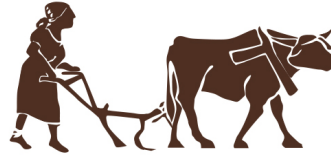


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Differentiation and development:

The case of the Xolobeni community in the Eastern Cape, South Africa

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Abstract

Most agrarian scholars argue that long historic processes of colonialism, capitalist development and implementation of neo-liberal structural policies in Sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in deagrarianisation and its sub-genre of depeasantisation particularly in South Africa. I argue that this long historic process epitomised, in some cases, by abandonment of cropping fields and deactivation of agriculture was uneven between and within communities across South Africa. Glossing over the geographic and socially differentiated outcomes has partly led to the general characterisation of rural communities as relic agrarian populations that need to be modernised through a new wave of large-scale land based investments. To substantiate, I use the case study of Xolobeni, which is situated on the Wild Coast, in the Eastern Cape Province. The Xolobeni community is engaged in a struggle against the South African government and the Transworld Energy and Minerals Resources (TEM) from Australia, which wants to invest in titanium mining in the area since 2001. Following a series of struggles, in 2018 the North Gauteng High Court ruled that the community has a right to say no to a development project, in line with the international principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In addition to this legal right, I posit that the community actively used land for multiple livelihoods including gardening, livestock and crop production as well as marine resource harvesting for both consumption and for sale in contrast to the deactivation thesis. Given local processes of social differentiation, the benefits differed to a degree across a continuum of subsistence-oriented households, market-oriented households, wage and sale reliant households and wage reliant households. However, in all cases land-based livelihoods were essential in enabling households to create a higher standard of living. Consequently, the community preferred ecotourism and an agrarian model of development that would preserve their livelihoods, conserve ecological natural resources and reduce rural poverty as well as contribute to wider national economic development.

Introduction

I argue that the long historic process of deagrarianisation epitomised by the deactivation of agriculture and land-based livelihoods was uneven between and within communities across South Africa. Failure to differentiate can result in the blanket application of rural development policies that consider all communities as relic agrarian populations especially in the context of a new global rush for land in Africa. I use the case of the Xolobeni community, which is situated on the Wild Coast, in the Eastern Cape Province to substantiate my argument. The community is against mining investments from Transworld Energy and Minerals Resources (TEM) owned by Minerals Resource Commodities (MRC) from Australia. MRC wants to acquire a mining licence for a 22km strip of coastline, two kilometres wide, from the Eastern Cape covering 2 867 hectares (Koen 2016). The Broad-based Economic Empowerment (BEE) partner is called the Xolobeni Empowerment Company. The area contains about '139 million tonnes of titanium-bearing minerals, including ilmenite, zircon, leucosene and rutile, mainly used in pigment manufacture' (Ledwaba 2019:1). The investment is for US \$200 million and can possibly create up to 300 permanent jobs (Koen 2016). Following a series of struggles, the North Gauteng High Court, in 2018, eventually ruled that the community has a right to say no to the project in line with the international principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). To the South African government the ruling is retrogressive because it will strangle mining investments and efforts to develop the poor communal areas. However, evidence from this study demonstrates alternative development in the form of activated agricultural fields, grazing lands, marine resources and harvests from natural resources among other wider livelihoods benefits, which outweigh the benefits from mining when combined with eco-tourism.

This argument is based on a survey of 80 Amadiba community homesteads conducted by the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) and the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) researchers, in partnership with the Amadiba Crisis Committee and local residents. Data was collected in the wards of Xolobeni (n=23), Mdatya (n=20), Mtentu (n=19), and Sigidi (n=18). Researchers collected data on crop production, livestock production, ocean harvesting, natural resources, consumption patterns and asset investments. This quantitative data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Researchers also held open-ended discussions with the residents of Xolobeni to find out their preferred models of development. In addition to field data, meeting reports of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Amadiba

Crisis Committee, companies and communities, as well as government laws and policy documents helped to shed light on legal contestations, nature of livelihoods and preferred development models. Company, community and court reports at times offered distinctively different views, but a careful reading of all revealed many closer accounts of developments on the ground, and of the political rhetoric that surrounded them. Media articles were also of use. From such a mix of research methods, the study was able to capture the local dynamics and weave them into a story presented in five interrelated parts in this paper.

