to experience stagnant development up to the present. With the introduction of municipalities in the 2000s, a lot had to be rectified. Policies and legislation have been put in place to combat these injustices and inequalities in access but with uneven efficacy.

Agnes Rest experiences water shortages because there are only communal taps in the entire village and households do not have direct access to running water. They all depend on communal taps. Regarding electricity, most of the households have electricity in their brick houses and some have wired their rondavels too. There are no streetlights in the village, this is an issue the local municipality has not addressed yet. Therefore, the people here depend on their municipality to build more of the communal taps around the village or better yet, to install running water for each household and to install streetlights while making absolutely certain

[7] Translated: dam

that every household has electricity and that the tariffs are not high. This dependence on the local government is likened to the dependence that the Transkei had on broader South Africa economically in the past. The dependence of this village on the municipality affects the livelihood of the people; moreover, it emphasises the crucial relationships that must be preserved between the residents and their ward councillor so that the residents can seek aid from the municipality when in crisis, a matter that I will return to below in Chapter Four and Five.

# Chapter Three — Literature Review

## Introduction

This chapter aims to review the anthropological literature on the discourse of development. I begin with the conceptual framework where I discuss the definitions of concepts that best explain and shape my research. Within this section, I have three subsections where I have unpacked what constitutes the development discourse. As I will show I cannot merely claim development discourse as 'Eurocentric' without providing the essential evidence to back up my claim, subsequently my conceptual framework is structured in a way to provide this evidence as you will see in the subsections titled 'modernisation theory' and 'ethnodevelopment' below. This is followed by a description of infrastructures as objects of inquiry, as I will further explain how we can variously categorise infrastructure to explore the social process and the entanglements it has with people. Infrastructures are not just objects themselves they are also the relation between things that enable the movement of other matter. For this reason, we see with our eyes light and not electricity, we see taps and running water and not pipes and sewers. In this way, Larkin (2013) conceptualises that infrastructures are to be thought of as objects that create the grounds for other matter to operate, and when they do that they thus operate as systems. This makes them a system of substrates – connected systems enabling a movement of other matter. (see also Star 1999:380). Electricity is the perfect example of an infrastructure enabling an electric stove to operate.

In my theoretical orientation, I will discuss how the theoretical study of the relationship between development history and subjectification appears. Significantly I will discuss the work of Foucault's governmentality – tracing how infrastructure (or a relationship to infrastructure) might operate in the constitution of subjectivity, whilst functioning as a principle of commodification and accounting for how and why forms of infrastructure have emerged: to control, to discipline, to govern the poor. This leads to the last subsection on 'techno-politics as modes of governance' where I discuss the dynamic process between technological developments and political purpose, navigating how the entanglements of technology with politics takes place on a local and national level.

## 3.1. Conceptual Framework

Although much has already been written on the topic of development, some key scholars take this discussion further. In conceptualising development, I trace how this topic has predominantly been studied anthropologically through ethnographic fieldwork in various

social contexts. I look at the applications of the case studies of Zambian Copperbelt and Lesotho in James Ferguson's books (1990;1999) to portray expectations of modernity and development in these distinct social contexts, alongside Arturo Escobar's book, *Encountering Development the Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1995) written in relation primarily to the experience of Colombia. These three books commonly illustrate the dominant discourse of development at a global level by using specific case studies of local communities.

My conceptual framework will differ in that it has a lot to say about people's conceptions of development and what constitutes their 'knowledge,' their 'truths,' their ideas about right and wrong and, about how change should happen (see the section on ethnodevelopment). Lastly about what constitutes 'progress.' Essentially these topics are what I will be highlighting in this section.

### 3.1.1 Modernisation Theory

To begin, it is important to state that there is no set universal definition of development that I have sought to conceptualise in my research, but rather a theory from which scholars have conceptualised development. The review of the following literature on development discourse shows an association with modernisation theory.

Kumar (2008) argues that modernity began in the 15th century in the West and has thereafter become a dominant category to implement social changes. Historically modernity has been used to map out a period in history that brought several instrumental changes to be initiated. It was the Enlightenment Project that led to the consolidation of modernity (Kumar 2008). Modernity has impacted social structures and cultural institutions worldwide. As such, colonialism and neo-colonialism were the vehicle behind modernity reaching every possible society (Kumar 2008). Throughout this period, 'modernisation' was held to be a pathway along which all societies had to travel. Modernisation theory was intended to overestimate the power of the modern state to elicit loyalty, instil solidarity, reshape subjectivities, and reframe social relations (Brubaker 2015:148). To a certain extent there is considerable truth behind the idea of modernity, argues Brubaker (2015). Brubaker (2015) highlights that this truth behind modernity was encouraged through the increase in the intellectual work on ethnicity and nationalism; these two concepts Brubaker saw as central to the development of modernisation theory. Brubaker (2015) argues modernisation theory which branched from modernity received attention within academia in the 1950s and early 1960s and was influenced by Karl Deutsch, Ernest Gellner, and Clifford Geertz. On a similar note, Kumar explicitly states that

modernisation theory was only propounded in the 1950s and 1960s, and the theory is nothing but an 'undiluted acceptance of modernity and its institutions' (Kumar 2008:244). In the *Expectations of Modernity* book written by James Ferguson, he refers to 'modernisation' as a process of moving forward or joining up with the world (Ferguson 1999: 236). Considering all these accounts I will show that modernisation theory (as an extension of modernity) has been the crucial integrative concept informing development discourse (Kumar 2008).

Regmi (2018), Slater (1993) and Escobar (1995) in their work suggest that the construction of development reflects a Western epistemology and approach, it celebrates and imposes the Western culture and values and is ethnocentric. In this way, modernisation theory was a model from the West that would bring innovation to other regions all to be developed in the likeness of Europe or the Americas. Regmi (2018:13) states that the changing of traditional societies to more advanced modern societies is described as the process of modernisation and that this notion carries the assumption that the people are treated and seen as backward, uncivilised and traditional. Another similar conceptualisation of modernisation theory comes from Ferguson (1999). He specifically argues that the premise of modernisation theory is that certain countries are behind others and that they are supposed to catch up with the rest of the world.

In 1960 Rostow proposed a model of development concerning economic growth. He uses history as a tool to reinforce his underlying assumption that there are fixed linear stages and routes to development. It has modelled already developed countries such as the United States of America, France and Britain, according to Regmi (2018).

> *Here then, in an impressionistic rather than an analytic way, are the stages-of-growth which can be distinguished once a traditional society begins its modernisation: the transitional period when the preconditions for take-off are created generally in response to the intrusion of a foreign power, converging with certain domestic forces making modernisation; the take-off itself; the sweep into maturity generally taking up the life of about two further generations; and then, finally if the rise of income has matched the spread of technological virtuosity (which, as we shall see, it need not immediately do) the diversion of the fully mature economy to the provision of durable consumers' goods and services (as well as the welfare state) for its increasingly urban – and then suburban – population (Rostow (1960:12).*

In a word, Rostow shows what he thinks based on the ‘impressionistic rather than analytic’ viewpoint that traditional societies have to undertake these stages for development to occur: traditional society, the precondition for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity and the age of high consumption. This promotes a type of development that conforms to the ideas and expectations of the West, arguably these stages are what the Western countries perceive to be a normal course of progress according to Escobar (1995:26).

Crush (1995) shows a similar viewpoint to Escobar (1995) regarding conceptualising development discourse. Crush (1995) points out that development is rooted in the rise of the West, in the history of capitalism, modernity and the globalisation of the western state institutions, disciplines, cultures and mechanisms of exploitation.

In the more recent years, Regmi (2018) provides an excellent critique concerning the assumptions of modernisation theory that I have looked at above. He states that the process of modernisation should not be taken as a virtue and challenges the assumption that 'all good things are modern' and that everything else seen to be abnormal from a Western perspective can be considered as traditional and primitive. Regmi (2018) mentions that it creates a dichotomy between the understandings of modernity and tradition. Regmi is simply saying that modernisation has been promoted irrespective of the lack of attention given to the history of colonialism in some societies, rather, modernity is what is deemed more important. The break between ‘traditional and modernity’ is complicated here because not all societies have a colonial history to consider, it is, therefore, inaccurate to say if things are seen as traditional in that respect, they cannot be modern. Instead, we should take a careful look into a society and its history to judge between ‘traditional and modernity.’Regmi is arguing that such a history effectively makes it impossible for a formerly colonised society to ever ‘catch up’ and ‘become modern. Another critique Regmi (2018) presents is, conceptualising modernisation as a process of economic growth as according to Rostow’s stages is incorrect. Rostow simply fails to take into account how the fact of colonisation explains why colonising countries appear to be further down the road to modernity than colonised countries. Lastly, Regmi critiques modernisation theory on the basis that it does not take into account that societies are different because they have different social, economic, and political contexts (Regmi 2018:5-6).

Wolfgang Sachs (1992; see also Esteva 1992) argues that development imposes another experience and dreams upon the underdeveloped. Sachs (1992:2) gives a fascinating comment on what development offers, that is a ‘veiled Westernisation, colonising global monoculture

that blocks out the 'traditional' society's mode of life.' As such the local people from this society will conceptualise development based on what they have been ill-advised on (Ferguson 1999:246). Both critics of development, Esteva and Sachs through their respective work on the subject of development, claim that development has distorted the understanding of the people's histories and imposed Eurocentric values and ideas (Ferguson 1999:247). Ferguson also agrees with this view by similarly arguing that people who are from former colonial territories should think for themselves and not be told what they should think and say so that they do not have an ideal measure of achievement or progress. This dismisses Rostow's linear stages of economic growth in a profound way. Rostow (1960) offers an abstract stage theory of development and modernisation that he intends both as a description or representation of the path societies ought to aspire to for progress. In saying Ferguson's account 'dismisses' Rostow's linear stages of economic growth, I am saying that Ferguson's book *Expectations of Modernity* portraying Zambia's post-colonial reality reveals that teleological theories of change like Rostow's have done another kind of damage. Instilling genuine hopelessness as people struggle to make meaning out of lives that they have come to understand as failed attempts to 'become modern'. And that Rostow's stage theory makes the expectations of living up to becoming modern difficult because of Zambia's colonial history and what is more important is the self-representation of the people, how they come to make sense of their everyday lives.

The root of the problem in the conceptual framework of development is through the development apparatus – or as Ferguson states it, 'through specifiable mechanisms' that he has termed, 'the anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1999:248). By this conceptualisation, Ferguson (1994) in his earlier work through his study on 'development' in Lesotho, shows us that to understand 'what is development' we need to see it through an apparatus – that is an external device through which development can be implemented and then observed. In his case, development projects achieve this goal, therefore a 'development' apparatus can illustrate if a community like Lesotho is eliminating poverty or rather reinforcing bureaucratic state power through projects such as Thaba-Tseka Development Project. James Howard Smith in his critique of development terms a 'development apparatus' as a bureaucratic factory, defining it as a factory that is dominantly 'run by experts whose work allows the "First World" to believe it knows something about the "Third World," which lacks development by definition and is therefore characterised by the condition of needing something that experts may be capable of bestowing' (Smith 2008:3). Ferguson's (1994) study showed that an unintended effect of a development project is that it ends up having political uses or advantages – thus becoming an

anti-politics machine, as it has achieved a political benefit, and the development project failed but in failing has succeeded in meeting a political end (Ferguson 1994:256). More importantly, that this achievement of political ends occurs in the appearance of being apolitical or even 'anti-political (as the title of the book proposes). This is to say that the pursuit of 'development' is undertaken in such a way that it appears to be completely innocent of any political motivations whatsoever, even while its actual effects are deeply political.

Through his two important works of literature Ferguson (1994, 1999), informs the unpacking of the complexity of the development discourse. Crucially, by outlining that we should not conceptualise 'development' based on the failure of the development projects, rather by observing from the example of Lesotho we notice how despite the failure of the development projects to eliminate poverty, they did succeed in reinforcing and expanding the exercise of bureaucratic state power. Concerning my research in Agnes Rest, I did not attempt to understand development by trying to discern and describe a development apparatus of municipal development projects, but rather the relationship between the physical infrastructure and engagements with it from the community members.

