

## Collective agency and resistance to imposed development in rural South Africa

De Wet, Jacques

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Arbeitspapier / working paper

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

De Wet, J. (2013). *Collective agency and resistance to imposed development in rural South Africa*. (Working Papers in Development Sociology and Social Anthropology, 373). Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld, Fak. für Soziologie, AG Sozialanthropologie. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-421505>

### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Deposit-Lizenz (Keine Weiterverbreitung - keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

### Terms of use:

This document is made available under Deposit Licence (No Redistribution - no modifications). We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document. This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.



**SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**  
BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY

**Working Papers in  
Development Sociology  
and Social Anthropology**

Bielefeld University  
Faculty of Sociology  
P.O. Box: 10 01 31  
33501 Bielefeld  
Germany

Phone: +49 521 106-6944  
Fax: +49 521 106-2980  
[www.uni-bielefeld.de/tdrc](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/tdrc)

Jacques de Wet

**Collective Agency and Resistance to Imposed  
Development in Rural South Africa**

Working Paper no. 373

Bielefeld 2013

ISSN 0936-3408

# Collective Agency and Resistance to Imposed Development in Rural South Africa<sup>1</sup>

Jacques P de Wet<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Mbizana, in Pondoland, *along South Africa's Wild Coast, is at the centre of a struggle* between local residents, a multi-national mining company and the South African Government. In 2007 the local residents formed the AmaDiba Crisis Committee (ACC) in opposition to a government-supported proposal by Mineral Commodities Ltd, an Australian company, to mine their communal land. According to the ACC, the mining company and the government had violated established democratic processes and undermined the local *villagers'* control over their communal land. In 2008, a mining licence was granted by Government, however, in 2011, after protests and petitions by the ACC to Government, the Minister of Mineral Resources revoked the licence. The mining *company's response was to submit a new application for prospecting rights*. In public demonstrations against the mining of their land, the protesters have made reference to the well-known Mpondo Revolt<sup>3</sup> of 1959-1960; and, in interviews they have also mentioned resistance to the Mbizana sugar project in 1985-86 and the Gum Tree Rebellion in 1999. These references locate their struggle to retain the right to decide how best to develop their land in a history of resistance that started in the era of Apartheid, and has continued under the new democratic dispensation. At the heart of the activism is a collective consciousness that is best conceptualised as collective agency. This paper focuses on current resistance to imposed development, and its connections to past resistance, especially the Mpondo Revolt of 50 years ago. I argue that, contrary to popular perception, rural people of Pondoland have a long history of resisting imposed development and actively participating in their own development.

Key words: Pondoland, imposed development, resistance, collective agency, Mpondo Revolt.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some sections in this paper form part of a chapter in Kepe and Ntsebeza (eds.) (2011) *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.

<sup>2</sup> The author lectures in the Department Sociology's Development Studies Programme at the University of Cape Town, South Africa (email: jacques.dewet@uct.ac.za).

<sup>3</sup> Mpondo Revolt is sometimes spelt Pondo Revolt.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

“Asilufuni Uphuhliso lwenu! [We don’t want your development!] [...] If this mining takes place and the government issues a licence in this area, there will be war. There will be an uprising as it was in the [last] Mpondo Revolt.” (Nonhle Mbuthuma, Executive member of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, 2009)

“I’d rather die than allow this land to be mined!”  
(Tat’ uSamson Gampe, resident of AmaDiba in the district of Mbizana, 2009)

Nonhle Mbuthuma (in her 30s) and Tat’ uSamson Gampe (in his 80s) were two of almost a thousand people from Mbizana in North Eastern Pondoland, and others from further afield, who took part in a protest march on 20 July 2008. The protesters were expressing their opposition to a government-supported proposal by Mineral Commodities Ltd, an Australian company, to mine their communal land (SABC TV2 50/50, 2008a). The mining venture, Xolobeni Mineral Sands, proposes to strip away indigenous vegetation, in order to mine valuable titanium deposits along a 22 km stretch of coastline in the district of Mbizana, south of Port Edward. Local residents, who oppose this form of development, constitute the AmaDiba Crisis Committee (ACC). They argue that the proposed mining enterprise deprives them of control over their own land and destroys their livelihood strategies. Both Nonhle and Tat’ uSamson are members of the ACC, which has charged the Australian mining company and its local black empowerment partner, Xolobeni Empowerment Company, with human rights violations. The ACC has taken its complaints to the South African Human Rights Commission and petitioned the South African Government.

Protests and resistance to impositions in the name of development are not new to the Mpondo people of the Mbizana area. Young and old know their history. Today’s young activists like Nonhle refer to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960<sup>4</sup> in their public speeches, and there are veterans of that revolt, like Tat’ uSamson, who oppose the mining venture. In interviews they also mentioned resistance to the Mbizana sugar project in 1985-86 and the Gum Tree Rebellion in 1999. These references locate their struggle to retain the right to

---

<sup>4</sup> The Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960 was a peasant uprising in Pondoland, which was violently suppressed by the Apartheid armed forces. The uprising took place in the context of years of smaller acts of deviance and resistance throughout the 1950s to the Apartheid government’s Bantu Authorities and Betterment Programme (for more details see ‘Fifty Years of Resistance to Imposed Development’ below).

decide how best to develop their land, in a history of resistance that started in the era of Apartheid, and has continued in the new democratic South Africa.

In this paper I focus on the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960 and the current resistance to the Xolobeni mining venture in the Mbizana district. I argue that resistance to the mining venture is linked to a history of collective agency and resistance to imposed development. Fifty years after the last of the Mpondo revolts, which ended in 1960, ordinary people of Mbizana continue to exercise their collective agency in defence of participatory decision-making as essential to people-centred development, and their right to shape their own lives. The paper unfolds by paying attention to:

- The concept of collective agency
- A history of collective agency and resistance to imposed development going back to the Mpondo Revolt with references also to the Gum Tree Rebellion and opposition to Mbizana sugar project
- A description of the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project as the most recent example of an attempt to impose development on the people of Mbizana
- The ACC's case against the mining company's proposed development and a discussion of the ways in which ACC has demonstrated collective agency in their resistance to the mining development
- And, finally, a comparison of the current resistance to imposed development and the Mpondo Revolt in order to highlight the similarities and to draw attention to rural people's long history of collective agency in the context of development.