The first part to follow applies a class analytic approach to critique the deagrarianisation and deactivation theses and highlight the importance of geographic and social differentiation in analysing communities and processes of agrarian change. The second section revisits the court victory by the Xolobeni community and cautions against the dangers of a finagled consultation process dominated by powerful local elites and men. The third section provides the empirics that shows the evidence of cropping, livestock production, marine resource harvesting, water collection and multiple livelihoods benefits from the natural resources. The argument is that the envisaged mining will destroy the rich land-based livelihoods as happened elsewhere in South Africa. This then leads to a class analysis in the fourth section that reveals four social groups within Xolobeni. These are subsistence-oriented households, market-oriented households, wage and sale reliant households and wage reliant households. This class analytic approach then informs broad policy propositions in the final section. The next section situates the study within global debates.

A class analytic approach

Most agrarian scholars argue that the long historic processes of colonialism, capitalist development and implementation of neo-liberal structural policies have resulted in deagrarianisation and depeasantisation in Sub-Saharan Africa. The term deagrarianisation refers to ‘the long-term process of occupational adjustment, income-earning reorientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agricultural-based modes of livelihood’ Bryceson (2004:618). Bryceson (1996; 2004) argues that the specific form of deagrarianisation prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa is best characterised as depeasantisation, referring to the shrinkage in numbers of small-scale community-based family farmers, their loss of economic capacity and social coherence. However, the extrication of agrarian-based peasant livelihoods has not happened on a uniform scale across and within Sub-Saharan Africa. There is significant variation between and within communities. Smallholder agricultural production still form the nucleus of livelihoods in some countries and communities. For example, Zimbabwe witnessed a dramatic land reform programme that redistributed land to more than 150 000 smallholder producers with significant tobacco outputs (Scoones et al 2010). Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia rely on smallholder food production to feed their populations (Chirwa and Dorward 2013, Joala et al 2016, Zamchiya 2018).

Nevertheless, in South Africa, the more dominant longitudinal studies have empirically demonstrated a reduction in the area of cultivated fields and abandonment of cropping fields even in areas of high rainfall (see Hajdu 2006, de la Hey and Beinart 2017, Mfono 2007, Ntsebeza 1995, Shackleton et al 2019). Eastern Cape Province where Xolobeni is located is the most affected in terms of the decline. According to de la Hey and Beinart (2017: 768) the decline is largely caused by the inability of homestead heads to mobilise family labour or pay for labour. Shackleton et al (2019:693) attribute the trend to the economic context, insufficient agricultural inputs, lack of government support and policy constraints, socio-cultural change, and environmental issues. This has led to the argument that agricultural development is no longer central to rural livelihoods (Ntsebeza 1995). Consequently, Beinart and Delius (2018:1) see radical land reform as ‘a weapon for mass destruction’ because they simply do not see the evidence of smallholder productivity. They argued that, ‘the current levels of production and impediments to expansion suggests that the idea of transferring large amounts of new land to smallholders is more likely to do economic harm than alleviate poverty.’