Timothy Mitchell in his contribution to the *Questions of Modernity* book, explicitly states that modernity is a synonym for the West, and essentially that modernisation is a process that began in Europe and its destiny has been to induce other societies to 'mimic, never quite successfully, the history already performed by the West' (Mitchell 2000:1). I agree with Mitchell's understanding in that, the process of modernisation has become a process where the West imposes changes or advances on other societies, and then those societies are intended to mimic what the West has in their country. This imposition is directed towards African countries or underdeveloped countries as a whole – according to their standard of science inventions, cultural views and values. Particularly in Africa, development merges with a historically thick discourse about backwardness and savagery through which this continent, "the very figure of the strange," has come to be known, to the West, "under the sign of absence" (Mbembe 2001:3-4 as cited in Smith 2008:3). Smith (2008) also argues that development for most African states has rather brought increased global inequality, widespread environmental crisis, the spread of virulent diseases, and has led to the commodification of everything (also see Graeber 2001). The commodification of resources in underdeveloped countries exposes inequalities; electrification in South Africa has been the most vivid symbol of modernisation and development according to Ferguson (1999). This 'development' has rather differentiated and

created inequalities in the country, with some people having access to electricity while others do not because they cannot afford it.

Smith (2008) offers an excellent deconstructionist approach to development theory specific to African countries. He draws us to focus on the lived experiences, moral and social boundaries that alleviate the impact of violence concerning Kenyan people. His ethnography on this community is significant because it highlights the importance of social history and lived experiences of how Kenyans have made sense of the rationalising process surrounding them such as state and market expansion and decline. It is only through such close ethnography that we can see how politics in Africa are played out and the other local ideas arising from it (in his book he illustrates how witchcraft is seen in a tandem relation with development among members of the Kenyan community that he studied). This book fundamentally shows how conceptualising traditional beliefs along with development reveals that development is understood together with witchcraft in the Kenyan community. This reveals that African beliefs are not to be taken out of political and historical context when understanding development entirely.

As a social process, modernisation has historically been used by the West to initiate change that focuses on infrastructural facilities. The implemented innovations that came with it bring social and economic change for the affected countries, despite the critics saying that it has been an agenda by the West to promote neo-colonialism (Kumar 2008). Arguably, developed countries do not present a model to be emulated that other countries generally should follow; social context and history represent elements that can hinder the same progression route for certain countries. It is because of this misunderstanding and misrepresentation that investigating development is so critical to study because historically communities have had a partial understanding of the purpose and role of development, and Eurocentric values and ideas have been imposed on them (Ferguson 1999).

### 3.1.2. Ethnodevelopment

Watts (2003) argues that development is increasingly being analysed as a form of modernity. Critics of development discourse such as Escobar (1995) claim that it has made it difficult for actors - which are communities, states and individuals - to imagine futures that are essentially not bound in a form of development imaginary, which has become their focal reference point (Laurie et al. 2005:470-471). Thus, as argued by Stavenhagen (2013), the concept of ethnodevelopment becomes useful in helping us offers an alternative to the western

understanding of development as not being universal. Ethnodevelopment is based on the premise of understanding social change, which distinctively focuses on the established cultures and traditions in the new forms of governance that are associated with neoliberal development projects (Laurie et al. 2005:471).

Ethnodevelopment is informed by the indigenous people or the people living in a given social context— it focuses on the social and cultural identities of those people, thereby highlighting the culturally and historically specific assumptions of understanding social change. It does not support the modernisation theory of social change or economic growth that Rostow (1990) suggests all societies undergo.

The United Nations defines indigenous communities as communities that do not form part of a dominant sector of the society and that are determined to preserve and transmit their ancestral territories and ethnic identity for the future generations as a basis for their continued existence as a people (Stavenhagen 2013).

Ethnodevelopment is additionally concerned with the recognition of indigenous collective rights and how these citizens have to be hands-on regarding political decisions of development projects being implemented (Laurie et al. 2005). A point of departure that grounds ethnodevelopment is that it is orientated on meeting people's basic needs as being more important rather than economic growth (Stavenhagen 2013). This difference in discourse makes ethnodevelopment a point of interest in this research report.

Stavenhagen (2013) argues that ethnodevelopment is ecologically sound and promotes self-reliance, at a local level and national level. Given these viable elements of ethnodevelopment, I have found that it proposes an excellent alternative by which development should be explored because it differs from the universal and global understanding of the western ideology and the perspective of ethnodevelopment enables us to focus on the ethnography and experiences of people and alerts us to pay attention to their interactions with each other. It promotes a non-Eurocentric understanding as it looks at local notions of development.

It must be considered that there are critiques of ethnodevelopment, Stavenhagen (2013) also highlights them briefly in his contribution to the *Pioneer on Indigenous Rights* book. He mentions:

> *A more pernicious critique might suggest that the idea of ethnodevelopment will tend to isolate ethnic groups from the cultural mainstreams in order 'to keep them underdeveloped'. Ethnodevelopment, so it might be argued, could be used as an*

> *excuse to maintain segregation and cultural oppression, by refusing the possibility of 'national integration, and in fact, strengthen the position of the ruling ethnocracy. An extreme example of such an approach could be Apartheid and the so-called 'separate development' of the Bantustans (euphemistically called 'homelands'), in South Africa (Stavenhagen 2013:85-86).*

In his defence, he also signifies how such a critique would be, 'completely unwarranted, for ethnodevelopment is conceived as a dynamic, creative process, which will liberate collective energies for development rather than limit them' (Stavenhagen 2013:86).

Explicitly I do not take the position of using ethnodevelopment to advocate for a separation of cultures, like the illustration given by Stavenhagen of the Bantustans. The apartheid government used the Bantustans to isolate, depoliticize and disenfranchise black South Africans. Indeed, although anthropologies in South Africa are critical of ethnodevelopment precisely because it seems to support the isolation of cultures (volkskunde ideology during apartheid in South Africa). I am well Being aware of this, and of the problematic use of ethnodevelopment as a discourse especially for a village-like Agnes Rest which falls under the old Transkei. Within the context of this research. I take the stance of ethnodevelopment that makes it valuable – in the approach of doing the groundwork of implementing development programmes by focusing distinctively on the indigenous people. I am using ethnodevelopment to reveal the importance of undertaking groundwork at arriving at the local notions of 'what is development.' By focusing on how the people of Agnes Rest conceive of 'development' in their own 'local notions' it allowed me to learn something new by trying to understand how the local notions are unique to them (see Chapter 5).

### 3.1.3. Infrastructure: Objects of inquiry

Numerous scholars have studied infrastructure in various ways (see Simone 2004; Wafer 2012; von Schnitzler 2008; and Appel, Anand, and Gupta 2018). All these scholars have one thing in common, they have been caught up in moments of categorising infrastructure, making analytical choices on what to investigate and what not to, according to Larkin (2013).

According to Snieska and Simkunaite (2009), there are two categories of infrastructure: economic infrastructure and social infrastructure. Social infrastructures promote health and cultural standards of the population and examples of them include schools, theatres, and clinics (Snieska and Simkunaite 2009:17). The second category is the economic infrastructure that encourages economic activity, and examples include electricity, water supply, sanitation, and road construction.

Infrastructure plays a significant role in political expectations in post-apartheid South Africa (Wafer 2012:233). The role of infrastructure in post-apartheid South Africa has been to provide basic services seen through the example of policies such as the RDP - Reconstruction and Development Program. Through his study Wafer locates Soweto at the epicentre of the changing relationship between state infrastructural capacity on the one hand, and imaginations of citizenship (2012:233). Critically Wafer explores how the post-apartheid government re-frames citizenship of South Africans, especially in townships, through the provision of housing and basic services such as electricity and water.

There are similarities to Wafer's (2012) research and von Schnitzler's (2008) ethnography of water supply in Soweto. One similarity is that they both explore the relationship between access to infrastructure and citizenship, within the social context of the township of Soweto. Von Schnitzler's study, however, focuses on analysing the infrastructure of the water meter and its implications of monitoring water usage through the project Operation Gcin'amani in Soweto. Von Schnitzler differs in her analysis of water by drawing on the historical significance of how the water meter regulates water usage while also having the ability to produce a new brand or kind of citizen (Larkin 2013; von Schnitzler 2008). Von Schnitzler argues that the water meter installation and utilisation became the material or physical terrain and embodiment of relations to the state that are often experienced as impermeable. Von Schnitzler is simply saying that the state is otherwise experienced as something impermeable by ordinary people. In her study, she denotes that Soweto and many other townships around South Africa, present infrastructures as objects and forms of making political claims and reveal a strategy of government (von Schnitzler 2008:906; Appel et al. 2018).

The analytic choice Abulmaliq Simone presents in his well-known article 'People as Infrastructure' in investigating infrastructure is important to note for this research because it sets a different approach as opposed to von Schnitzler (2008) and Wafer (2012). Simone (2004) in categorising infrastructure distinctly explores the social networks that people create and use, which in his view, are as much 'infrastructure' as are wires and roads. Simone grounds his analysis on people's activities and engagement, his notion of people as infrastructure is grounded on the intersections and complex combinations of objects, spaces and persons and practices how they all combine to become an infrastructure. Particularly Simone defines it as a platform that produces life in a social space (Simone 2004:407-408).

Although Simone's categorising of infrastructure is advantageous in that it encompasses the social networks people find themselves in, for this research, I am rather focusing on the categorising of infrastructure suggested by Wafer (2012) and von Schnitzler (2008). I am focusing on the investigation of material infrastructure as revealing a 'strategy of government;' 'political technologies of rule,' and local notions of 'what is development.' Enquiring how infrastructural power and access represent state power to its citizens and its implication on the service delivery of water and electricity in Agnes Rest (Appel et al 2018; Wafer 2012; Mann 2008; Larkin 2013).

As aforementioned, development theorists have associated development as a signifier of the expansion of modernity and modernity brings about innovations, new inventions, and technologies. It is in this sense that infrastructure has emerged as an analytic and ethnographic object (Appel et al. 2018). An analytic object and medium drawing on its entanglements to study other social processes.

## 3.2. Theoretical Orientation

This section will discuss the theoretical debates around scholarship that will contribute to my research.

### 3.2.1 Development History and Subjectification

Wai (2010:73) describes the history of development as having functioned as a mechanism of socioeconomic control and politically it is an elitist project and a practice of control, domination, and exercise of power. While Crush (1995) writes that development discourse is entrenched in the history of capitalism, modernity and the globalisation of western institutions and disciplines. He further reiterates that development is portrayed as the general regulating practices of the modern state which plays itself out in the attempt to produce and reproduce disciplined citizens and governable subjects (Crush 1995). Much of what Jonathan Crush writes about regarding development reproducing governable subjects speaks to the theme of power struggle, power relations, and the constitution of the subject in theory and through the development discourse. Foucault's (1982) and Althusser's (1970) work on the discourse of the subject and subjectification provides the theoretical orientation that will link these ideas.

One of the complexities of the development discourse is: it is based on the western modality – steady on promoting their subjective perspective of development. Boswell (2016) argues subjectivity is cultural based on the social context that one finds oneself in. If we use this argument by Boswell to the Eurocentric perspective on development theory, the history of

development discourse does not account for the experiences of differences that occur in Africa compared to Europe and America. Differences such as the colonial situation that African countries suffered. This illustrates how development theory is flawed in its representation.

Foucault (1982) argues that institutional practices aimed at changing people's conduct – in which one could surely include 'development' interventions – are productively constituted as forms of what he terms as 'government.' In understanding development, first one has to grasp what Foucault means by 'the possible field of action of others' (Foucault 1982:221 as cited in Watts 2002:8). This quote refers to 'government' and Foucault's definition of government is distinct in that it associates links between forms of power and processes of subjectification (Lemke 2002:3). Similarly, Watts (2002:8) denotes that 'government' in Foucauldian terms is inclined as a field to "accomplish, or attempt to accomplish, stable rule through certain sorts of governable subjects and governable objects'. As such development projects in rural contexts are dominantly administered by the government through access to modern infrastructure such as communal taps. This introduces new modalities for the exercise of power by the government. It is predominantly in rural villages such as Agnes Rest where water is free, meaning there is no water meter, unlike townships. In townships like Soweto (see von Schnitzler 2008) it is easy to regulate citizens through controlling and monitoring their water consumption, and they have electricity meter boxes in their homes as well. In contrast, the findings of my research in Agnes Rest show that few households have electricity boxes because of the government's initiative of free basic electricity for qualifying households. With this said, infrastructure becomes a key 'governable object' and a means through which people who use it can become 'governable subjects' in the government's efforts to extend its project of rule. Depending on whether or not people use it, the installation of a water tap limits or allows them to be governable subjects according to the government's efforts of rule, even though the water is 'free'.