## **2. COLLECTIVE AGENCY**

At the heart of the Mbizana protesters' activism is a collective consciousness that is best described as collective agency.

By agency I mean that people are active participants in their development, because they take responsibility for their own well-being. Social systems and structures influence human behaviour by imposing constraints as well as providing enabling resources and opportunities, for individual and collective development. However, Bandura (2001: 15) observes that 'human agents operate generatively and proactively, not just reactively, to

shape the character of their social systems'. I acknowledge that people are producers as well as products of social systems, but in this paper I emphasise the former more than the latter.

The concept of agency is central to Sen's (2001) understanding of development as freedom. For Sen, development must be characterised by participants having the opportunity to reflect on what they consider valuable, and by actively shaping their own lives (ibid.). Collective agency refers to situations in which a group of people combine their knowledge and expertise in order to achieve a shared goal (Bandura, 2001: 14). This is not merely pooling of the goals of individuals, rather it is the manifestation of the goals that everyone in the group has agreed to (Schmid, 2005: 58-9). Group members are willing to defend their right to shape their lives in accordance with values and goals that have made a joint commitment to, after reasoned collective reflection (Sen, 2001). The 'key ingredient' of collective agency, according to Bandura (2001: 14), is 'people's shared belief in their collective power to produce [a] desired result' in their social system.

In the context of people-centred development collective action becomes 'an engine' for the collective capabilities of the poor (Ibrahim, 2006). According to Ibrahim (2006: 408) a number of factors promote collective capabilities. These include the existence of formal and informal institutions, which provide a framework for human interaction, and social capital, 'the lubricant which allows the poor to reach collective decisions, reinforces trust and allows for the exchange of ideas and coordination' (ibid.). The mobilisation of social capital 'enhances [the] bargaining power of the poor', catalyses participation, and protects poor communities from shocks which can threaten their livelihood strategies (Lin, 2001 in Ibrahim, 2006: 408).

Bandura (2001: 16, 18) singles out two main factors that undermine collective agency. The first is factional conflict, and the second 'global market forces unfettered by social obligation'. Development, whether at national or local municipal ward levels, requires that individuals merge self-interest in support of common core values and goals. These features of collective agency are not easily achieved in a society characterised by social fragmentation and conflicting interests. Similarly, where there is no social obligation to local communities, global economic forces erode social bonds and communal commitment

to local causes (ibid.: 16). My research shows that the people of Mbizana are not exempt from either; however, I have found that the impact on local village communities, of global economic forces is more complicated than Bandura's (ibid.) attribution of negative effects. Global economic forces can also galvanise local people against what they perceive to be a common external enemy, thereby strengthening social bonds and collective agency.

Along with Bandura (2001), Ibrahim (2006) and Sen (2001), I argue that collective agency is fundamental if development is to be sustainable; sustainability requires that the poor be treated as fully human, active subjects of history, not passive objects to be manipulated by oppressive social structures.

I now provide a brief history of resistance to imposed development in Mbizana, before I discuss the current resistance to mining as an example of collective agency being sustained across generations in one district.

### **3. FIFTY YEARS OF RESISTANCE TO IMPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN MBIZANA**

Mbizana was a centre of resistance against the Apartheid government's Bantu Authorities and Betterment Programme in the 1950s. In Pondoland acts of defiance and rebellion led up to the well documented Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960 (Kepe and Ntsebeza, 2011). The AmaDiba area in the Mbizana district features in this history of the Mpondo uprising. This is borne out in the 'Departmental Commission of Inquiry into the Unrest in Eastern Pondoland during 1960' (Van Heerden, 1960). Sgt. E.M. Warren, the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Mbizana, wrote that the AmaDiba location, under the leadership of Theophilus Tshangela, had gone over to the rebels (see Van Heerden, 1960, Annexure C). Tshangela was the local chief's counsellor, but 'began to move away from chief Gangatha in the late 1950s as the state started to put pressure on the chiefs to support their rural programme' (Beinart, 1984: 106). According to Beinart, Tshangela subsequently became one of the most important leaders in the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960 (Beinart, 1984).

Wood (1993:30-1) says,

“Ostensibly, the [Mpondo] rebellion was triggered in reaction to the introduction of the Bantu Authorities system [by the Apartheid government]. In practice, the

causes were far more complex [...] However, the greatest trigger of discontent seems to have been land reclamation programmes” (which is Betterment by another name).

‘Betterment proposals involved the concentration of scattered settlements, the demarcation and fencing of arable areas, and the division of grazing areas into fenced camps’ (Beinart and Bundy, 1980: 298). Government officials considered a reduction in numbers of livestock on the land to be a pre-requisite. Betterment may have been presented as nature conservation but this did not take into account the relationship between Betterment and the imposition of Bantu Authorities in 1951, nor of the central role that this nexus played in the events of 1959-1960. Under the National Party government the Betterment schemes turned into state mechanisms to keep the rural poor at a bare subsistence level and to maintain migratory labour. At this point Betterment thinking had changed from an emphasis on land ‘rehabilitation’ to ad hoc stabilisation: ‘the state priority was not “betterment” of the area, but the disorganization of African protest, the reduction of their wage levels and prohibition on urbanization’ (Hendricks, 1989: 319).

“Stabilization was the solution to the rural objectives of the state. Acting in the guise of a state development programme, it was, in fact, a scheme designed to prepare the [black] reserves ideologically, administratively and in terms of infrastructure for the resettlement of Africans from ‘black spots’, white farms and the towns”. (ibid.)