Whilst the studies about the decline of agriculture have rich archival, aerial and photographic evidence, they tend to look at smallholder farmers as a homogenous group. The problem is in the way they characterise and generalise reality in a linear trajectory. Yet even in the same community, one social group can be expanding production whilst another is deactivating with even potential to reactivate in future. As Mtero (2012) has argued, communities are not fixed in concrete positions. Abandoning crop fields cannot be a

culture, a mind-set that is pervasive, affecting all sectors of social groups. Hence, a class analytic approach can be of use here. Its value is in demonstrating that there is variation in field cultivation across the country, within the country and even within the same community. A variegated understanding of these local realities would help to identify policy interventions that support different groups (Bernstein 2010, Cousins 2010). Cousins' (2019a; 2019b) work has shown four different groups in South Africa's rural agrarian structure. These are subsistence-oriented smallholder farmers growing food for themselves and selling occasionally; market-oriented smallholder farmers (in loose value chains) who mainly grow fresh vegetables under irrigation, with some rearing livestock; market-oriented smallholder farmers who supply tight value chains and most are under contract farming; and lastly small-scale black capitalist farmers who derive income from off-farm activities in addition to farming. Such an approach can provide a more nuanced understanding that can help inform decision-makers on specific rural development policies, as we shall see in subsequent sections.

On the other hand, the notions of depeasantisation, deagrarianisation, abandonment and deactivation can feed into the myths that such land is vacant, idle and unproductive. This is the narrative used by some foreign investors and the World Bank (2010) to justify the seizure of millions of hectares of customary land in Sub-Saharan Africa. This narrative prevails in the context of the renewed global rush for land for large-scale capitalist investments. It can also feed into the myth that all smallholder agricultural producers have lost the capacity and relevance to play a leading role in agricultural production. Consequently, this leads to disastrous policies that seek to decimate the resilient peasantry into proletariats in a context where capitalism is failing to provide decent wages to sustain livelihoods. In addition, such philosophies do not bode well for a land reform programme that targets small-scale farmers, as forcefully articulated by Jara (2019), Hall (2009) and Cousins (2019a; 2019b). Generalised patterns do not provide the nuances and modalities necessary to design local specific interventions. The next section provides the context in terms of who owns the land in Xolobeni and the struggles for and against mining.

Who owns the land and who makes decisions?

For those who live in Xolobeni, the registered nominal owner of the land is the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform. The rights of people who use the land are not formally registered. However, contrary to the Boserupian thesis of individualisation of land rights as the only form of secure tenure (see de Soto 2002), the majority of the homesteads (82, 5%) felt secure on their customary land in Xolobeni. The main reason for having a sense of security over their land is being in possession of the Permission-To-Occupy (PTO) certificate. Some of the homesteads draw their sense of security from the fact that land was allocated customarily, and that they were born in the area. They argued that no one could take their land away from them because of these two factors. Close to 9% of the respondents felt insecure, and the main source of insecurity was the proposed mine (6, 3%) (n=73). The new sense of insecurity can be traced to the long battle to stop the government from awarding a mining licence to the investors. Washinyira (2016) traced the sequence of events from 2001. The government granted an old-order prospecting licence to the mining company in 2002 and granted a full mining licence in 2008. This triggered local struggles culminating in the suspension of the licence four months later and the withdrawal of the licence in 2011.

Following a series of struggles since then, the North Gauteng High Court ruled in 2018 that the Xolobeni community has a right to be consulted under the Mineral Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA). Section 5(4) of the MPRDA stipulates that the investor must notify and consult the lawful occupiers. The MPRDA's guidelines require a consultation report, but do not clearly allow a host community the right to say no. Therefore, the court went further to grant the community the right to give consent in line with the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act (IPILRA), Act 31 of 1996 and a widely established principle of international law that stipulates that indigenous peoples have the right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). IPILRA was meant to 'provide for the temporary protection of certain rights to and interests in land which are not otherwise adequately protected by law; and to provide for matters connected therewith' (RSA 1996). IPILRA requires that the holder of informal land rights must give consent. Section 2(1) states that,

... subject to the provisions of subsection (4), and the provisions of the Expropriation Act, 1975 (Act No. 63 of 1975), or any other law which provides for the expropriation of land or rights in land, no person may be deprived of any informal right to land without his or her consent (RSA 1996).