The understanding of the category of a subject' is essentially derived from the reproduction of relationships around him or her (Althusser 1970). Althusser's work is centred on the idea of repressive state apparatus (RSA) and this lies heavily on the state government laws. These RSAs constitute the governing bodies such as municipality officials who instil rules and regulations that must be followed. Consequently, once an individual experiences a certain kind of interpellation by the government, they experience subjectification. Interpellation is a concept invented by Althusser (1970), he uses it to explain how the state or government reproduces social relations through the apparatus of law. Althusser (1970) argues that interpellation by government articulates how individuals are already always subjected to social structure and

ideology (an example is the police and courts) that they have found themselves in. This, for Althusser, is illustrative of how the state is constantly involved in subject formation and this is implemented in practice every day by 'hailing' people according to how the state constitutes them. For example, in 2020 when we were in the early stages of the alert level-five lockdown because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government set in place laws against the restriction of movement to only allowing essential workers to go to work and also implementing social distance between people while making sure everyone wears their face mask every time they are in public. Everyone in the country had to live according to these rules set by the government, in a way, we became subjects interpellated by the government according to state law and regulation of combating the spread of Covid-19.

Furthermore, Foucault (1982) identifies three modes to which objectification occurs that change people into subjects. The significant mode of objectification for my research is objectivising of the subject in dividing practices. Dividing practices are composed of contrasting two categories with one another to identify how a subject fits into either of the two – there is no in-between. This objectification is essential in helping us understand how the government uses the lack of infrastructure in rural areas as a site of power relations and power struggle.

The objectivising of a subject by dividing practices of those who have access to infrastructure in contrast to those who do not have access explores the distinction between 'us and them.' The category of 'us and them' gets created when we are contrasting two different entities together to arrive at a mutual understanding of where one fits when concerning another one.

Another scholar that contributes to this theme of 'us and them' is Manganyi, he gives an account of the subjective experiences of differences that occurs between being black-in-the-world and being-white-in-the-world. In this text, Manganyi (1973) critically engages with how the experience of the black body is concerning the counterpart of being white in the world. The dividing practice, in this case, is that black skin is not only perceived as a marker of oppression but also marks one as a target for oppression and alienation whereas white skin speaks something contrary.

For illustration, if we consider the apartheid era, forcing black people to stay in the homelands was an example of a dividing practice. The government reinforced governmentality that made it easy for the control and regulation of black subjects to certain locations. Therefore, subjects are created by the exercise of power by the government.

Foucault (1982) writes that power is everywhere, and that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge. Power relations are not restricted to just political power, there is also pastoral power and disciplinary power; what they all have in common is that they are both repressive and productive. Foucault (1982) draws our attention to how we should study power by attaching importance to the understanding of how power struggles have played out in the past. In this case, this reminds us to consider that development discourse is deeply rooted in capitalism as mentioned by Crush (1995). Understanding the power struggles of the past help us understand how the European or Western discourse of development is not universal because it only considers the background of Western countries. It doesn't account for the expansion of colonialism and the oppression that came with capitalism for the less privileged. Therefore, considering this historical aspect it becomes evident that scholarship in development theory relies heavily on the European ideology.

This exercise of power happens through what Foucault calls 'governmentality.' This is understood as governing with rationality. That is exactly what the government does with infrastructural projects in rural areas; when they implement them, however, most of these initiatives fail (Phillips-Howard and Porter 1996). Ferguson (1994), in his book *The Anti-Politics Machine,* illustrates how despite the development project's 'failure' to transform the lives of the people in need, it does not mean that it fails in implementing a bureaucratic state, thereby achieving political effects. In a word, this 'fail' does not mean the development apparatus did not produce a new power relation, new modes of subjectification and subjection, and the extension of the bureaucratic authority of the state into communities. It overall achieved political ends.

As Lemke summarizes, 'The concept of governmentality plays a significant role in Foucault's analytics of power in many ways: it offers a view on power beyond a perspective that centres either on consensus or violence; it links technologies of the self with technologies of domination, the constitution of the subject to the formation of the state; finally, it helps to differentiate between power and domination (Lemke 2002:3-4). '

The interaction of government with subjects contributes to the interplay of power. Although power is everywhere and can be seen in different forms, it does not mean everyone has power; to reiterate, power is understood through relations between people. As such governmentality cannot happen if there is no interplay of power between the powerful and powerless – that is the government and the subject.

Without a doubt, Foucault's work offers us another way to understand how political power relations and subject formation in the context of development work. Additionally, development historically has been seen with newly arising technological inventions. This has led to techno-politics.

### 3.2.2. Technopolitics as modes of governance

Kurban, Pena-Lopez, and Haberer (2016) define techno-politics as a dynamic process between technological developments and political purposes. It is the entanglements of technology with politics and it takes place on a local and national level. Political power is at the centre of the understanding of techno-politics.

Technology empowers people in different ways and the government uses this to its advantage. This is what Antina Von Schnitzler writes in her chapter that appears in *The Promise of Infrastructure* book (Anand, Gupta and Appel 2018). She shifts the understanding of techno-politics. She does not use the concept of "techno-politics" in the same way as Timothy Mitchell (2002) and Gabrielle Hecht (2009). Von Schnitzler differs from them by adding more micrological techno-politics involving habits, subjectivities, and relations, analysing the grounds upon which techno-politics play out through the residents' struggle for water supply and the government enforcing high payment rates for water. In that sense, infrastructure through technological advancements become generative sites where we can study political action and development. This is the approach that I broadly follow in my analysis of the 'techno-politics' of infrastructural development in Agnes Rest.

# Chapter Four – Materiality of Infrastructure

## Introduction

The physical material of electricity wires and water taps will be used in this chapter to discuss and explore the relationalities, subjectivities, and meanings the residents of Agnes Rest ascribe to the communal tap sites and their use of electricity. After numerous interviews, I realised that I was hearing different descriptions of communal taps spread across this village. Because I was relying on telephonic interviews, at first, I did not think this was important. Until I asked about the experiences of collecting water. And significantly the families using the different taps had different experiences of collecting water. In this chapter, I argue that the spatial difference in the spaces in Agnes Rest contributes to the availability of physical infrastructure and that similarity affects the experience an individual has with the resources. There are different experiences with water and electricity based on where one stays.

I open this chapter with an ethnographic scene to describe the two types of communal taps situated around the village (see Figure 4.1 and 4.2)



*Figure 4.1 Individual communal tap (captured by author, in July 2019)*



*Figure 4.2 Communal tap with a tank attached to it - locally referred to as 'itanke' (captured by Buthi G, in August 2020)*

These two figures show two different types of communal taps in two different areas of Agnes Rest. Buthi G was one of my younger research participants, he is in his early thirties, he was very keen to talk to me about his interaction with *itanke*. He took the photograph of the communal tap he uses daily, and I took the other one when I visited Agnes Rest, so to say these photos were taken on different occasions in different parts of the village. Stunned as I was with these two different taps as I compared the photographs, I asked Buthi G why this tap (shown here in Figure 4.1) has no tank attached to it? Why is the other one (shown here in Figure 4.2) having a huge built-in tank attached? Why was this the case? Buthi G explained to me:

> *There is not a huge difference in the taps except that leyethu (our tap – as shown in figure 4.2) we must add more water if we run out of water. It happens in two ways; firstly, we can inform our ward councilor who then takes it up to the municipality who then comes and refills the water tank– but this takes such a long process and time. Anything with our municipality here takes forever to be addressed. Secondly, we can come together as a community and hire a water truck from Lady Frere to come and fill the tank with more water. This is also complicated because all the families must contribute money. And asifan[8], some have money to contribute but others generally do not have.*

After listening to his words, I realised how complex it is to get water in Agnes Rest and what it causes for the people affected. For instance, I thought it was an upgrade to have this water tap with the tank attached, but it adds to the complexity of access and social division in the village. Buthi G mentioned that the tap in Figure 4.1 was the first kind of infrastructure introduced in the village in terms of centralised water. He recalls how this tap was unreliable because the water finished quickly and randomly, there was no way of measuring as to when the water will finish or come back. The frustrating thing about this tap, he said, 'was that even if you woke up early you were not sure if you will get water, and as a community, we were not sure if the water was safe to drink because we were not sure where it came from.' In contrast, *iTanke* becomes a generative site - one that gathers the community in that area together in order to address their water issues. In this instance, water becomes commodified; when the tank runs dry they have to purchase water from a water truck. Loftus (2006) argues that the

[8] Translated in English as: we are not all the same

commodification of water and its associated technology become the controlling mechanisms that end up regulating the community members' daily routines and socialising. This is what happens in Agnes Rest as well. Buthi G further made remarks about how it is rather advantageous for them to act for themselves rather than wait for their municipality. It is thus evident that water provision goes beyond the issue of provision and accessibility and take a close look at how power operates at the scale of everyday life (O'Reilly and Dhanju 2014:376).

A similar narrative also arises in figure 4.1. During my telephonic interview with Mamike this year who stays a few rondavels away from my family home, she shared her thoughts and experiences about collecting water from the same tap:

'…As uMama wekhaya ndim ofuneka a'collect.e amazi oko ekuseni..'

Translated: 'As the mother of the household, I must collect water each morning.' Mamike recalls moments where she met with her neighbors at the tap to catch up and talk about the social affairs that occur in the village. These 'catching up' sessions have been something of a routine to her. Her communal tap has been a spot for her to talk with her friends about her life. Communication becomes transferred between these spaces. Noticeably Mamike does not see any issues of inequality or discrimination in terms of why it is only women that collect the water. Rather, when I furthered enquired about her thoughts of the gendered roles when it came to collecting water; she explained:

'It is not an issue because this is something, we grew up doing. So *kum akhonto efunny…*'

In her defense, it did not matter if her daughters or herself collected water in 10L buckets carrying them in a wheelbarrow. What was more important to Mamike was understanding that:

'As a woman, we must contribute to the household and know what is expected of us.'

Mamike recalls how, when she was still working as a teacher, whenever she bumped into a learner's parent while collecting water that is where she even discussed issues about the learner to the parent. Similarly, Buthi G refers to *itanke* as the place that causes them as a community to come together to arrange their money to tackle their water shortages issue. These two perspectives from Buthi G and Mamike reveal that the site of the different communal taps become more symbolic not only of spaces for informal conversations, but also formal conversations. The water taps serve the purpose of (or provide the occasion for) convening people to do other kinds of social "work" that exceed the task of obtaining water. These different sites of water reveal how the materiality of water taps become a site to engage in

social relations. It allows for many other things to be possible. Another dimension to look at when considering the site of different water taps is how it shows the temporality of water. Residents of the village have to wait in a queue and take turns and the time they wait unfolds where other types of conversations can arise.

These two sites have led to how subjectivities have been constantly created through this space with the community member's interaction with the physical infrastructure of the built-in-taps. This idea can be enriched by Foucault's (1982) work on subjectification through dividing practices. Simply this means how a subject is created through divisions in performance. The site of the communal tap from the experiences of Mamike and Buthi G expresses this explicitly. It illustrates how their subjectivity is created by their performance when in contact with their communal taps. As *umama wekhaya* Mamike has the role of being a mother figure and the role of collecting water for her household. The role she has objectified has also made her subject to this gendered role of being *umama wekhaya*. Mamike gave the representation that is based only on one dimension of who she is, the role of being a wife and mother figure. It is as though she is confined to this singular representation because she has grown to believe by socialisation that she must embrace this aspect more than any other thing about herself. For instance, she had a professional occupation as a teacher, however, she hardly mentioned that in conversation. But it remains that the physical duty of collecting water is an example of her gendered subjectivity of *umama wekhaya*. *Umama wekhaya* is I argue is also an example of "dividing practices'' in Foucault's usage, the state government divides 'men' and 'women' in the law, in the census and many other areas and even might record 'housewife' as an occupation when collecting data on employment. But *umama wekhaya* does not seem like an example of that kind of dividing practice that comes from the practices of knowledge formation by the state. It seems like a 'local' or 'cultural' social identity that stands outside of state knowledge. When culture and tradition intersect with knowledge formation by recognised entities like the state it does not match with how people understand themselves. That is why I argue that *umama wekhaya* is a cultural practice, a category of identification to these local people and that is why it is important to highlight it when studying such a community.