On this basis, Yawitch (1981: 31) argues, Betterment became less about providing a pool of migrant labourers, and sustaining their dependents, and more about social control. This logic found concrete expression in the Apartheid government’s Bantustan policy, where ‘autonomous governments’ would manage black Africans considered redundant to South Africa. McAllister (1992: 209) links Betterment to the loss of decision-making power and social control. He says:

“Coinciding with this were the loss of autonomy and control by local communities over important areas of their existence, and the imposition of centralized, state control in its place ... With Betterment, the control of land, and other related issues, was taken away from local communities and exercised by the state in conjunction with the Tribal Authority. The power of the state and Tribal Authority (with a headman or chief as its head) was thus increased dramatically **at the expense of local autonomy and democratic process.**” [my emphasis]

Hendricks and Peires (2011: 133) note that many ‘locations’ in the Mbizana magisterial district were declared Betterment Areas by the Apartheid government. The people of Mbizana and the Eastern Pondoland were determined to resist the imposition of Betterment and Bantu Authorities and to defend their right to shape their lives based on what they



valued and had decided collectively. Initially the methods of protest were traditional ones, ranging from non-compliance to mass meetings, marches, boycotting traders, deputations to magistrates, but an unsympathetic state deepened the crisis, and the protesters turned on collaborating chiefs and headmen, and burnt their compounds (Turok, 1961: 13). Later government dipping tanks were destroyed and a government tent associated with the Betterment schemes was also burned (Wood, 1993: 31). On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1960 thousands of the people from Eastern Pondoland met on Ngquza Hill, near Mbizana (ibid.: 27). It was a peaceful gathering, but it met with a violent response from the state (ibid.). Eleven protesters were killed, 23 others were arrested. In the following year 30 people were sentenced to death for their part in the Mpondo Revolt (ibid.: 27-8). By January 1961 resistance had been suppressed (ibid.: 30).

Since the end of the last of the Mpondo revolts in 1960, now just over fifty years ago, the Mpondo people of the AmaDiba area in Mbizana have, for similar reasons, continued to resist imposed development of their communal land. Tat' uSamson (in an interview in 2009) recalled that between the 1960 Mpondo Revolt and the current protests against the mining venture, there have been numerous instances of resistance to imposed development in Mbizana. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, for example, there was opposition to the government-sponsored Mbizana sugar cane plantation project, and in the late 1990s there was the Gum Tree Rebellion. In a study of the Mbizana sugar project, which was undertaken in 1985-1986 by the Institute for Management and Development Studies (IMDS), the IMDS reported that local people were 'antagonistic' towards so-called development projects, which they perceived benefitted only a few members of the local village community (IMDS, 1986: 7, 28). It had led to forced removals, the loss of land, and it undermined their livelihood strategies (ibid.). Tat' uSamson explained that in the case of the Gum Tree Rebellion of 1999 there were two weeks of violence in the AmaDiba area. The South African government facilitated the gum tree planting project. Under a rental system the villagers were supposed to be paid to plant more trees. The intervention divided the village community: some wanted trees and 'development', while others questioned this land use and preferred to keep it for growing crops and for grazing livestock (Schutz, 2007). In the end, the fourteen homesteads that had planted gum trees for South African Pulp and Paper Industries Ltd (SAPPI) were burnt to the ground. Schutz (ibid.) argues that the ensuing conflict was caused by SAPPI and the state (both whom were regarded as

outsiders by the community) ‘ignoring local concerns, pushing their own agenda and sowing division’.

My examination of local resistance to these development projects has revealed that in each case: i.) Outsiders (either the government or the government and the business sector) had attempted to impose development on the community, ii.) There had been little or no consultation with the local people, iii.) The local community’s control over communal land and their livelihood strategies were undermined by the development project, and iv.) Ordinary people from the Mbizana district put up strong resistance. (Resistance is understood to mean publicly demonstrated opposition.) Similar patterns have emerged in the current opposition to the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project.

I now turn to a description of the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project, the target of current resistance.

#### **4. XOLOBENI MINERAL SANDS PROJECT**

The Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project, a mining venture in the AmaDiba area along the Pondoland Wild Coast, has been proposed by an Australian company, Mineral Resources Commodities (MRC), its South African subsidiary, Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources (TEM), and, a small black economic empowerment (BEE) venture, Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company (Xolco). They plan to strip away indigenous vegetation on communal land, along a 22 kilometre stretch of coastline in the Mbizana district, in order to mine for titanium-bearing minerals. Over a period of 22 years it is expected that 13 million tons of minerals would be mined each year (Barradas, 2008). The mining company has applied for a licence to mine in Xolobeni in the AmaDiba area. Xolobeni has the 10<sup>th</sup> largest deposit of titanium in the world, worth an estimated R11 billion<sup>5</sup> (Hofstatter, 2008a). Titanium is used in the manufacture of aircraft engines and other products such as paint.

The mining operation will require the building of the following infrastructure: access roads, water supply and pipelines, a wet separation plant, a dry minerals separation plant,

---

<sup>5</sup> R11 billion ZAR equals €834,900,000 (based on an exchange rate of R1 equals €0.0759 as at 7 August 2013).

and storage facilities (Barradas, 2008). The National Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) initially supported the mining venture mainly because it promised to create job opportunities<sup>6</sup> in the area (Khuswayo, 2008). The latter is one of the objectives of the national government's foreign investment-led, growth-orientated development policy (ibid.). It, therefore, makes sense for the DME to support the mining venture because there is high demand for titanium, and it fits the government's economic development policy. In May 2005 the Eastern Cape Department of Minerals and Energy Affairs granted TEM provisional prospecting rights, and in July 2008, the DME awarded TEM limited mining rights to a third of the area requested in the original application, which was to have been signed and issued on 31 October 2008 (Legal Resources Centre, 2008; Khuswayo, 2008). Despite a warning from the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism that mining would permanently damage local ecosystems in an area acknowledged as one of the most important centres of plant diversity in South Africa, and an internationally recognised centre of endemism, the DME initially granted the mining rights (Clarke, 2008; Hofstatter, 2008a; Naidoo, 2003).