The subsequent section 4 notes that the land right,

... can only be disposed by a majority of the holders of such rights present or represented at a meeting convened for the purpose of considering such disposal and of which they have been given sufficient notice, and in which they have had a reasonable opportunity to participate (RSA 1996).

In response to the ruling, the Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy, Gwede Mantashe had a two-pronged approach. First, he appealed the judgment. He explained, '[Why] we are appealing the ruling on Xolobeni is that, if you ask for full community approval, you transfer the authority of licensing from the state to the community. If you do that you create a chaotic situation' (Mantashe in Magubane 2019). Mineral Resources director-general Thabo Mokoena has said that the ruling 'marks the end of mining in South Africa' (Radio 702). However, this is about recognising, upholding and protecting customary land rights and not about granting mining licenses. The government can still grant or not grant mining licences but only in line with the judgment. Secondly, Mantashe started the processes of consultation with the community in order to seek the community's consent. The consultation process has been marred by controversy and violence which undermines the principle of freeness. At one meeting, the police beat up some members of the community, fired teargas and rubber bullets that injured many. However, the Xolobeni community was not homogenous in its views. For example, a group of young people claiming to have been 'consulted' by Mantashe said they want mining:

We, Xolobeni Youth for Sustainable Development are open to engagement with every potential investor and government. We are not surprised by the fact that ACC¹ rejects any potential development opportunity, because distracting development is an employment opportunity to ACC as they are getting funded to oppose.

The Youth for Sustainable Development allegedly have links to the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) partners. In addition, some traditional leaders favoured mining. Lunga Baleni, the chief of the Amadiba Tribal Authority, initially opposed the mining project. However, his views changed when he was made the director of the Xolobeni Empowerment Company with an envisaged 26% empowerment shareholding in the mining company. As observed in Limpopo, capital has shown the power to co-opt and marshal traditional leaders, local gangs and state officials in support of their investments (Zamchiya 2019). Another reality is that power and social relations regulate the communities. Therefore, groups like traditional leaders and local elites who are largely male are most likely to dominate the consultations. The next section now turns to the empirics to substantiate the central focus of this paper.

The evidence

This section provides a descriptive overview of the general incidence and extent of multiple key sources of cash income and production that Amadiba homesteads rely on to maintain their standard of living. Particular emphasis is given to employment and social grants, crop production, animal ownership and ocean resource harvesting. It then provides a brief overview of the incidence of other natural-resource activities that play a key role in enabling and supporting these activities, as well as making direct contributions in their own right. The section also debates the impact on asset accumulation and food self-sufficiency.

'Deactivated' jobs

Like many communities in South Africa, the Amadiba community suffers from a high rate of formal unemployment, which shows the importance of alternative self-sustaining land-based livelihoods. In the sample survey, only 12.7% (n=57) of adults (of 18 years or older) had access to any form of employment, and 48% (n=38) of homesteads did not have a single homestead member with a job. Of those with jobs, 70% (n=40) are men, and

¹Amadiba Crisis Committee.

40% (n=26) of all jobs are held by men between the ages of 21 and 40 years. This shows that the formal labour market in South Africa is highly gendered. Those who are fortunate enough to find employment of any kind, however, tend to receive low wages, receiving a mean wage of R2, 700 per month. Moreover, those with jobs typically need to travel large distances, with only 17.5% (n=10) of those employed finding work in the nearest towns of Port Edward (n=8) and Bizana (n=2), and 8.8% (n=5) locally at the Amadiba guest lodge. While jobs provide an important source of income for those homesteads with a member able to find employment, social grants are the most reliable and largest source of cash income for many homesteads, providing an average income of R2, 019 per month. A total of 99% (n=76) of homesteads have access to at least one social grant, but only 36% (n=29) claim the more significant old-age grant. Together, jobs and grants provide an average annual income of R3, 147 per month for an entire homestead. This means that in per capita terms, each individual homestead member receives on average only R357 per month from combined grant and employment income. For some this might be a call for mining investments that bring jobs. However, mining companies usually offer low-paying casual labour for the locals during the construction phase, resulting in precarious livelihoods. In addition, most members of each household had work to do. This included herding livestock, cultivating fields, fetching water, harvesting marine resources and marketing produce. All this had significant value, which some generally overlook. In as much as there was no formal employment, individuals still provided labour, extracting significant value. Experience elsewhere has shown that mining jobs for locals are usually temporary and the aftermath of the mining project leaves economic and social devastation (Ferguson 1999). The next section details the land-based activities that sustained the communities outside formal employment.