## 4.1 Material Layout

*The Production of Space* book by Henri Lefebvre is about understanding and unpacking social space, how studying space reduces space to becoming a status of a message and once you inhabit that space, you start a process of reading it as you do with any message, involving history and practice. Reading a social space in this instance means involving the interactions

people engage in with their physical objects. I borrow Lefebvre's notion that space goes beyond the architectural, plastic, or literary spaces (1974:8) and is inclusive of elements and moments of social practice. Much like the interactions around the communal tap as Mamaki shared with me in the description above. This sub-section will demonstrate and provide the spatial differences of the village structure thus leading to the discussion of different interactions as a result of the spatial differences.

The national alert level 5 lockdown regulations posed as a restriction for me to visit Agnes Rest during the June/July 2020 winter break. Making use of my previous visits when I was younger, along with the help of my research participants, their vivid descriptions and my family's input, I was able to pinpoint what the village structure is like. A research participant by the name of Vusimuzi (Vusi for short), is an elderly man who through our interactions became an important asset in the discoveries I made regarding the village layout in and around Agnes Rest.

Not only is Agnes Rest a village within a rural town (that is, Lady Frere), it also is surrounded by several small villages. I managed to get participants from all around Agnes Rest. Vusi foremostly stated:

> *apha eAgnes Rest, sisiseko sahlulwe sangamacandelo amabini. uyabona, ndihlala kwelona candelo liphezulu, asinamagama ezitalato njengawe edolophini. Indlela ezahlulwe ngayo iindawo, ibhulorho. Sithi icandelo eliphezulu- KwaMkulu, kananjalo ngenxa yokuba inkosi ihlala kweli candelo.*

Our telephonic interview was in isiXhosa because he was not eloquent in English. Vusi was mentioning how the village does not have street names. This reminded me of how it was difficult for my family to drive from Queenstown when we drove to Agnes Rest, we kept getting lost and asking people around to find the exact house we wanted. All because there were no street names or house numbers. Much of what Vusi was saying was that Agnes Rest, is divided into two sections and these two sections are divided by a small bridge. The upper section is commonly referred to as KwaMkulu – direct translation is "a place of the highest. "

KwaMkulu occupies most of Agnes Rest, as most households are situated on the mountain hill. And the local chief stays in this section as well. This mostly is the reason it is called KwaMkulu because the chief's homestead is located there. The portion of land at the bottom does not necessarily have a local term – rather a phrase is used to describe where they stay relating to

KwaMkulu. I recall in one interview, the young lady I was speaking to said she stayed *ezantsi kwaseMkulu*[9].

Ato Quayson (2014) in his book focusing on space especially in the city of Accra, provides a perspective on how to study space. He mentions that, "once we reflect on any social space, we find that although space gives the impression of being a mere container, its dimensions are in fact produced by what it contains, while it also reconfigures and rearranges the contained elements" (Quayson 2014:5). Meaning that the dimensions that occupy any given space such as the built infrastructure of roads and houses, electricity cables all contribute to the social relationships that are specified as people interact with their built environment (Quayson 2014). Lefebvre (1974) shares the same sentiment on how social space should be studied; the two scholars believe that space is more than the architectural aspect of it and takes it beyond how interactions in spaces are what makes space significant. Therefore, I asked myself this question in my research fieldsite: what made the space in Agnes Rest important to study? I found it quite fascinating how my research participants explained the two different sections of Agnes Rest. I decided to then focus on what makes these spaces different from each other.

Significantly it was the built infrastructure found in KwaMkulu that you did not find *ezantsi kweseMkulu* that was the focal difference in these sections of the village. As most of the rondavels were in KwaMkulu, Buthi G shared with me (he resides in KwaMkulu) that the built infrastructure they had was first introduced in this section before *ezantsi kweseMkulu*. *iTanke* for instance was an upgrade from the individual communal tap (see the two figures in the introduction of this chapter). Electricity was first introduced here before *ezantsi kweseMkulu*.

KwaMkulu occupies roughly 70% of Agnes Rest. While situated at the mountain hill, this section is known for its beautiful rondavels. The built structures that are here include the local clinic and Ntsonkotha Senior Secondary School – the only high school in the entire village. The secondary school and clinic are at the center, while the homesteads are spread across these two significant buildings. Several research participants, I spoke to, attended the Ntsonkotha school. They shared moments of growing up with no centralised water and electricity in the school. The clinic was a fairly new development as it only opened on 10 June 2010.

> *The school is one of the oldest building in the village, kuthi (to us) it shows where we have come from. Even so, you would notice from the lack of proper sanitation*

[9]Direct translation – below the highest

*and hygiene in terms of bathrooms for the learners, it was the same for us when we attended there. The toilets are very far from the actual classrooms. But KwaMkulu has always been favoured because of the school building. – sis'Siphokazi*

Sis'Siphokazi attended Ntsonkotha from 1998 to 2003, she additionally recalls to me how the school had walls that were damaged and cracking, there were broken windows, some classrooms did not have a roof, as such they were many learners in her classrooms. On some heavy rainy days, the teachers would send the learners back home because they knew their roof structure was not reliable. Despite the condition of the school, it was still the pride and joy for these community members. This resonates with the affective implications of both 'having' and 'being able to show' the presence of infrastructure in the community: prestige, pride, pleasure – and the pleasurable memory of what it felt like to get a school like this when it was first built.

The local clinic only opened in 2010, before then the space that occupies the clinic was just an open space of land. Significantly there are numerous open spaces of land without any purpose in the village. However, space is always under construction because space is understood as a product of interrelations, argues Massey (2005). These relations Massey outlines are mandatory for material practices to take place; therefore, space is never finished, never closed it is always under construction, meaning there are always relations that lead to material practices between them. It is crucial to use the conceptualisation that Massey offers here, that space does not exist prior to identities or entities and their relations between spatiality, it is in this sense that space becomes constructive, constantly being made. This argument presented by Massey provides the understanding that agrees with how emergent and different subjectivities and experiences of infrastructural space in Agnes Rest indeed both construct and are constructed by space as it is transformed through material and social relations. *iTanke* causes the residents that use it daily to interact with each other, thereby actively constructing their subjectivities as influenced by their interrelations. Whereas investigating electricity access is a different story: the electricity cables do not significantly allow residents to interact with each other daily. The ontology of infrastructure as Larkin (2013:329) outlines is that infrastructures are matter that enables the movement of other matter; electricity is a good example of this. There is little to no interpersonal interactions with electricity cables because only trained technicians can come close to handling electric wires and the space it occupies. Rather it is the product of the electric wiring that impacts the lives of the residents. Electric cables and wiring are spread across the village as it serves to connect almost all rondavels and houses with electricity. The product is electricity working in every household.

This research was limited in achieving the aim of gathering evidence as to why there is a difference in building different kinds of communal taps because the research was not inclusive of interviewing municipality officials. However, to understand the impact of these differences on the people, the research looked at the responses the people shared with respect to their taps.

## 4.2 Interactions and rationalities

The water pump and Jojo tank in one yard introduce a different subjectivity and experience of water access. Their ownership of a tank means not relying on external forces (except for nature, rain). They have the agency that is defined by their ownership of a Jojo tank in their yard.

In my conversations with tata uDumani, mam'Nobulumko (Nobu for short), and sis'Iminathi, they similarly shared that they both had JoJo tanks in their homes. Mam'Nobu recently got hers installed in early January 2020. In a proud moment as a mother, she mentioned how her daughter started working in Cape Town, having a good-paying job enabled her to renovate her mother's home and buy her the Jojo tank she now has. I felt the warmth and joy in her voice as she went on about how her daughter struggled to get a job when she moved to Cape Town. It took her more than ten years to get this good paying job she has. As this acquisition is relatively new in mam'Nobu's life, hearing her experience became important for me because the changes were still new for her.

> *Before getting itanke for my house [she was referring to the green Jojo tank], I was like uMamike as well. We shared the same communal tap for years because we stay close to each other; we shared a lot of memories there [laughing]. I've been a 'household' wife like you young people say [laughing] all my life, so you see I have never had formal education or formal job. I'm luckily married to a wonderful man who provides for me and my children. I took care of the house while he went to work. Let me first start with my experience of collecting water from idama[10]. That was a part of my life since I was born, my mother used to wake us up early in the morning, my sisters and I carried buckets on our heads, wearing headwraps or small towels to help support the buckets on our heads. I think the walk to idama was roughly thirty minutes because our home was on the far side of ezantsi kweseMkulu, I don't know how to describe it over the phone, but the distance was like walking on steep gravel pave walk with many trees on the way there. Stones were all over the ground, it's like you couldn't wear sandals or open-toe shoes. We all learned to navigate more than one route to idama because we wanted to get there faster before anyone else. Along the walk, we'd normally be talking (Mam'Nobu and her sisters) about a bunch of different things. For example, I remember on the days we went to do our washing, we did it idama, so we would spend like four hours there. And it was not just me and my sisters, but other people from the village. On such days there was a lot of gossiping, I won't lie I was there,*

[10] Translated: dam

*we were busy talking nonsense and having fun as children [laughing]. That was where a lot of friendships formed and dissolved, unfortunately, that was the truth.*

*I understood the meaning of ubuntu from these trips, that a community supports each other, for instance when one girl did not have sunlight powder for washing, we would share without thinking twice. Reciprocation also, when you are nice to someone, they are nice back to you. We did not have much to offer but whatever we had we shared, tina ["us"] we grew up with that. We did not lose it even when the communal tap was introduced, it was the same experience, just the difference was the tap meant a shorter walking distance and healthier water. Now we can do washing in our yards instead of idama.*

*Shifting to the JoJo tank is a different story. Although I am grateful for my daughter to buy me one, it has changed how my neighbours relate with me now. Because I don't see them often, I'm constantly feeling like I am drifting away from them in some respects. I don't get to see them as often as before, because previously every day I had to collect freshwater, now I don't have to even leave my yard for that. I have seen how distant people become when they get a JoJo tank in their yards, it places them in a different league, I fear that others think that about me. But honestly, I don't care, there's more peace in my life now. I don't have to stress about water finishing midway while waiting in a queue. I think as we get older, we want things to be more easily accessible to us and make our lives easier because we have less mobility. Well, I will speak for myself, I struggle with walking for a long time because of my arthritis.*

Mam' Nobu in our conversation showed how her experience of having the JoJo tank was for her not being subjected to an administration of water delivery. Anand's (2011,2012,2017) work on water supply illustrates two infrastructural systems that interact: water delivery and social networks. It is through the administration of water that social networks of rule exercise their management over subjects in the promise of water delivery for the community. The peace Mam'Nobu mentions is connected to the thought of not having to rely on the general water supply in the village; the social networks that connect the water are the fundamental issue at hand here.

I discovered that through their experiences, people in the community cannot rely on their ward councillor or municipality to quickly act on water delivery issues. Therefore, the reason behind purchasing a JoJo tank is to delink the dependence a family has on the municipality for their water. It means only depending on borehole water they pump themselves and through the rainwater because the Jojo tank is, in some instances, refilled with rainwater rather than from a borehole. All the more as I listened to my participants, I began to admire water as a powerful and resourceful infrastructure that can reveal the political and social aspect of everyday life. Through this research and focusing mainly on water access I have been able to learn that my

research participants long for the freedom to have better access to basic needs whilst maintain their sense of community with each other.

Scholars like Von Schnitzler and Anand have provided an account of the relations through which we can study water. Von Schnitzler (2008) argues that the state uses the water meter as a device to manage and regulate a certain type of citizen in South Africa. Both these scholars have shown me how water supply can be used to administrate a particular type of life. Anand's (2017) work conducted in Mumbai revealed that despite being marginalised through the infrastructure of water pipes, the residents there prefer public infrastructure that will lead to more points of access to water for them. Noticeably this differs from the South African approach that Von Schnitzler (2008) looks at, where the water meter is for each household and it is thus more individualist and not communal.

Rural South Africa is different from the Soweto township life that Von Schnitzler (2008) wrote about. In Agnes Rest there are no water meters, residents are not charged water bills, yet they remain regulated by the materiality of the infrastructure that enables access to their water. *iTanke* causes families that share it to fill their huge tank when the water finishes and when the municipality does not listen to their request. While there is no such option with a stand-alone communal tap: they ultimately have to wait for the tap to have water again. Finally, we have the JoJo tank that only a few own. It is a much better option to have because there is more autonomy for a family in choosing how to control their water consumption, although it comes at the 'cost' of being able to sustain social relations.