In 2007 local residents established the ACC in order to oppose the mining venture, and to promote the existing community-based eco-tourism business, which runs along the same 22 kilometres. The ACC's resistance is informed by four interlinked issues: the lack of consultation about development strategies, violation of communal land rights, threats to livelihood strategies, and the lack of legitimacy of those who ostensibly represent the community.

## **5. ACC'S CASE AGAINST THE MINING PROJECT**

### **Inadequate consultation and the violation of communal land rights**

We just saw this mining thing happening without the people being properly consulted. I will never agree to something that the community has not agreed to. (AmaDiba resident<sup>7</sup>, 2009)

In 2007 the South African Human Rights Commission (HRC) sent a fact finding mission to Mbizana to investigate the AmaDiba residents' complaint that the legally required public

---

<sup>6</sup> In the official application mention is made of 347 permanent jobs, but no details are provided.

<sup>7</sup> The author conducted all the interviews with residents from the AmaDiba area in isiMpondo (an isiXhosa dialect). The quotes are English translations.

participation process was flawed, which was also a denial of the rights of freedom of expression and information (Hofstatter, 2008a: 56; Marshal, 2007; Myrtle, 2007b; South African Human Rights Commission, 2007: 2).

The HRC (2007: 2) report noted that the law required that the communal land users consent to other parties using their land. Because the AmaDiba village community is co-owner of the land with the State<sup>8</sup>, in whose name the land is registered (Schultz, 2007), the community must be consulted. The mining company did not get a Community Resolution from the Department of Land Affairs and the traditional authorities representing the community (Legal Resources Centre, 2008). The HRC's (2007: 8-9) report concluded that, 'despite a chronic lack of information, the majority of the communities [affected by the mining] are not in favour of mining while the mining companies consistently claim otherwise, saying that support is unanimous'.

At a meeting in August 2007, the Queen of Pondoland<sup>9</sup> rejected the claim by Minerals Commodities Ltd that the AmaDiba village community 'continues to unanimously support the project and has formed a consultative forum supported by the traditional leaders, [the] King and Queen of Pondoland, as well as local government authorities' (Kockott, 2007). The King had warned that forcing the mining development on the AmaDiba people would be viewed as 'nothing less than invasion' of their land (Legalbrief Environmental, 2008).

In September 2008 the then Minister of DME, Buyelwa Sonjica, acknowledged that there was substantial opposition to the Xolobeni Mineral Sands Project, and admitted, for the first time, that the consultation process was 'flawed' (Daily Dispatch, 2008; Kockott, 2008b).

### **Mining undermines livelihood strategies**

The ACC argued that the scoping and environmental impact assessment reports did not properly assess the impact that the venture would have, in the short and the long term, on the livelihoods of many local people, viz. farming, fishing, gathering from the veld or

---

<sup>8</sup> The Department of Land Affairs holds communal land in trust for communities.

<sup>9</sup> The King and Queen of Pondoland are the head of the AmaMpondo royal family and the most senior traditional and cultural leaders of the AmaMpondo people of South Africa.

working in eco-tourism. As an example, many of the residents' food gardens lie right next to the mining area and some residents will be cut off from parts of their grazing lands (Carte Blanche, 2008).

“The mining will affect the community here because the development will pass through some homesteads. It will also interfere with grazing areas. People feel threatened.” (Tat' uSamson Gampe, 2009)

Some people would be forced to seek agricultural land elsewhere, which would also require that ancestral graves be moved.

“The area affected by mining is from Mzamba River to Mtentu River. We were informed that we would have to move to a site nearby, where we will have to build new homesteads. [...] Our forefathers' grave sites are all here; we are not prepared to dig them up.” (Tat' uSamson Gampe, 2009)

Tourism, and community-based eco-tourism in particular, would be affected negatively by mining. The staff of a local community-based eco-tourism initiative, the award winning AmaDiba Adventures Horse and Hiking Trail, felt that eco-tourism could provide a good income base that would also support other livelihood activities, such as crop cultivation and rearing livestock, which are important to local people (Ntshona and Lahiff, 2003: 15-16). The pro-mining group used the argument, that ‘concern for the environment’ puts ‘conservation’ ahead of ‘people’, in order to discredit local community activists (for example see Hofstatter, 2008b: 42). However, the promise of jobs does not equate to a livelihood strategy, as some economists have argued. Families are likely to become more dependent on wages (which are obviously attractive to cash poor residents) and less able to rely on the diverse natural resources than at present.

Farming would be badly affected by damage to the environment caused by dust, water shortages and pollution, and landfill would spread beyond the area being mined (Schutz, 2007b). The noise would scare the livestock, and locals would be disturbed by 40 ton ore trucks passing by, every hour, every day, for 22 years (Hofstätter, 2008b:42). The mining operation would create a strip of desert on what is now pristine coastal endemism.

The DEAT's EIA argued that the mine would have significant ecological and environmental consequences. Furthermore, a European Union study found that eco-tourism in the area ‘beats mining hands-down in terms of sustainable economic delivery to the community’ (SABC TV2 50/50, 2008a). Normally, all environmental impact assessments (EIAs) are approved by the DEAT. In this case the South African government

deemed that the DME had the necessary expertise to assess the environmental impact of the mining operation and provide approval (Kockott, 2008a; Naidoo, 2003). DME chose to ignore the results of DEAT's environmental impact assessment. The conflicting positions adopted by these two departments represent a fundamental clash of development perspectives within the government.

### **Illegitimacy of Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company as a Representative of Local Interests**

Very little is known about Xolco, the BEE Company, which is said to hold a 26 per cent stake in TEM (Carnie, 2008b), the South African subsidiary of Mineral Resources Commodities, and which claimed it represented the affected village communities because it manages a number of local trusts.