Activated cropping fields and incomes

Contrary to the literature about deactivated land and the shrinkage of agricultural activities resulting in relic agrarian populations, it is clear that households in Xolobeni universally practiced agriculture. All surveyed homesteads had at least some land under crop production, with 98% (n=78) cropping on fields and 79% (n=63) cropping on an adjacent garden. Nearly all homesteads grow key staple crops like maize (95%, n=71), sweet potatoes (86%, n=66), amadumbe (taro) (79%, n=62), potatoes (34%, n=27) and beans (65%, n=50). Koen (2016) found a similar trend. He found that mealie production per reporting household averaged at around 743 kg per year, with a further 455 kg of sweet potatoes and 522 kg of amadumbe, with average field sizes at an estimated 2.7 hectares (Koen 2016). In addition, many homesteads (63%, n=50) also produced substantial amounts of fresh vegetables, particularly tomatoes (62%, n=45), but also onions (46%, n=33), spinach (44%, n=30), carrots (39%, n=29), and to a lesser extent green peppers (25%, n=18) and beetroot (9%, n=7). For those homesteads producing vegetables (including sweet potatoes), own-consumption meets an estimated 20% of their minimum vegetable requirements.²

Using local prices, the total value of crop production in the sample reaches R1.026 million, or approximately 34% of all cash income from grants and jobs. This does not include bananas (grown by 26.3% of homesteads, n=21), sugarcane (22.5%, n=13), pumpkins (13.8%, n=11), chillies (7.5%, n=6), oranges (3.8%, n=3), peaches and brinjals (each 2.5%, n=2) mangoes, guavas, peanuts, pineapples, lemons, butternuts (each 1.3%, n=1). In addition to consuming their production, 83% (n=66) of homesteads also sell some of their crops locally and to 'bakkie' traders, providing an important supplement to cash incomes from grants and jobs. On average homesteads receive approximately R5, 924 each year from sales, particularly from sweet potatoes, of which 64% (n=48) of homesteads sold an average of 78% of their harvest, and amadumbe, of which 50% (n=39) of homesteads sold 61% of their harvest. This did not indicate a decline in income from agricultural sales, as Bryceson (2004) would like us to believe.

Activated grazing lands

In addition to cropping, animal production is a key component of homestead livelihoods, and most homesteads (87.5%, n=70) rely on the Amadiba's communal grazing land to maintain their herds. Only 3.7% (n=3) of homesteads do not have any animals, with 71% (n=56) of homesteads owning an average of nine cattle (70%, n=55) owning an average of nine goats, 88% (n=69) of homesteads owning an average of 23 chickens, and 42% (n=33) of homesteads owning an average of three pigs. Together, animal ownership comes to an average value of R64, 921 per homestead. As with cropping, some animals are also sold every year by around 34% (n=26) of

²Assumes a necessary 400g daily requirement.

homesteads, particularly goats and chickens, attracting an extra average annual income of R3, 585. The total livestock value for the entire community is estimated at over R4 million (Koen 2016). The simple cash value of animals owned and sold, however, underplays their importance to homestead livelihoods. While animals provide an important source of meat protein, particularly chickens and pigs, they have a number of other uses and functions. Cattle in particular are integral to homestead cropping activities, with 83.6% (n=46) of cattle owners using cattle for draught-power, and 20% (n=11) as a source of fertiliser. Moreover, animals are utilised by nearly all homesteads for ceremonial functions critical for broader social relationships. A total of 80% (n=44) of goat-owning homesteads used goats for such purposes, 58.2% (n=32) of cattle-owning homesteads used cows for such functions, and 35.7% (n=25) of chicken owning-homestead used chickens. Sources of livelihoods were multiple.