The experience of electricity is somewhat difficult because there are numerous issues of access that influence it. For instance, while residents of the City of Johannesburg powered by City Power often experience 2 to 4 hours of scheduled load shedding, residents of the Emalahleni Local Municipality experience load shedding for longer hours, sometimes counting to days. From the interviews I conducted, the random absence or disconnection of electricity in the village due to load shedding from Eskom (their supplier) does not interrupt their mundane everyday life. The main reason for this is because most elderly people have managed to live more than fifty years without electricity. They can cook with fire and wood outside, boil water to bath, do everything except charge their cellphones. Even families in the village who still do not have electricity for some reason unknown, still interact normally with those with access, this is to emphasize that not all homes have electrical wiring as I thought. However, for my

research I spoke to residents with electricity, it was only in conversation with those research participants I learnt that there are some homes still waiting for their rondavels.

## 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has sought the importance of the symbolic meaning of material infrastructure for the creation of other social processes. We cannot be limited to study infrastructure alone, some associations arise from it. The interaction of people with their water taps significantly shows how they occupy their spaces, space is never empty it is constructive; always being made. This highlights how people's dispositions and subjectivities can be created within the spaces they find themselves and therefore affect their perceptions of experiences and access. I also identified that the different sections of this village contribute to the inequality in access as KwMkula receive better infrastructure than *ezantsi kweseMkulu*. In the next chapter, I will discuss more about how the people relate to the prevalent inequality in the village.

# Chapter Five – *Sonke asilingani:* How social inequality is understood

## Introduction

The previous chapter showed the importance of studying space and the interactions people have with their built infrastructure around this space. This chapter, therefore, continues the conversation on infrastructure and development, by specifically focusing on how the residents of Agnes Rest understand the social categories evident in the village. Those categories are created firstly by which section of the village they live in; secondly, by whether they have *itanke* or the standing alone communal tap; and thirdly, whether they have electricity or not. I argue that the language expressions used by people interacting in and around their built infrastructure reveal the way they self-identify as well as the social hierarchy and social divide in the village. This chapter will subsequently discuss the database on various social classes and income sources in the rural Eastern Cape in order to highlight the social divide and hierarchy here. Therefore, this chapter will unpack the perception that '*sonke asilingani'* - that people are not of the same caliber, or they are not all at the same level – be it in terms of financial wealth or access to resources.

## 5.1. Emic Perspective: *Asifana sonke*

In ethnography, the emic perspective is about capturing the way that culture is interpreted through the eyes of its members (Willis 2007:100). I will attempt to capture this perspective in this section through using ethnography based on the discourses of self-identification and how my research participants apply social categories to their meanings and understandings of social inequality within Agnes Rest.

Investigating water access in the village has remarkably shown me how the community members think of themselves and each other. I will start with my interview with Mamike. As an elder woman, she was nothing but forthcoming to share her experience of water access.

Mamike lives *ezantsi kweseMkulu.* The section that is locally perceived as less developed than KwaMkulu. Below is an excerpt from my interview with Mamike:

> *In the street or area where I stay there are five or six houses [she could not recall the exact number over the phone – in my second interview with her she verified that there are five homes], these households share one communal tap.*

From this first excerpt, I learned that within the section of *ezantsi kweseMkulu*, you further realise that despite there being no street names or house numbers, there is an alternative – and perhaps more significant – way of grouping houses than by street, and that is by the common water tap or source that they share. The source of their water is either borehole or for others, it

comes pumped from the nearby dam. There is some inconsistency with the source of their water, this is something I discovered from several interviews. Some residents said that they received their water from the borehole while others said that they received it from the dam. It was confusing for me to follow the exact water source because different people said different things, there was inconsistency in this regard. However, what was consistent and true and collectively shared by all my research participants was the fact that all the infrastructure to connect these resources come from the municipality through their development programs. And the perceptions of these development programs that the residents have are mixed because they have different experiences of the transformations that have come in the village throughout the years. This is because some areas have certain resources while others either have different versions of them or none whatsoever.

> *Most boreholes generate clean water, but that does not mean it is healthy because it does not taste nice. And I have seen some of my neighbors who have the means to, they buy drinking water in those big bottles for all of us to see when they throw them away. I for instance have too many responsibilities and no means, we drink the borehole water as it is. Another thing I have gradually seen that is increasing apha (here) eAgnes Rest is ezi'JoJo tanks. Mna ekhaya asinayo eJoJo tank, sonke asilingani, asifani (at my household we do not own a JoJo tank, we cannot afford one; we are not all the same).*

The above excerpt from my interview with Mamike was a turning point for me as a researcher. I discovered how the awareness of difference and inequality is alarming yet considered important in this village. With that said, I listened to this conversation again and noticed the tone to which she was speaking, it was one of longing and envy despite her assurance to me that she did not care what other people had. I also sensed a tone of sadness as she was communicating, perhaps due to the longing of owning her own JoJo tank. I felt as though Mamike did not accept her living conditions, as a result, she would constantly compare herself to her neighbors – by sharing to me how her neighbors have electric pumps and own JoJo tanks. It caused her to envy them and be resentful towards them because of what they have and what she does not have. Yet she did not disclose if she was either longing to have her own JoJo tank in clear spoken words, but from the phone calls we had, I gathered that she wanted to be like her neighbors with JoJo tanks.

From my other interviews, I learned that the community attached wealth not just to cattle and other livestock but also if a yard has its own JoJo tank. The tank is expensive so if any family owned a JoJo tank, and owned an electric pump, these two things are equated to having financial wealth.

I found it quite astounding how much the community dwelled on the perspective of the wealth of other households by merely observing how they had access to water. Mamike was sharing the different ways people in her area make means to get water. Significantly what they all had in common was that they do not pay water rates. It is specific households that take an independent choice to upgrade or further develop their households by installing water storage containers like the JoJo tank. After expressing the comfort and contentment she has with the resources she has access to, it is here that she makes the remark that, *sonke asifani,* meaning we are not all equal.

When I asked Mamike why she does not have a JoJo tank, she remarked 'sonke asilingani' – we are not all equally the same. This phrase *sonke asilingani* is different from *sonke asifani,* the subtle meaning of *sonke asifani* is 'we are all different, we are not the same and in that difference then inequality arises. ' *Sonke asilingani* has a slightly different meaning attached to it – we are not of the same calibre, standard and income bracket. *Sonke asilingani* is deeply rooted in this community as I have seen with the different types of participants I spoke to. In numerous conversations, the phrase was mostly used as a self-identification category. My interviews with tata uDumani and tata uTole best illustrate this, one has a JoJo tank and the other does not. Although both stay within the same jurisdiction, they have different experiences of access.

The Tole family wakes up early each morning to collect water for their household. Using their wheelbarrow to carry three of their 10L buckets, this task is mostly done by the women in the family. Surprisingly just a few houses down the gravel road in KwaMkulu, you get the Dumani family. They use an electronic pump that pumps water directly to their green JoJo tank in their yard that supplies water for their entire household. The Dumani's no longer must face the reality of cold mornings of having to wake up to be the first ones to collect water from the communal tap before the water finishes.

In a small village like Agnes Rest, you would assume every household has the same kind of access to the same resources. Moreover, this would seem especially likely when considering that the municipality that governs them is mostly composed of local people who grew up in that same village and surrounding villages. However, that is not the case. Inequality of access is at the core when we are discussing sources of water supply in the entire village. The root of this inequality is current income. I have observed from my interviews and conversations that because families are different in their income, there is bound to be a hierarchy within this

community. This contrasting livelihood is undoubtedly crucial to note when you discover the fact that these houses are in proximity to each other. And it is not just one family that has a JoJo tank in their yard, but several other families own one as well.

Self-identification among this village is validated by what an individual has and also identification by others. Electricity access is regulated differently compared to water. Electricity access was installed categorically according to whether or not an individual household had a resident member who was employed at the time the wiring was installed by the government. According to several participates this was such a flawed and unreliable way to categorise households and determine this. Sisi Amanda recalls:

> *I remember when they were installing the electricity cables, I had just started working in the Boxer store in Lady Frere, I was not permanent. I had been working there for three months or so. My neighbors knew I was working now because everyone knows who works and who does not in the village. And so, when the people came and install electricity, they had the knowledge they received from the residents that in my house someone is working, so surely, I can afford to buy my electricity. Just like that, I got an electricity meter box that allowed me to buy my units. I was the breadwinner in my house, I eventually lost my job a few years afterwards. I am telling you now it is difficult to buy electricity, as a result, I cook mostly on a gas stove or outside so I can save electricity. I rely on my children's grant money, even that is not enough. I only use electricity to light the house because at least if I can buy R150 units of electricity it will cover an entire month. So, it is like that asifani (we are not the same) as we were years ago, and it's not like these government people can come back and redo the electricity wiring. They would never, it even took them long to connect the village with electricity.*

From the above interview, I discovered how the categories their municipality used are now outdated and do not account for the reality people face now. Especially considering how unemployment is always on the rapid rise in our country. The category system they used was flawed from the beginning. Scott (1998:2) argues how the state needs to handle its subjects, by introducing a 'legible' process such as the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers; in his argument, this attempt at legibility and simplification creates a standard grid whereby people can be centrally recorded and monitored. The state simplifications are disadvantageous in that they do not represent the actual activity of the society, they are more like maps which, when combined with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade (Scott 1998:3). But, not all maps are accurate because when making on-the-ground 'emic' knowledge there occurs a mismatch between the state-produced 'etic' knowledge and the emic knowledge. That is exactly how I perceive the electricity connection

in Agnes Rest: there was a mismatch that occurred to how the state connected households with electricity; they used more of a 'snapshot' view of social reality, rather than a dynamic view that would understand the likelihood of income variation over time in a particular household.

## 5.2. Etic Perspective

The state produces etic knowledge of this kind that informs the concept of 'dividing practices' and enforces a certain kind of governmentality as proposed by Foucault (1982) and the state simplifications suggested by Scott (1998). It is a one-sided viewpoint in that is based on their evidence of dividing, labelling and categorising people based on criteria. However, for an on-the-ground emic study of development this becomes somewhat difficult because as I showed with the case of Agnes Rest, the village is full of individual social categories such as umama wekhaya. The state cannot categorise Mamaike only as a housewife, she does more than fill that 'box'. This etic knowledge is useful, yes, but it should not be the only reference point to identify members of a society; the emic, inside perspective is important as well to represent the type of society you have and specifically the type of people in it, not solely based on state classification knowledge alone.

Statistics South Africa (2019) reported that the Eastern Cape was the most unequal province in 2015; it reported the highest levels of inequality in the whole country during that year. The National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) is a dataset that collects information on households in South Africa, this survey is held every two years. The purpose of the NIDS is to collect information on four modules: income, expenditure, assets, and debts. Compared to the Income and Expenditure Survey (IES), the NIDS is advantageous in that it provides more details on the labour market in addition to the labour market status of a person – whether a person is employed, unemployed, or inactive. The NIDS further collects information on the sector and occupation if a person is employed. A second advantage of the NIDS is that collects information on the education and work status of people. The extra detail that NIDS includes makes it influential in studying the equality of opportunities that people have (Sulla and Zikhali 2018). And such a survey should be used to identify how to develop communities like Agnes Rest when it comes to implementing development programmes, taking into account all aspects of a household.

Sulla and Zikhali (2018) argue South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world and the inequality is high, persistent, and has increased since 1994. Therefore, to assess this inequality, I will subsequently analyse the NIDS survey firstly to identify social classes in

South Africa. The five social classes include the chronic poor, characterised by high poverty persistence; the transient poor, who have above-average chances of escaping poverty; the non-poor but vulnerable, whose basic needs are currently being met but who face above-average risks of slipping into poverty; the middle class, who are in a better position to maintain a non-poor standard of living even in the event of negative shocks; and the elite, whose living standards situate them far above the average (Sulla and Zikhali 2018:35). The classes differ in their access to the labour market: the more disadvantaged the class of a household, the more likely the household head is unemployed or economically inactive. Only 31% of household heads among the chronically poor are employed, with the remainder being economically inactive or unemployed. Among the transient poor and the vulnerable, about 50% are employed (Sulla and Zikhali 2018:39). In their study, Sulla and Zikhali (2018) reveal that poverty is consistently highest among black South Africans, the less educated, the unemployed, female-headed households, large families, and children. Further poverty remains most prevalent in previously disadvantaged areas, such as the former homelands – areas that were set aside for black South Africans along ethnic lines during apartheid. I have discovered that several participants in my research fall within the non-poor but vulnerable class group, however, they are similar to the chronic poor in the aspect of depending on half of their income from the government, through social grants. Mamike is the only participant among the people I interviewed that was leading a household, although she is educated (now retired) because she has a large family, it still causes her to fall within the vulnerable group whose basic needs are met but still face the risk of slipping into poverty.