Hofstatter (2008b: 43) writes that Xolco side-lined legitimate community structures such as the traditional village councils. The local community was not invited to take part in trustee elections, nor was it involved in Xolco appointments (ibid.: 44). Scorpion Dimane, a local shopkeeper, anti-mining activist, and an outspoken member of the AmaDiba community had this to say:

“How can a structure like Xolco that has been formed outside the tribal authority represent our community? [...] You can't just form a private company to benefit from taking things from the land that doesn't even belong to you.” (Kockott and Gobingca, 2007)

Dimane had questioned Xolco's integrity at a community meeting organised by Xolco representatives (Hofstatter, 2007)

“It is written in a document that all of you here have elected Xolco. It is said in the document each and every household in the community has a share in Xolco, in this mining. But that is not formally recorded anywhere [...] They are lying.” (SABC TV 50/50, 2008a).

A year later Scorpion Dimane died under very suspicious circumstances (Carte Blanche, 2008).

Xolco's lack of transparency, in part, prompted the ACC to lodge an application against it with the HRC. The ACC argued that the residents of AmaDiba were not given a chance to examine Xolco's books (ibid.). Furthermore, the Company (MRC) refused to disclose the financial details of a deal struck between Xolco and themselves (Hofstatter, 2008a: 58;

Hofstatter, 2008b: 43). There was no evidence of a legally binding agreement which would oblige Xolco to cede shares, or any revenues to the trusts; or that the trustees have the right to appoint the directors of Xolco and its operating company (ibid.). Kockott and Gobingca (2007) concluded that ‘the people who [are] directly affected by the mining proposals have no legal share in the planned mining operation’.

In December 2007 the mining company bussed local people and some traditional leaders to Pretoria to deliver a pro-mining petition to Buyelwa Sonjica, the then Minerals and Energy minister. Chief Lunga Baleni, the traditional leader of five of the designated mining areas, is convinced that the mining petition was fraudulent (Hofstatter, 2008b: 45). Sarah Sephton from the Legal Resource Centre in Grahamstown was told that the

“[...] majority of the supporters were from an inland group and not from the community who’ll directly be affected by the mining. ...People have been told that they are signing up for electricity, when in fact they were signing up for a petition in favour of the mine.” (Carte Blanche, 2008)

There is also some evidence to suggest that Xolco’s members themselves were either left in the dark or were misled by the mother company. Zeka Mnyamana, the Xolco secretary and spokesman, claimed that

“[...] what we need is the truth ... We welcome what the AmaDiba Crisis Committee is saying. They are asking questions about the mining, which we can’t answer. We need to have those answers before people can decide whether the mining should go ahead or not.” (Kockott and Gobingca, 2007)

Then there is the tarnished record of ACCODA, the Amadiba Coastal Communities Development Association. Zamble Qunya was chairperson of ACCODA in March 2007. As far back as 2004 he had openly championed the mining venture. Together with a Port Elizabeth-based attorney, Max Boqwana (one of the original BEE partners) he set up the Xolobeni Community Empowerment Company (Pty) Ltd (Xolco) (ibid.).

ACCODA, which controlled the Amadiba Adventures Horse and Hiking Trail, the major eco-tourism alternative to mining (Ntshona and Lahiff, 2003; Schutz, 2007b),

“[...] had been on the verge of signing a “lucrative contract” with Wilderness Safaris in a partnership that would have injected money and professionalism into [the local] eco-tourism initiatives [...] when Zamble Qunya, then chairperson of ACCODA, rejected it at the last minute.” (ibid.)

Qunya then changed the composition of ACCODA so that 11 of the 12 members supported the mining venture (ibid.).

In a 2006 documentary produced by the South African Broadcasting Company's environmental TV programme 50/50, accusations, which included bribery, corruption and even murder<sup>10</sup>, were levelled at ACCODA. ACCODA's accountants had found evidence of gross mismanagement and lack of accountability on the part of its committee members (50/50 TV, 2006). Soon after the documentary was completed the Amadiba Trail Adventures headquarters mysteriously burnt down.

Xolco and Xolobeni Minerals Sands seem to have had strong backing from local councillors and Zoleka Capa, the Mayor of the OR Tambo Municipality, (Hofstatter, 2008a). In an interview with the South African pay channel TV programme Carte Blanche Mayor Capa demonstrated her support for the mining when she said:

“Let the process go. Why would you want to stop it? [...] The people [Zamile Qunya and others] that were with the tourism are now with the mining and they are the people now who are saying, “No man, change your mind. We have changed ours”. (Carte Blanche, 2008)

As with Betterment and Bantu Authorities, it seems that much of the present day unrest in the AmaDiba area of Mbizana is the consequence of threats to local villagers' livelihood strategies, and the failure to consult local people through the local power structures, as the law required. My research shows that the opportunities for self-enrichment and power have led to the splintering of opinion, rumour mongering and conflict refracted through local elites, who themselves are often as much in the dark as their ostensible 'constituencies'. Some local elites have been co-opted into supporting the mining interests and, they have in turn, tried to co-opt others, including certain municipal officials.

## **6. ONGOING COLLECTIVE AGENCY AND RESISTANCE TO IMPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

From its inception the proposed mining venture has come under heavy criticism. Resistance has taken the form of mass meetings, legal submissions (the HRC submission, in particular), media publicity, marches and demonstrations. For example, on 20 July 2008 a protest march along the coast, through the areas affected by the mining, received considerable media attention (Carnie, 2008a). More recently there has been the threat of violence.

---

<sup>10</sup> The 2003 murder of a headman, Madoda Ndovela, has been ascribed to his opposition to mining (Hofstatter, 2007).