Ocean harvesting

In addition to landed production of crops and livestock, the Amadiba community's close proximity to the coast enables homesteads to harvest significant resources from the ocean. A total of 93.6% (n=54) of homesteads surveyed harvest at least some ocean resources, particularly fish (68.4%, n=54), crayfish (62%, n=49), mussels (50.6%, n=40), limpets (41.8%, n=33), octopus (36.7%, n=29), and sea water (22.8%, n=18) with some homesteads also harvesting crabs (7.5%, n=6), urchins (6.5%, n=5), red-bait (3.8%, n=3), sea-snails (5%, n=4), seaweed and oysters (2.5%, n=2), and eels, oysters and prawns (1.3%, n=1). However, some homesteads harvest from the ocean at much higher levels than others: 30% of fish, 16% of crayfish, 29% of mussels, 26% of limpets and 30% of octopus, are harvested by the largest harvesting homestead in each case. As with cropping and livestock, homesteads harvest from the ocean both for their own consumption and for sale. A total of 41% (n=33) of homesteads sell at least some resources harvested from the ocean, and the most commonly sold ocean resources are crayfish (39%, n=29) and fish (19%, n=14). On average, homesteads selling resources harvested from the ocean receive an extra R8, 447 per year, although one particular homestead receives 61% (n=R170, 550) of this income. Nonetheless, other homesteads that sell still receive around R1, 200 per year from their sales. The area is also endowed with fresh sources of water.

Natural resources harvesting

Homesteads at the Amadiba area collect water from the river and the spring and they also harvest rainfall. They walk to the river, and transport the collected water by carrying it on their heads or using their hands, or wheel-barrows. Water is often collected daily. An average of 4, 86 water containers (20/25 litres) is collected per day. The time they spend collecting water ranges from 2 minutes to 120 minutes (2hours). The collection is usually done by the whole family (41, 48%). All available homestead members collect water, but during the focus groups, both for the youth and the women, it was declared that water collection is primarily the duty of females. Table 1 shows that females are more involved in water collection than males. Children in homesteads also collect water, either alone (8,9%) or together with females (24%).

Table 1: Water collection within homesteads

Who collects water	Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid N	79	100
Mother	11	13.9
Daughter	7	8.9
Mother and children	8	10.1
Whole family	33	41.8
Children	7	8.9
Mother and daughter	7	8.9
Father	1	1.3
Mother and sons	1	1.3
Mother, daughter and children	3	3.8
Daughter and children	1	1.3

Source: Author, from survey data.

Some homesteads at Amadiba use water for crop production; 66, 3% of the homesteads irrigate their crops in gardens (n=77). The homesteads irrigate vegetables in their gardens. Very few homesteads (3, 8%) irrigate the crops they planted in the fields, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Water use for crop production

Irrigated	Field	%	Garden	%	Valid N
Yes	3	3,8	53	66,3	77
No	74	92,5	14	17,5	67

Source: Author, from survey data.

If the mine gets the licence, such communal water uses will be disrupted. Mining processes transform the waterscape. As Sneddon (2007) has argued, pollution, contamination, toxics and the private enclosure of water sources are key outcomes of mining investments. In addition, other natural resources can be transformed.