Below is a graph illustrating the racial composition of the social classes in South Africa using the NIDA survey 2008 and 2014/15.

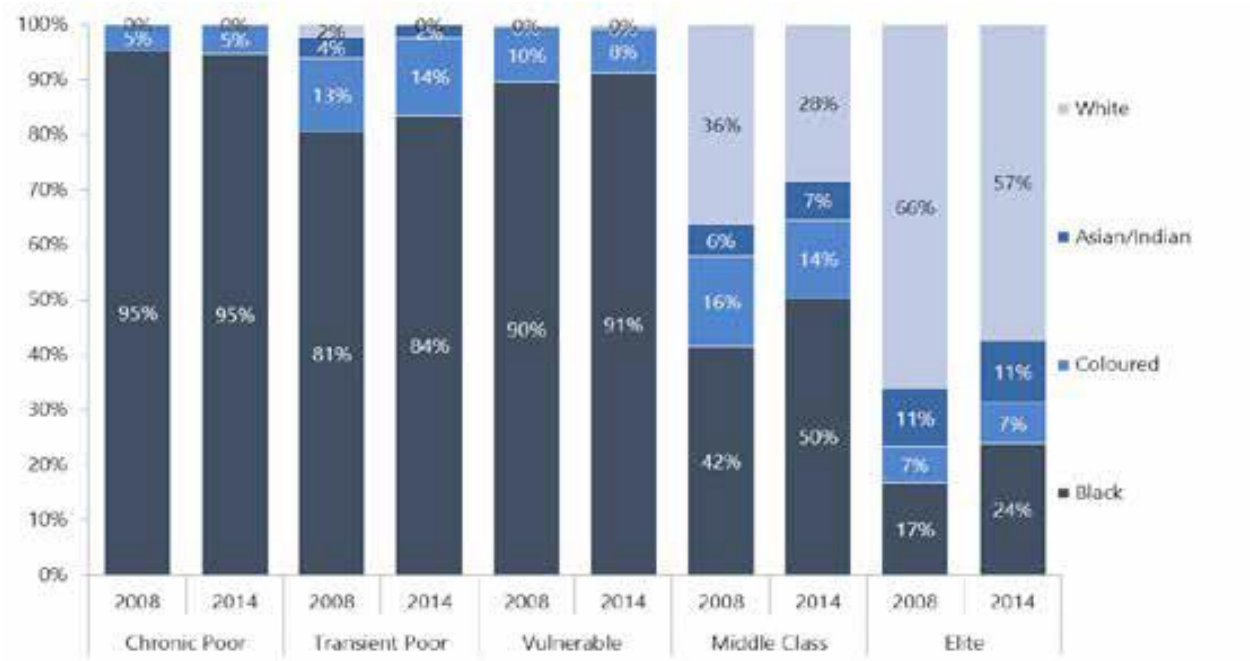
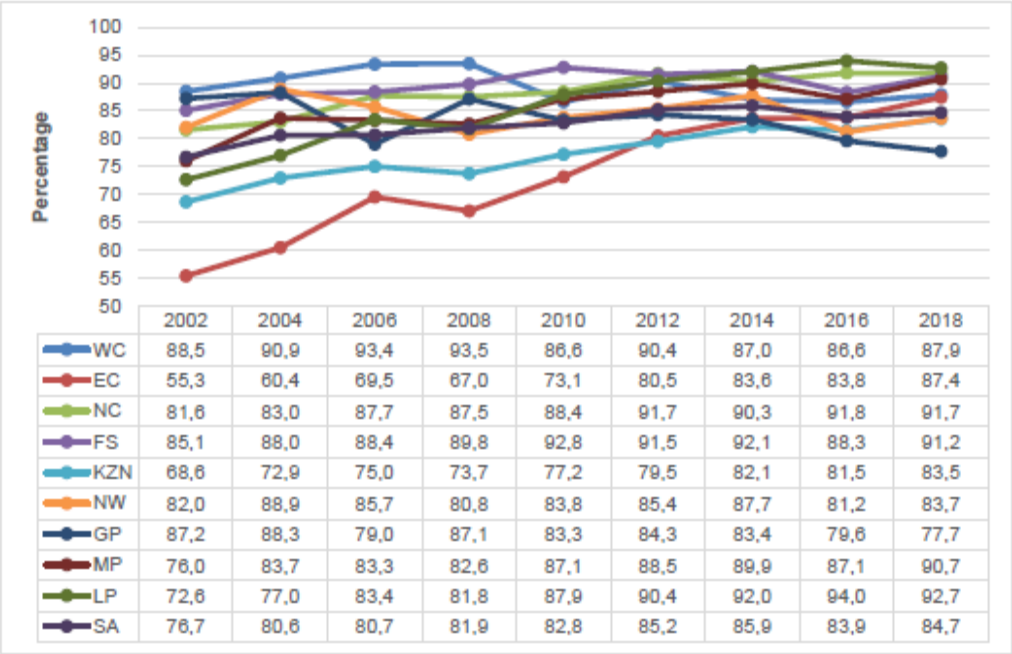



*Table 5.1. The Racial composition of the five social classes in South Africa using the NIDA survey 2008 and 2014/15*

The NIDS survey also offers a categorising of employed people and categorises them into five types of economic activity: subsistence agriculture, casual work, self-employment, employees with a temporary or time-limited work contract, and employees with a permanent work contract (Sulla and Zikhali 2018:39). Apart from social grants, the source of income from several of the participants from this research was casual work and temporary contracts. Additionally, the older participants who are over sixty years depend on 'income transfers' from their children, for example, Mamike, Mam' Nobu, tata uTole. Whereas Buthi G and sis'Siphokazi often secured casual work and temporary work. Having these different sources of income contribute to the social inequality in the village, it explains why some households do not struggle with buying electricity while others struggle; why some households own Jojo tanks and others do not.

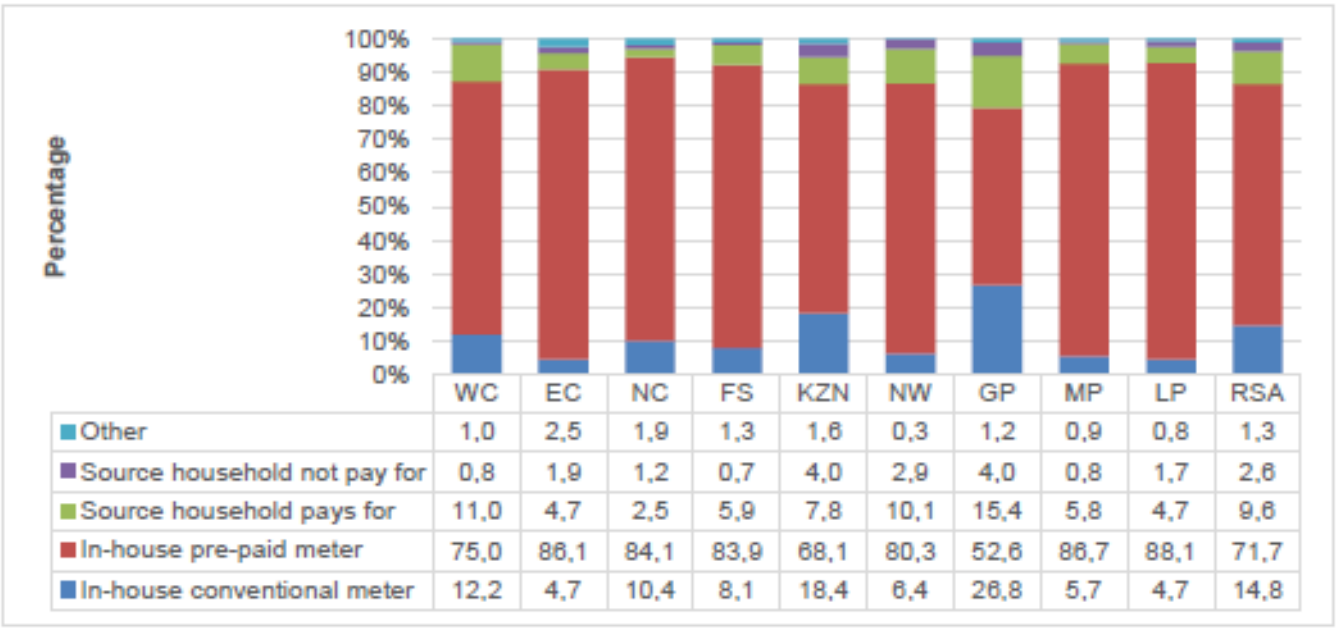
Below is a graph that shows how electricity access in the Eastern Cape (denoted by 'EC') has been gradually increasing since 2002.




| | 2002 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 | 2012 | 2014 | 2016 | 2018 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WC | 88,5 | 90,9 | 93,4 | 93,5 | 86,6 | 90,4 | 87,0 | 86,6 | 87,9 |
| EC | 55,3 | 60,4 | 69,5 | 67,0 | 73,1 | 80,5 | 83,6 | 83,8 | 87,4 |
| NC | 81,6 | 83,0 | 87,7 | 87,5 | 88,4 | 91,7 | 90,3 | 91,8 | 91,7 |
| FS | 85,1 | 88,0 | 88,4 | 89,8 | 92,8 | 91,5 | 92,1 | 88,3 | 91,2 |
| KZN | 68,6 | 72,9 | 75,0 | 73,7 | 77,2 | 79,5 | 82,1 | 81,5 | 83,5 |
| NW | 82,0 | 88,9 | 85,7 | 80,8 | 83,8 | 85,4 | 87,7 | 81,2 | 83,7 |
| GP | 87,2 | 88,3 | 79,0 | 87,1 | 83,3 | 84,3 | 83,4 | 79,6 | 77,7 |
| MP | 76,0 | 83,7 | 83,3 | 82,6 | 87,1 | 88,5 | 89,9 | 87,1 | 90,7 |
| LP | 72,6 | 77,0 | 83,4 | 81,8 | 87,9 | 90,4 | 92,0 | 94,0 | 92,7 |
| SA | 76,7 | 80,6 | 80,7 | 81,9 | 82,8 | 85,2 | 85,9 | 83,9 | 84,7 |

*Table 5.2 Graph illustrating the percentage of households connected to the electricity supply by province, 2002-2018 (source: General Household Survey, 2018).*

In 2002, Eastern Cape showed the lowest percentage of households with electricity in the whole country, surprisingly by 2018 the province had grown to have more households connected - far more than North West and Gauteng province.




| | WC | EC | NC | FS | KZN | NW | GP | MP | LP | RSA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Other | 1,0 | 2,5 | 1,9 | 1,3 | 1,6 | 0,3 | 1,2 | 0,9 | 0,8 | 1,3 |
| Source household not pay for | 0,8 | 1,9 | 1,2 | 0,7 | 4,0 | 2,9 | 4,0 | 0,8 | 1,7 | 2,6 |
| Source household pays for | 11,0 | 4,7 | 2,5 | 5,9 | 7,8 | 10,1 | 15,4 | 5,8 | 4,7 | 9,6 |
| In-house pre-paid meter | 75,0 | 86,1 | 84,1 | 83,9 | 68,1 | 80,3 | 52,6 | 86,7 | 88,1 | 71,7 |
| In-house conventional meter | 12,2 | 4,7 | 10,4 | 8,1 | 18,4 | 6,4 | 26,8 | 5,7 | 4,7 | 14,8 |

*Table 5.3 Percentage of households connected to different sources of electricity by province, 2018 (source: General Household Survey, 2018).*

The difference in electricity sources is illustrated in the above table. Roughly 71,7% of South African households that had access to electricity obtained electricity through a pre-paid meter.

Notably, only 2,6% of households used electricity for which they did not pay. To my surprise, this survey revealed that Gauteng experiences the highest number of houses that did not pay for electricity as opposed to the Eastern Cape (General Household Survey, 2018).