At the forefront of resistance is the ACC, with almost 3000 members who reside in the AmaDiba area (email correspondence with the leadership of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee 16 November 2009). While ACC's raison d'être is to oppose the imposition of the mining development, the Committee's activities are informed by an understanding of development that is endogenous:

“Real development must go together with that which ordinary people say they want. There is a saying in the Mpondo language: Development starts at the feet and progresses upwards, it does not start at the head and move downwards. It's bottom-up... if the government was to come with something from the head in a manner that stifles us, [we would say:] ‘No, this is not development’.” (Interview with the leadership of the ACC, 2009)

The ACC may not be very clear about what development outcomes they wish to achieve, but they have articulated an approach based on participatory decision-making. For them ‘real development’ is founded on processes that create opportunities that enable ordinary rural people to influence development decisions that affect their lives. They have resisted attempts by outsiders, including government officials, to impose any development initiative that has not started ‘at the feet’. They are prepared to defend their right to shape their lives according to what, they as a group, have decided after collective and reasoned reflection, an approach in accord with Sen's perspective on development.

The ACC has been able to garner considerable media attention, not only because they occupy the moral high-ground, but also because the possible destruction of the natural beauty of the area, obviously attracts much attention. Environmental organisations, such as Sustaining the Wild Coast and the Wilderness Foundation, and their myriad of network partners, have used the internet and television to wage an information war. Such technological linkages have harnessed the support of concerned urban residents, nature-loving tourists and activists from other parts of the country and the world. Some of this has translated into help, in terms of volunteerism and expertise, as well as support for the affected communities (Nonhle Mbuthuma, 2009). The ACC and residents have mobilised social capital beyond the confines of the local villages, thereby enhancing their bargaining power in their dealings with the government.

In 2007 the AmaDiba residents sent several petitions to National Government, demanding that the DME reject the mining company's application, because they feared they would

lose rights to their ancestral land and become squatters on a mine dump (Hofstatter, 2008a: 56; Hofstatter, 2008b: 43). They also sent petitions to the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Economic Affairs and Tourism.

“Many of us are employed in the tourism sector, and are therefore affected by the development. The most sustainable and preferable way to develop the area is with tourism [and] nature conservation that also employs local communities working in the tourism sector, and sustainable farming. [...] We would not support any venture, which would lead to the displacement of people from their land...We would also like to see the fostering of sustainable development which is owned by the communities, and directly benefits the rural communities, and honours their rights to natural resources.” (Sustaining the Wild Coast, 2007a)

At a meeting on 18 June 2007, when about 150 local residents gathered at the Xolobeni Traditional Authority, two municipal ward councillors and representatives of Xolco were severely criticised by residents and members of the ACC (Schultz, 2007; Sustaining the Wild Coast, 2007b). Nonhle Mbuthuma voiced the concerns of many, ‘We can no longer trust our ward councillors to speak on our behalf; and the Xolco directors were never elected or mandated by us to negotiate on mining’ (Sustaining the Wild Coast, 2007b).

In August 2008, despite the ACC’s petitions, public protests and the Human Rights Commission investigation, the DME informed the mining company that it had been granted the mining rights to a third of the area which had been requested in the original application (Barradas, 2008). The announcement, at a community meeting in the AmaDiba area, that the mining would go ahead, was met with further demonstrations from the ACC (Kockott, 2008b).

“It [the mining venture] just arrived, confusing and with many stories. It did come to the people. We showed our discontent with it to the government, but our objections were not considered. These people just said they would go on with the mine despite our objections that the people did not want it.” (AmaDiba Community member, 2009)

It became apparent to the Minister that there was substantial opposition to dune mining, and conflict was growing, she met with protesters and members of the affected communities (Van der Merwe, 2008). These meetings took place amidst growing conflict. A pro-mining headman was beaten up and consultants, which the mining company had appointed to broker offers of compensation to the families who would lose their homes and land to make way for the mining development, were chased out of the area (Kockott, 2008b).

“The whole situation has the potential for violence and there were already rumblings in the community. There were some who had pointed out that in the Mpondo Uprisings of the 1960s some chiefs had been killed because they were perceived to be giving outsiders land that belonged to the people.” (Myrtle, 2007b)

The mining licence was to have been signed into effect on 31 October 2008, but on 2 September the Minister said she would not sign the licence. This was a consequence of a lawyer from the Legal Resources Centre, acting on behalf of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, filing a notice of appeal which requested that the Minister of Minerals and Energy suspend the licence and withdraw the mining rights (Van der Merwe, 2008 & Legal Resources Centre, 2008). The ACC appeal argued that the mining rights had been granted “without sufficient and reasonable notice to, consultation with [,] or invitation for comments from the community, as an interested and affected party[,] which was unlawful” (Legal Resources Centre, 2008). A ministerial spokesperson indicated that the appeal process would now have to run its course (Daily Dispatch, 2008). When no decision was forthcoming the ACC lodged a complaint against the Minister with the Public Protector<sup>11</sup>.

Three years later, in June 2011, the new Minister of Mineral Resources<sup>12</sup> withdrew the mining licence granted in 2008 (Macleod, 2011). In response, the mining company submitted a new application for prospecting rights (Macleod, 2012:16).

The response from the current national government contrasts dramatically with the Apartheid government’s extremely violent suppression of resistance to Betterment and the Bantu Authorities. The then government viewed the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960 as part of the struggle for liberation led by the African National Congress (Wood, 1993:31).

## **7. LINKING PRESENT RESISTANCE TO PAST RESISTANCE**

For the people of Mbizana the history of imposed development and resistance did not end in 1960 with the last of the Mpondo revolts, it is still a feature of their lives. This paper focuses on the current resistance and its connections to the Mpondo revolts as examples of ongoing collective agency in Mbizana. While there are some obvious differences, for example, current resistance is distinguished by the prominence of women and the very

---

<sup>11</sup> The ACC later withdrew its complaint, when in June 2011 the minister withdrew the mining licence.

