

# Gated Rustenburg

## Winners and losers of the mining boom

Rustenburg is often presented as a platinum mining success story. The local government points to the town's economic growth rate, which is much higher than South Africa's as a whole, write **Andries Bezuidenhout** and **Sakhela Buhlungu**.

**U**nlike other mining towns that are declining, Rustenburg's economic boom has resulted in the creation of many job opportunities. Several new shopping malls have mushroomed in the last decade. Mansions in security estates overlook this from the vantage point of the surrounding Magaliesberg Mountains. But this picture of success and prosperity is but one side of the story. What is the other side?

### GATED MUNICIPALITIES

Mining booms always produce winners and losers and Rustenburg is no exception. Mining accounts for more than half of Rustenburg's economy (53% in 2009). Unfortunately, jobs in manufacturing have not grown alongside mining. In fact, manufacturing jobs declined from approximately 12,000 in 1995 to 7,000 in 2009. This is a very risky situation for a mining town.

Estimates are that platinum mining in Rustenburg can continue for another 70 years, but what happens after that? Rustenburg's local government and the Royal Bafokeng authorities both want the local economy to diversify. But the decline in

manufacturing shows that this is easier said than done. Mining booms tend to happen very fast and create logics of their own.

It is not only mansions in security estates that form gated communities in Rustenburg. The logic of closing off access to land and resources is repeated in other parts of this city and its surrounds.

Rustenburg's mining boom attracts many people in search of job opportunities. The city's population grew from 427,000 in 2004 to 459,000 in 2008 and continues to grow. Of Rustenburg's residents, roughly 250,000 live in areas that are classified as 'non-tribal land'. A further 150,000 people live on 'tribal land', 30,000 in hostels, and 40,000 on farms in the municipal area.

The point about tribal land is an interesting one. This land is controlled by what is called the Royal Bafokeng Nation. One of the major platinum mining companies, Impala Platinum, mines on Bafokeng land. This was part of Bophuthatswana under apartheid.

Impala Platinum paid royalties to the Bafokeng authorities to mine on their land and in 1999 made a deal to continue doing this for another 40 years. These

royalties were converted into share ownership as a black empowerment initiative. This makes the Royal Bafokeng the largest share owner in this mining company.

According to a fact sheet published by Royal Bafokeng Holdings (Pty) Limited, it is 'the primary investment vehicle of the Royal Bafokeng Nation (RBN), a community of approximately 300,000 Tswana-speaking people with substantial, minerals-rich land holdings in South Africa's North West Province.'

Some of the income from investments is ploughed back into the area. The Bafokeng king, Kgosi Leruo Molotlegi, built a world class and exclusive private school, called Lebone II College. In this top school, 70% of places are reserved for Bafokeng. This illustrates how 'tribal land' in Rustenburg constitutes another gated community.

The resources of the Bafokeng in practice mean that Rustenburg has two local authorities. One is the elected Rustenburg Local Municipality and the other is the Royal Bafokeng authority. Both authorities provide services and both have town planning functions.

Boitekong and Phokeng are close to mines and therefore popular residential areas. Both areas are growing as new residents move in. However, Boitekong is growing much faster than Phokeng. This is because Boitekong falls under the Rustenburg Local Municipality and Phokeng under the Bafokeng authorities. The Bafokeng authority controls who is allowed to live in places such as Phokeng, which is located on 'tribal' land. This is another example of how gated communities operate in Rustenburg.

### GATED HOUSING

While 45% of people in Rustenburg live in formal houses, 42% live in shacks. The majority of these shacks are in informal settlements, but many are in backyards in formal housing areas.

This figure of 42% is much higher than the 15% of South Africans nationally who live in shacks. Local authorities counted 38 informal areas, and 16,461 backyard shacks. Rustenburg's housing backlog is 64,536 units, this notwithstanding the construction of many RDP houses in the area, as well as compounds that mine companies have converted into decent apartments and family accommodation.

The story of mine compounds is a rapidly changing one. Not so long ago, mining compounds were designed to control the movements of mineworkers using security measures such as mine police and pseudo-tribal structures. Food costs were kept to the bare minimum. Only men were allowed to live in compounds.

This legacy of migrant labour continues today. In 2009, there were 255,456 men living in Rustenburg, as opposed to 194,319 women. This is a gender imbalance of about 60,000 in favour of men. These numbers are racialised. African men comprise 232,337 of the total and African

women 171,149 of Rustenburg residents. The white community of Rustenburg reflects a more typical gender balance, with white men comprising 20,268 and white women 20,623 of the total local population.

While mine compounds are so visible on the Rustenburg residential landscape, they hardly feature in national and local statistical surveys or local government planning. Major changes are happening in these compounds. This, in part, is a result of the Mining Charter and ongoing struggles by the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to reduce the number of hostel dwellers and to transform existing compounds into decent accommodation.

At one of the Impala Platinum compounds, now called a 'residence', dormitories are converted into single rooms in apartments with shared kitchens and bathrooms. Workers who live here have more choice regarding food than in the past. In addition to the standard meal, they can 'top-up' their meals by ordering from a menu.

But hostel dwellers now face the problem of crime. As a result, mining companies are putting up security cameras and electric fences around 'residences' in order to control access. In the past, compounds were designed to keep mineworkers inside. Now mine 'residences' are designed to keep criminals out. This is another example of gated communities in Rustenburg.

It should be mentioned that not all compounds are turned into 'residences'. A compound near Kroondal is used to house employees of subcontractors to mines. In March 2012, platinum mines employed 134,264 permanent employees and 66,394 workers through subcontractors. This means that a third of those in the platinum labour market are subcontracted.

Subcontracted workers are generally lower paid and tend not to be union members. They still live in filthy, old style, overcrowded dormitories. Here access is still tightly controlled and visitors such as journalists or researchers are definitely not welcome. These are also gated communities, but in ways that remind us of the past.

A major proportion of Rustenburg's residents live in shacks, called 'informal housing' in elite circles. The majority of these are in sprawling informal settlements. Home owners and farmers charge rents for these shacks on their properties.

Informal settlements tend to form near mine shafts and are often far from formal shopping businesses. As a result, informal traders are a central part of commercial activity. Shopkeepers are often from other countries, such as Somalia, China, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.

Although these foreign nationals are integrated into local communities to a large degree, they become easy targets during times of unrest. For example, towards the end of the recent strike at Impala Platinum, hungry strikers turned on shopkeepers. Some shops were looted, and shopkeepers temporarily fled to other areas.

The story of Rustenburg, of the winners and losers of the mining boom, is about boundary drawing. Various things determine who lives inside the many gated communities and who is on the outside. These things include whether you are Mofokeng or not, South African or not, a migrant or a local, permanently employed or subcontracted, a union member or not, or have a house or shack. <sup>18</sup>

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