Regarding water, there are various sources evident in Agnes Rest where people get water. Table 5.3 shows the alternative sources of drinking water used by households in South Africa.

| Statistic (Thousands) | Province | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | WC | EC | NC | FS | KZN | NW | GP | MP | LP | RSA |
| Borehole | 4,5 | 1,0 | 5,9 | 1,0 | 4,0 | 12,2 | 2,0 | 1,3 | 10,2 | 4,7 |
| Spring | 0,0 | 8,1 | 0,0 | 1,8 | 1,5 | 0,7 | 2,6 | 0,7 | 3,0 | 2,5 |
| Well | 0,0 | 0,4 | 0,4 | 8,3 | 1,2 | 1,2 | 0,7 | 7,2 | 2,4 | 2,7 |
| Rain water tank | 0,0 | 29,2 | 0,7 | 0,9 | 5,9 | 2,7 | 2,4 | 1,3 | 2,8 | 6,7 |
| Dam/ pool/ stagnant water | 0,0 | 0,8 | 1,1 | 0,5 | 1,9 | 0,0 | 0,0 | 0,0 | 1,0 | 0,8 |
| River / stream | 0,0 | 16,8 | 0,7 | 4,8 | 9,6 | 0,0 | 0,0 | 7,4 | 3,4 | 6,7 |
| Water vendor | 3,6 | 7,1 | 11,8 | 10,1 | 3,8 | 13,2 | 2,8 | 19,0 | 36,9 | 14,3 |
| Water tanker | 0,0 | 22,7 | 34,4 | 23,9 | 44,7 | 30,3 | 31,9 | 13,7 | 21,2 | 27,2 |
| None | 19,1 | 6,1 | 29,0 | 25,8 | 21,2 | 28,9 | 12,9 | 32,3 | 17,8 | 21,3 |
| Other | 69,8 | 7,8 | 16,0 | 22,9 | 5,0 | 8,9 | 44,3 | 16,9 | 1,6 | 12,6 |
| Do not know | 2,9 | 0,0 | 0,0 | 0,0 | 1,3 | 2,0 | 0,5 | 0,3 | 0,0 | 0,6 |
| **Total** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** | **100,0** |

*Table 5.4 Percentage of households by alternative sources of water,2018 (General Household Survey, 2018).*

Noticeably the households in the Eastern Cape use various water sources but for the most common category, (accounting for 29% of the total) their water comes from the rainwater tanks; these are JoJo tanks or itanke in the shared spaces. The 'other' category refers to the use of bottled water, water stored domestically for drinking in case of interruptions; in the Eastern Cape, this usage is very low. Overall, this survey supports the claim that the main water source in Agnes Rest is from the JoJo tank used by households and others *itanke* which has the water storage container built in attached to the tap (see Figure 4.2 in the previous chapter).

## 5.3 Conclusion

This chapter calls into attention how there are two different kinds of knowledge: one based on the etic knowledge of the state and the other based on the emic knowledge of social categorising based on social classes as they are understood by people on the ground. Differences in people exist and the state labels people based on their dividing practices that can be limiting for a community like Agnes Rest. Due to their rich local phrases and terms, their social categories best reflect their livelihood and community and these influence how they understand development. I suggest that 'etic' knowledge – the external knowledge of the community that is produced by the state – is more often and more widely regarded as 'truthful' and authoritative

than the knowledge that people produce about (and circulate among) themselves. Following Foucault and Althusser, I, therefore, argue that the state's 'etic' knowledge produces social relations and subjectivities, ones that are at odds with the ways in which people would understand themselves in 'emic' terms. But for the local notions of development perspective, the emic perspective provides the on-the-ground approach that is vital in this kind of research. Also, emic knowledge challenges the labels of social classes that entities like Stats SA have created and other surveys; in a word, it is more valuable for this kind of research to prioritise local notions and the emic understandings of 'what is development' As such in the following chapter I will present my findings on the local notions of 'what is development?'

# Chapter Six – Development perceptions

Development is particularly interesting because

it is a relational concept that entails comparing one's condition to

an ideal representation of other places and times to explain and measure

circumstances and actions (Smith 2008: 8).

## Introduction

The failure of development in the former homelands partially stems from inadequate understandings of local contexts and livelihoods (Hajdu et al. 2020:744). With this in mind using local understandings and perceptions of 'what is development' this chapter will discuss how access to water and electricity has become politicised in this Agnes Rest. The argument I bring forth is that access in Agnes Rest has become politicised and this has contributed to how the residents understand and experience development in Agnes Rest. This chapter opens with a brief life history that will provide the initial context of how Mamike shares her perceptions of development throughout the years in Agnes Rest.

> *Often described by some of her former learners as a strict teacher, Mamike undoubtedly was the most compelling, yet challenging to understand research participant. Mamike's former occupation is a primary school teacher. I met Mamike in June 2019, she was born in 1952 during a difficult time in the country, apartheid. She is someone who expresses her love through being overly protective, her children who are now grown know this the most. But I became acquainted with her grandchildren mostly as they are roughly my age group. She is overly protective of them as well. Mamike is a person whom many people in the village say knows everything that goes on in the area. Yet, she also comes across as someone who always wants people to think her life is perfect and complete, just so she does not become a topic of discussion. The ironic thing about her is that she always has something to say about other people, but hardly opens up about her situations. I recall during our two interviews she provided me with more context about her neighbours than her actual life. This was beneficial to a certain extent to me as a researcher as I was able to get a window into the different lives of my other research participants through Mamike. Although it did limit me from getting more access to her.*
>
> *As a young girl growing up in Transkei, she had few opportunities because of her skin colour. However, being the self-driven person she was to change the narrative of her own family, she moved from Agnes Rest after finishing high school to the nearby rural town of Lady Frere. It is there in Lady Frere that Mamike worked in a supermarket for several years while she was saving money to attend a teaching college. During her tenure as a teacher, she worked in primary schools surrounding the Lady Frere area; Agnes Rest and Gwansana Secondary School. Her former*

*learners are some of my family members. Now a retired teacher Mamike enjoys her time looking after her grandchildren and since her husband passed away several years ago, Mamike has been looking after her livestock.*

*Her knowledge of the village is from the decades she has spent living and working in it. Mamike has lived through various stages of transformation Agnes Rest has undergone. The stages of transformation are the slow progressive changes to their water supply, starting from collecting water from their river stream, and then to the windmill attached to borehole water and the centralised communal tap that was introduced in the early 2000s when municipalities were introduced in the Eastern Cape. These different experiences each were an upgrade from the previous one, for instance from the river stream to water pumping windmills, Mamike mentioned in our interview that although the windmills were an upgrade, they were still not dependable because of the fragility of the infrastructure. She said, 'impompo zazingcono kunendawo yokumpompa amanzi yokumpompa amanzi kuba ubume bazo babungaqinanga. Ngelixa amanzi equla ngaphandle kohlaziyo ayingomanzi asempilweni. Kuyinto engathandekiyo ukusela.' – What she expressing here with such discouragement was that the centralised water supply through taps was better than a water pumping windmill because their structure was not strong. Whereas with borehole water although is an upgrade it is not healthy water. It tastes horrible to drink. Thunderstorms and heavy rain also caused damages to their windmills.*

*The other major transition she has experienced was from living with a candle and gas and paraffin stoves and cooking outside to having electricity connection and light in their homes. She mentioned how it made her life easier and enabled her to spend less time cooking.*

*When reflecting on the development of the area as a whole – that is post-apartheid and currently, while into her description of how progressive her village is, she kept going back and forth about the overwhelming fact that the water they get in their communal tap is not purified water and the fragility of their electricity cables. This sentiment is not just conveyed by Mamike alone but several other research participants also complained about the water not being purified.*

*Additionally, despite getting the electricity connection which is a fairly recent improvement for the entire village, Mamike could not help but express feelings of disgust and anguish by how unequal the electricity connection made available to her has been in comparison to others. The categorical division between those who receive the prepaid electricity and those who receive the subsidised metered electricity meant that people in the village like Mamike who have an 'income' [11]have prepaid electricity (as according to their total net household income – these are SASSA grant receivers in the village), whilst others do not pay for electricity because it is subsidised by their municipality. It is these distinctions and this division in access that makes Agnes Rest a village suitable to explore how access has become politicised through one's socioeconomic position. This affects how the*

[11] Mamike's Department of Education monthly pension fund pay-outs

*residents of the village generally express their political imagination and understanding of development locally.*

James Ferguson makes two distinctions on development thinking, the first conceptualisation is that development is understood as the process of transition or transformation geared towards a modern, capitalist, industrial economy – that is 'modernisation' (Ferguson 2003:15). The second meaning is that development refers to the quality of life and standard of living. That is, living a 'developed life.' I argue that we need to deconstruct this discourse of development by focusing on the cultural context. My main concern is not with the transitions and transformations that have occurred in Agnes Rest, but rather a discussion of 'development,' as Ferguson captures it as a 'social entity in its own right' (2003:9). This simply means the particular ideas and understandings that people ascribe to development entirely. The argument Ferguson unfolds in his book *The Anti-Politics Machine* is that development essentially creates its discourse. Similarly, through the experiences of the residents of Agnes Rest, I have come to discover that their discourse is grounded in social inequality and social categories because of the differentiated access they have to water and electricity. Mamike's narrative draws our attention to how the lived experiences of a particular individual will be different from the next person. This makes a bold statement about the importance of discourse - how it expresses some things in common, while in other instances the discourse, will bear a distinctive content and vary according to people's individual life histories, social positionalities, and experiences.

## 6.1. What is development?

The *Anti-Politics Machine* book by Ferguson is a critique of development thinking and through its focus study of Lesotho, Ferguson reveals the development model as a western ideological and 'socio-economic' formulaic panacea for all recipient countries (Taylor 2017:141). Simply, whether it be liberals or capitalists, the African lived experience benefits only minimally from initiatives brought by western foreign assistance. Ferguson (1994) attributed the main reason for the shortcomings of development models is that no local people have been involved in the design. In this sense, cultural context is vital (Taylor 2017). Local people are needed to contribute to the implementation of development projects for their environment, in that way it educates them about the transitions that are taking place around them so that they can adapt to them and be useful to them.

When I asked my participants what they understood by the term 'development', this became a complex question and difficult to answer. In English terms, the Cambridge Dictionary provides

a meaning of development as the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced. In the local Xhosa vernacular in Agnes Rest, the concept of development I learnt is filled with multiple notions and interpretations from my research participants. The common phrases include '*utshintsho; inguqu; into entsha; umahluko phakathi*. When I asked my aunt to help me translate these phrases into simple terms, it was here that I noticed the different dialects of Xhosa discourses that exist, the bridge between my Xhosa and that of my research participants. Requiring the help of someone else became critical here because I did not want to misrepresent their local understandings. The insight that my aunt (who has more of a fluent understanding of the dialect of Xhosa they speak in Agnes Rest) essentially uncovered the root meaning of these phrases as follows;

*Utshintsho* – transforming something

*Inguqu* – change

*Into entsha* – something newly introduced

*Umahluko phakathi* – the difference between things as previously and currently.

All of these phrases suggest a transformation, a movement from one end to another – a new perspective. Also, these local notions reveal both an individualist understanding and a communal understanding. I had to break down the development question and be explicit. I then asked my participants the question 'What do you associate development with?' It thus became a relational question of trying to find the associations that these people attached to 'development'. I found that the phrase '*umahluko phakathi'* reveals a communal shared understanding based on the context it was said '*ngoku kukho umahluko phakathi kwethu onokuthenga umbane kunye nabo bangakwaziyo. Inyani yokuba sine choice yile yenza umahluko.'* The open interpretation of this is: now there is a difference between us who can buy electricity and those who cannot; the fact that we have a choice is what is making a difference. The context of this conversation was similar to another interview. Two participants mentioned that significantly there is a difference in the livelihood they have now compared to before, meaning they have a choice to either have prepaid electricity or free basic electricity. Mamike's response highlighted how her difficult upbringing draws our attention to how the lived experiences of a particular individual will be different from those of the next person. Thus her particular and unique understanding. Tata uTole mentioned that 'it's something that ANC brought with them, it made all of us happy.' While sisi 'Siphokazi remarked that, 'for me, I see development as the thing that has brought many jobs in the village. Buthi G mentioned that

'life is much easier because of the projects that our municipality has done here, I think what development is for me is associated with looking at the physical differences in what we have that we did not have before, for example, ngoku sino nombane neitanke wamanze[12].' All their responses are significant because it shows how a community sharing the same infrastructures and social space can have individual dispositions influenced by how they experience their space. And that to understand development in their local terms one has to phase it as a relational question. I came to uncover that individuals can simultaneously have multiple ideas and understandings of development.