<sup>12</sup> The old Department of Minerals and Energy was split into two departments.

different response of the democratically elected government, a number of similarities<sup>13</sup> emerge when the two are compared. These similarities, which run across several generations of community members, shed light on the links between collective agency, resistance and development. These similarities include:

- i.) Resistance to development ventures imposed by outsiders. During the Mpondo revolts local people resisted the government's imposition of Betterment. The ACC has resisted the dune mining venture imposed by an Australian mining company, which had the blessing of the national Department of Minerals and Energy.
- ii.) The illegitimacy of those claiming to represent the people affected by the development. With few exceptions, the traditional leaders supported Betterment and the Bantu Authorities, and the Mpondo resisters targeted them for collaborating with the enemy, the Apartheid government. Similarly, the protesters from AmaDiba have identified Xolco, certain members of the local authority, and some traditional leaders, as collaborators for promoting the mining venture. Today far fewer traditional leaders are prepared to ignore the bulk of local residents who are opposed to the mining development; however, local government officials seem to be pursuing an undemocratic role like that that played by the Bantu Authorities, but for different reasons.
- iii.) Inadequate consultation. Though some traditional leaders might have been consulted when the Apartheid government tried to enforce Betterment (and establish Bantu Authorities) in Pondoland, the people at grassroots never were, and they objected vehemently. The failure to consult ordinary rural people seems to have been a significant departure from forms of participatory decision-making that were common practice in these rural communities (McAllister, 1989: 355). A main complaint in the ACC's submissions to the HRC, and to the Minister of Minerals and Energy, is the lack of consultation, this time by the mining company and the government. Participatory development is obviously not new to Mbizana; the people there value collective decision-making.
- iv.) The local community's control over communal land and their livelihood strategies is undermined by local or global economic forces, which are unfettered by social

---

<sup>13</sup> Similar patterns also emerge in the resistance to the Mbizana Sugar Project and Gum Tree Rebellion, but they are not discussed here.

obligation. The Mpondo revolts can be viewed as rural people defending their land and customary livelihood strategies. The ACC has mobilised social capital to protest the violation of their communal land rights and the undermining of the locals' livelihood strategies.

- v.) Years of low level resistance lead to threats of war. The Kongo social movement (or 'iKongo'), which is said to have played a vital role in the build-up to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960, was 'born in resistance to the "rehabilitation scheme", [and] tempered in the fight against small allotments and cattle-culling [;] it led to the fight against Bantu Authorities and called for armed insurrection' (Hirson, 1977: 128). Though resistance to the mining venture has been mostly non-violent, for example, mass meetings and marches, legal submissions, and media publicity, recently there has been talk of 'war'.
- vi.) Stories of the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960 are part of the contemporary discourse of resistance and public protest. Mbizana protesters explicitly link the current protest to the Mpondo Revolt of 1959-1960. Veterans of the Mpondo Revolts rally young activists with stories of the past. Interviews with the leaders of the ACC, and with the veteran Tat' uSamson Gampe, reveal that narratives around questions of development, decision-making and communal land use, are etched in popular memory.

"We never consented to the Betterment schemes on our land and now they want to bring the mining in the same way. ...I am prepared to die for my forefathers' land." (Tat' uSamson Gampe, 2009)

These stories shape their collective identity and sense of agency, in that the village community has never seen itself as a victim, nor have individual residents. They still exercise a measure of control over their situation, and, as a collective take responsibility for their own well-being. This is evident in their understanding of people-centred development, the formation of the ACC and the petitions and protests, their championing community-based eco-tourism and the partnership with NGOs and legal experts. Following the example of their forebears, today's activists choose to defend their right to shape their own lives in accordance with goals derived from endogenous, collective values.

## 8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Present and past resistance in Mbizana is informed by four interlinked issues: the lack of consultation about development strategies, the violation of communal land rights, threats to livelihood strategies, and the lack of legitimacy of those who ostensibly represent the community. This paper shows that from the Mpondo Revolt in 1959-1960 until the current resistance to the mining of communal land, ordinary rural people have organised to defend their understanding of participatory decision-making in the context of development. In the words of the ACC leadership: “real development must go together with that which ordinary people say they want ...[it] starts at the feet and progresses upwards”. References to major protests of the past locate the present struggle to retain the right to decide how best to develop their land, as part of a history of resistance that started under Apartheid, and has continued into the new democratic dispensation. At the heart of their activism is a collective consciousness that is best conceptualised as collective agency.

Bongani Bingwa, the narrator in the 2008 Carte Blanche TV documentary, has said:

“The people of this stretch of the Wild Coast may not have much, but they do have their land. A huge part of the opposition to the mining project is that it will dispossess them of their birthright, and they are intimately connected to this land.”

He could have added that they have proudly carried on a tradition of collective agency. It is this sense of collective agency that seems to give generations of Mpondo people in Mbizana the confidence to resist any form of ‘development’, which ignores endogenous, people-centred processes, whether it comes from powerful government officials, paternalistic development planners, or greedy businesspeople.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Reuben Message, who helped me with the archival research, and Ichumile Gqada, who helped collect some of the data during one of my field trips to Mbizana.

## REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (2001) Social cognitive theory: An agentic perspective, *Annual Reviews Psychology*, 52:1–26.
- Barradas, S. (2008) Xolobeni mineral sands project, South Africa, *Mining Weekly*, 15 August.
- Beinart, W. (1984) Ethnic particularism, worker consciousness and nationalism: the experience of a South African migrant, 1930-1960, *Institute of Commonwealth Studies Collected Seminar Papers*, 13(33): 97-107.
- Carnie, T. (2007) Contentious mining application lodged, *The Mercury*, 30 March.
- Carnie, T. (2008a) Protest picnic against mining plans. *Sustaining the Wild Coast website*, [www.swc.org](http://www.swc.org), 22 July.
- Carnie, T. (2008b) Wild Coast set to feel the pinch, *Star*, 14 January.
- Clarke, J. (2008) Update on the current state of play in the Wild Coast dune Mining Saga, [www.swc.co.za](http://www.swc.co.za), 22 July.
- Daily Despatch (2008) Minister admits mining ‘flaw’, *Daily Despatch*, 16 September.
- De Wet, J.P. (2011) ‘We don’t want your development!’: Resistance to Imposed Development in Northeastern Pondoland. In Kepe, T and L. Ntsebeza (eds) *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*, pp. 259–278. Leiden: Koninklijke. Brill NV
- Hendricks, F.T. (1989) Loose Planning and Rapid Resettlement: The Politics of Conservation and Control in Transkei, South Africa, 1950-1970. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Special Issue on The Politics of Conservation in Southern Africa. 15(2): 306–325.
- Hendricks, F. and Peires, J. (2011) All Quiet on the Western Front: Nyandeni Acquiescence in the Mpondoland Revolt. In Kepe, T and L. Ntsebeza (eds) *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*, pp. 115-142. Leiden: Koninklijke. Brill NV
- Hirson, B. (1977) Rural revolt in South Africa: 1937-1951, Paper presented at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies Postgraduate Seminar, *The Societies of Southern Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries*.
- Hofstatter, S. (2007) Bring machines and we will fight, *Mail & Guardian*, 4 May.
- Hofstatter, S. (2008a) Digging up trouble, *Financial Mail*, 30 May.

- Hofstatter, S. (2008b) Wild coast on knife's edge over mining plans, *Farmer's Weekly*, 4 July.
- Institute of Management and Development Studies. (1986) *The Bizana sugar project: a socio-economic survey of area 6 Eastern Pondoland*, Mthatha: IMDS.
- Kepe, T and L. Ntsebeza (eds.) (2011) *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty Years*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Khuzwayo, W. (2008) Mining decision at Xolobeni is right, say state. *Business Report*, 7 August.
- Kockott, F. and S. Gobingca (2007) Big money at stake in dunes. *Sunday Tribune*, 9 September.
- Kockott, F. (2007) Traditional council takes up dunes issue. *Sunday Tribune*, 12 August.
- Kockott, F. (2008a) Wild Coast mining can be stopped. *Sunday Tribune*, 13 April.
- Kockott, F. (2008b) Pondo king gives minister ultimatum. *Sunday Tribune*, 14 September.
- Legal Resources Centre. (2008) The AmaDiba community appeals against the award of a mining right to Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources, [www.lrc.co.za/articles](http://www.lrc.co.za/articles), 2 September.
- Legalbrief Environment. (2008) Pondo king lashes dune-mining project. *Legalbrief Environment*, 75, August.
- Marshal, L. (2007) New threat to our dunes, *Sunday Tribune*, 13 May.
- McAllister, P.A. (1989) Resistance to 'Betterment' in the Transkei: a case study from Willowvale district, *Journal of Southern African Studies* (special issue on the politics of conservation in Southern Africa) 15(2): 346-368.
- Macleod, F. (2011) Transkei Mining down, but not out, *Mail & Guardian*, 10 June.
- Myrtle, R. (2007a) In the path of the bulldozers, *Sunday Tribune*, 22 April.
- Myrtle, R. (2007b) Rights watchdog rallies to support people of Xolobeni, *Sunday Tribune*, 13 May.
- Naidoo, S. (2003) Xolobeni mine seen as threat to ecotourism, *Business Day*, 28 May
- Njobeni, S. (2004) Xolobeni pins hope on mine, *Business Day*, 9 September.
- Ntshona, Z. and E. Lahiff (2003) *Community-based eco-tourism on the Wild Coast, South Africa: the case of the Amadiba trail*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Schutz, E. (2007a) Residents on warpath over dune mining, *Sunday Tribune*, 24 June.
- Schutz, E. (2007b) Skulduggery and dune mining, [www.swc.co.za](http://www.swc.co.za), 5 August.
- Sen, A. (2001) *Development as freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmid, H.B. (2005) Beyond Self-Goal Choice: Amartya Sen's analysis of the structure of commitment and the role of shared desires, *Economics and Philosophy*, 21:51-63.
- Turok, B. (1961) *The Pondo revolt*. The Congress of Democrats Publication.



South Africa Human Rights Commission. (2007) Human rights commission visit to Xolobeni, Wild Coast. Johannesburg: SAHRC.

Sustaining the Wild Coast. (2007a) Communities call on government to reject Wild Coast Mining. Sustain the Wild Coast Press Release, [www. swc.org.za](http://www.swc.org.za) (accessed 9 September 2009).

Sustaining the Wild Coast. (2007b) AmaDiba communities militant in opposition to Wild Coast mining. Sustain the Wild Coast Press Release, [www. swc.org.za](http://www. swc.org.za) (accessed 9 September 2009).

Van der Merwe, C. (2008) DME delays official signing of Xolobeni mining right. Mining Weekly, 19 September.

Van der Merwe, C. (2011) Shabangu withdraws Xolobeni mining licence. Mining Weekly, 7 June.

Van Heerden, J.A.C. (1960) Departmental commission of inquiry into the unrest in Eastern Pondoland during 1960, minutes and evidence. (Also referred to as the Van Heerden verslag oor onrus in Oos-Pondoland).

Wood, G. (1993) 'The Horsemen are coming': Rethinking the Pondoland Rebellion. *Contree*. 33:27–34.

Yawitch, J. (1981) *Betterment: The Myth of Homeland Agriculture*. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations.

### **TV Documentaries**

Carte Blanche. (2008) *Dune in Danger*. Documentary broadcast on 20 April.

SABC TV 50/50. (2006) Documentary broadcast on 6 November.

SABC TV 50/50. (2008a) Documentary broadcast on 11 August.

SABC TV 50/50. (2008b) Documentary broadcast on 12 September.

### **Interviews**

Tat' uSamson Gampe, 31 March 2009.

Nonhle Mbuthuma, 30 & 31 March 2009.

The following respondents granted me interviews, but they prefer to remain anonymous:

AmaDiba resident and supporter of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, 31 March 2009.

Leadership of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, 30 March 2009.