From the responses I received from the development question and its sub questions, I gathered that the emic approach to conceptualising development from my participants is vital. That it is not enough to implement initiatives like RDP, such projects need to be managed effectively according to the type of community. Through the various responses, I analysed how development in Agnes Rest is perceived as a transformational tool, one that has initiated several upgrades in the lives of the community members in this village. The confidence they have in the transformation tool determines the benefits they receive from it. For instance, there were roughly six responses from the elderly participants that showed a shared admiration of the ANC government, attaching it to the new clinic they have, the centralised water, and the electricity- these attachments signified development for them. Arguably this is similar to Ferguson's development apparatus conceptualisation (1999) but within this community, it differs in that the apparatus is not foreign aid, rather it is the implementation of policies and legislation as a result of the new state administration post-apartheid. It is the constitution of the country that has enabled the citizens to have basic water and electricity access. More importantly, they do not perceive development in the sense of the modernisation theory, but rather as a liberating transformation that has made a huge difference in their lives. Thus I conceptualise development for this diverse community, as a liberating transformation process. For instance households like the Dumanis, mam'Nobu and sis'Iminathi— to name a few in the village with JoJo tanks, suggest that the independence from the accountability and dependence on public infrastructure to privately owned infrastructure that regulates better water access has been a huge development, personally for them.

Therefore, the development discourse can be understood within its discourse, that is why Ferguson argues also that development projects fail because local people are not involved in

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Translated: now we have electricity and a water tank

the design phases and therefore have no sense of ownership over it. Using emic on-the-ground analysis of infrastructure will attempt to account for a local understanding of development. And effectively manage the initiatives. Discourses of development are not simply assimilated by local people but are reinterpreted, reshaped and renegotiated on an ongoing basis, thus creating multiple discourses (Bulloch 2014).

Rural South Africans receive development assistance from the South African government in roughly the same way as underdeveloped and developing countries like Lesotho in other parts of the world receive development aid from the West (Ferguson 1994). Ranging from the interested parties – national heads of government departments, provincial heads and then the municipality officials – in this form a typical development project first serves this hierarchy before reaching the community members. I realised during my interviews that unpacking such a dense and complex concept like development in my chosen social context was difficult because new themes were emerging during my conversations and they derailed my focus often. As such, embedded in this study has been the overwhelming desire to shed some perspective on the political structure upholding this community, and that is the ANC government. I was overwhelmed with some of the responses from my older research participants about their publicly declared fond admiration of the current governing administration of our country. However, that is not the scope of this research.

The idea of ethnodevelopment I argue has been the driving idea behind initiatives such as the RDP, SDI and ECSECC, especially considering that encapsulate policies that target the previously disadvantaged black communities and they recognise the rights of the citizens and how development programmes need to be implemented and managed in those communities. Ethnodevelopment becomes useful because it gives a new lens to implementing development programmes. Buthi G recalled how people got temporary jobs when they were building the community clinic in Agnes Rest. To that end, ethnodevelopment methodologically has been the instrumental tool for implementing development programmes for villages in South Africa because it has provided the community members with personal growth in the form of jobs within their respective communities. This may have not been the intended purpose of the building of the clinic by the government, however, from my study of this village, this is what I have discovered. The constitutional rights of the people are met by such initiatives. Whether the degree of health care, water and sanitation, social welfare, food and electricity is abundant or not as a result of the initiative is highly debatable because social inequality will contribute to how each experience these basic human rights. The main point is that the government is

attempting to adhere to the local citizens' basic needs and transforming the community by transforming the lives of the people.

Significantly I discovered that access is politicised through the local administration level – that is the municipality. I will show this in the subsections that follow.

## 6.2. A dark village

Baker and Phillips' (2019) study on electricity distribution in South Africa reveal that municipalities are responsible for just over 40% of electricity distribution in the country. The municipalities purchase electricity in bulk from Eskom at wholesale prices and then mark up and sell on to the end-user (Baker and Phillips 2019:185). Local municipalities are also licensed by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) to serve as electricity distributors, inclusive of maintaining infrastructure, providing new connections, and setting minimum service level standards and pricing and subsidy levels for poor consumers (Baker and Phillips 2019:185-186). This correlates to the accounts and descriptions I heard of how access to electricity in Agnes Rest is organised. Such as some households have prepaid electricity due to their ability to afford it and while others are supplied by the municipality free of charge.

Furthermore, the study by Baker and Phillips (2019) significantly highlighted that the spatial legacy of apartheid has caused South Africa's municipalities to differ, this includes the population sizes, levels of income, human and institutional resources, service delivery and infrastructures. That is why within the municipalities like Emalahleni in the Eastern Cape, electricity distribution has historically been determined by the county's complex interactions between its social, political and economic institutions, networked infrastructures and technological capabilities (Baker, 2016 as cited in Baker and Phillips 2019). Therefore, we notice that electricity access becomes politicised by being influenced by the politics and struggle over the governance and ownership of electricity services (Gentle, 2009; MacDonald, 2016 as cited in Baker and Phillips 2019:180).

## 6.3. *iTanke*

The communal tap poses as a starting point and distant memory for some residents. Some families have progressively started introducing electronic pumps, borehole water and JoJo tanks in the village to enhance their water supply accessibility in their household rather than making long trips to the communal tap to collect water. A sense of community is being lost according to the Dumani family, as they have several memories of their trips throughout the years when they think of the communal tap they frequently used. Despite the loss of community

they mentioned, it is covered by the overwhelming joy of having accessible water that does not make one depend on the government or anyone else to supply for them. This illustrates that people have experienced the provision of water infrastructure over time in very different ways, depending on their social class position.

Despite the municipality making noticeable developments of *itanke* as a shared infrastructure, it has proven to be more reliable than the early windmill system the village used according to the Toles. Their perception is different from others because they have no other means to access water but utilising the shared system in the village. Buthi G and tata uDumani remarkably illustrated how the shared communal taps bring a lot of issues to the members more than relief. For instance, during the December holidays frequently and dry seasons of no rain, they experience little to no water. In rare instances, the affected families confront the ward council with their water issues, but as I came to understand, the process of addressing service delivery in small, isolated villages like Agnes Rest poses a difficulty. A difficulty that is still unclear to me as a researcher because the appointed people live among the residents; they are in the same community space, however, they still cannot be of assistance.

The provision of water infrastructure in this village might appear to be simply a disinterested development project, but it is highly politicised. This illustrates the larger argument made by Foucault about governmentality as a system or strategy of power. I further enquired what their thoughts were on the role of their ward council and municipality as a whole. The responses I received were daunting; the people are clear on their issues; however, it takes a prolonged time for them to be addressed – this ultimately discourages them. Another discovery I made was that the people who represent the community had access to water like the Dumani family, meaning they had the financial means to have a secured water supply. Disruptions like the community's water finishing did not affect them, they could either buy bottled water or use water from their JoJo tank. The JoJo tank functions effectively as a water storage container in times of dry seasons, especially if a household has more than one tank in its yard.

Through the politicising of water, the municipality quietly infuses governmentality among the community members that use the communal taps. While the people benefit positively with water access that they do not pay for, the government can regulate and monitor this group's accessibility and therefore can govern them through this window of dependence. Through the infrastructure being made public, it carries the deception that the people in Agnes Rest are in control of their water supply, however, that is not true. Governmentality works silently like

that. Because it governs with rationality, it initially comes across as if people like Mamike are in charge of conducting themselves because they are using a shared water supply easily. But the underlying truth is that the municipality is administrating a mechanism that classifies and categorises the people.

## 6.4. Conclusion

This chapter describes the local phrases that development is associated with in Agnes Rest. The ethnographic material showed how development understanding can be shared and individualistic. Focusing on the discourse of the residents I was able to highlight the shared meanings of development, therefore I suggest that all the different phrases associated with development suggest an underlying similar understanding of development as a transformational tool enabling a change from one state to another. Because this occurs as a project imposed on people in different spaces, you are bound to get different experiences of development. Through these different experiences, I have observed that access is controlled and monitored by the government, be it water access or electricity. Enforced governmentality is evident in the public infrastructures around the village and that affects how residents interact with the infrastructure. I bring ethnodevelopment in this chapter as a useful tactic in understanding how local initiatives such as the ECSECC work and have been implemented to aid the local communities of the Eastern Cape, by prioritising the residents and communities within the jurisdiction. My findings in this chapter thus contribute to the argument that it is difficult to claim a universal understanding of development. In the concluding chapter, I will tie all of the arguments of the previous chapters together.

# Chapter Seven – Conclusion

Since 1994 the South African government has been increasingly implementing legislation and policies to eradicate injustices and inequalities caused by apartheid. One of the aspects that has caught my attention in the new South African government has been infrastructure service delivery in rural villages. This study was initially aimed at investigating whether the universal modern teleological understanding of development was translatable to a rural post-apartheid former Transkei village. Assessing the interactions with the public infrastructure of water taps and access to electricity, this ethnography revealed multiple truths as to how Agnes Rest residents understand development locally. Foremost there is no 'one' understanding of 'what is development' within this village. All I have done in this report is bring together multiple truths in a coherent conversation of infrastructure service delivery and development discourse.

Examining some well-known academic works on development discourse such as the works of James Ferguson revealed that there needs to be an apparatus to study development. My focus on water and electricity as the physical material to investigate how development is understood granted me access to discover how these public infrastructures occupy different spaces and ultimately enable other social processes to happen. This ethnography revealed how there are different types of water taps in different areas of the village. This contributed to the conversation of how space is constantly constructed and the temporality of space caused by how individuals engage with the water taps – the endless queues waiting to fill up one's 10L bucket and their conversations around these spaces. Here I think of my findings as important in that I suggest that because of the way space is interpreted in Agnes Rest, taking into account the historical significance of the land, it is not accurate to claim that this village is underdeveloped by referencing it to the universal understanding of 'what is development.' This report has focused on the on-the-ground emic approach to understanding how the residents think of themselves and each other without having a 'universal' category to ascribe them to. That is why this ethnography revealed there is a mismatch between the etic state categories and the emic understandings of social identities and categories in this village.

Although the state provides categories to classify people, the dynamic environment of Agnes Rest and its people introduced alternative ways to classify people based on their subjectivity and positionality. This report has repeatedly emphsised the importance of how subjectivities are understood and created based on where one stays, one's access, responsibilities and identity. Mamike as a research participant was significant in discovering these truths of

subjectivity, that her role of *umama wekhaya* in no way allows for state etic labels to just box her as a 'housewife'.

Prominent scholars have linked modernisation theory to development in saying that uncivilised, traditional communities undergo modernisation to be civilised modern communities in accordance with the European and American models. However, as I have mentioned not everything that is not considered modern is traditional. By this I mean that the things seen as traditional in the European understanding of development are not necessarily seen that way in rural South Africa. For example in Agnes Rest collecting water in your 10L bucket from a nearby communal tap is a development for them, compared to going to *idama* like they used to. Just because it is not running water in their household does not mean it is not an advancement of access for these residents. In a word, development discourse is best understood within the social context studied and I suggest it is not fair to claim development is the same for everyone globally.

The truth of social inequality existing in this village influences how development is perceived. The personal ownership of a JoJo tank and the divide between those who use prepaid electricity and those who use free basic electricity contributes to how there will always be a hierarchy, a difference in perception and experience of access due to this inequality. It was astonishing to discover through the General Household Survey (2018) that Gauteng experiences the highest number of houses that did not pay for electricity as opposed to the Eastern Cape. This did not make sense to me because Stats SA reported that the Eastern Cape was the most unequal province in 2015. These statistics are shocking because Gauteng is considered to be a wealthy province with industries and metropolitan municipalities; one would think that the majority of people there can afford prepaid electricity, unlike in the Eastern Cape which is populated by category B municipalities and rural towns and villages. The mismatch in infrastructure service delivery affects the whole country and in the end, demonstrates how our government has prioritised particular places for development to the neglect of others.

Another significant truth embedded within this report has been my approach to development discourse as being valuable in shedding light on the issues of representation of rural villages in post-apartheid South Africa. Focusing on infrastructure service delivery was useful in discovering that Agnes Rest is an example of a changing village, assimilating to the life lived by people in the nearby rural towns such as Lady Frere and Queenstown. I have read literature, read archives and statistical documents that represent a one-sided view of rural villages. One

that tells the story of broken down rondavels and living in the dark ages; but from the conversations and life histories I gathered, I have observed the importance of generating more grounded knowledge of experiences and how people's social positions affect their development perception. Most importantly I have been reflexive and given a pathway to allowing the ethnography to shape this research, not allowing my preconceived thoughts to cloud the rich ethnography this research has explored.

Nevertheless, there should be more literature on understanding these local notions of development in South Africa, there is so much to go on and I can only hope in my further research endeavours I can contribute to this conversation. By using the 'Living Archive' we can create more grounded development discourse for our unique and diverse country.

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