Harvesting natural resources from within the community also plays a key role in enabling and supporting various productive activities of the Amadiba community, as well as making direct contributions in their own right. All homesteads rely on firewood from the local area to meet their daily energy needs and nearly all homesteads further rely on other natural resources for the construction and quarterly maintenance of residential and other structures, particularly thatch (94.9%, n=75), poles (93.8%, n=75), sand/clay (87.3%, n=69), as well as grass and twigs (79.7%, n=63) and reeds (74.7%, n=59) collected for the manufacture of items such as mats and brooms. Most (86.1%, n=68) homesteads also rely on local medicinal resources around twice a month, and 59% (n=46) use local sources of wood to carve furniture and other items each week. As with all other forms of local production and harvesting, some items are also sold to supplement homestead cash reserves. A significant number (40.4%, n=23) of homesteads that collect reeds also sell some, as do 22.2% (n=14) of those collecting grass and twigs, 18.1% (n=13) of those collecting thatch, and 15.9% (n=10) of those collecting 'muthi'. Moreover, significant numbers of homesteads further rely on the local area to supplement their food consumption, particularly by collecting wild herbs and fruit (81%, n=64), collecting honey (42.3%, n=33), hunting for wild animals (41.8%, n=33), and gathering insects (39.2%, n=31). Mining will lead to the enclosure and destruction of some of these natural resources in ways that will destroy local livelihoods. The next section briefly outlines the food dynamics.

Food self-sufficiency

From a combination of livelihood activities outlined above, most households are food self-sufficient. Many homesteads (53%, n=42) are able to meet their minimum carbohydrate requirements³ from the consumption of staple crops, like maize, sweet potatoes, amadumbe (taro), potatoes, and beans, produced by homestead members. Many homesteads however, produce more than this minimum, and on average produce 2.5 times the homestead's necessary minimum. As Koen (2016:8) has argued, consumption data indicated a 'sufficient, healthy and nutritionally varied diet facilitated by own-production and reciprocity along with the existence of internal markets and cash resources generated through external market sales. The diets reported in group discussions suggest that residents consume sufficient calories with adequate fat, protein and carbohydrate ratios'. Members of the community also regard themselves as food self-sufficient. This is well captured by one of the community members, in response to government's assertion that Xolobeni was one of the poorest community in South Africa:

When shall this stupidity stop? How can we be poor when we have land? We grow maize, sweet potatoes, taro, potatoes, onions, spinach, carrots, lemons and guavas, and we sell some of it to the market. We eat fish, eggs and chicken. This agriculture is what should be developed here. It is not falling apart like in many other places in Eastern Cape. We have cattle for weddings and traditional rituals. We have goats for ceremonies. We are not a part of the one out of four South Africans who go hungry to bed. We have a life. Poor infrastructure is not poverty (Washinyira 2016).

The mining project can therefore result in food insecurity as people lose their fields, grazing lands, access

³Assumes a necessary 300g daily requirement.

to water and natural resources. Economic activities are not just meant for poverty reduction but there are significant investments in the community, which shows the community's potential to accumulate from below.

Asset accumulation

The importance of natural resources and production of crops and animals to the livelihoods of Amadiba residents is also reflected in the levels of investment. In the first instance, key non-residential structures on homestead plots are largely geared towards the corralling of animals and storage of crops, and are largely constructed mainly or entirely from locally harvested materials. For example, 56% of all homesteads had a cattle kraal, which was constructed from mainly local materials by 95% of owners. Similarly, 38% of homesteads had a granary constructed mainly or entirely from local materials in 93% of cases. Perhaps more critically, Amadiba homesteads rely extensively on local materials for their residential structures. All homesteads claimed at least one rondavel, with 78% claiming two or more, 50% claiming three or more, and 20% claiming four or more. Upwards of 80% of homesteads relied mainly on local materials for their first, second, third, fourth and fifth rondavels. In addition, 68% of homesteads also claimed at least one 'flat', constructed from mainly purchased materials in 66% of cases, and 23% claimed a second flat constructed from mainly purchased materials in 83% of cases.

The character of non-residential and livestock assets-ownership reflects the importance of landed production and harvesting to Amadiba homesteads. The most commonly held homestead assets are hoes (94.9%, n=75) and solar panels (70.9%, n=56), followed by spades (78.5%, n=62), wheelbarrows (60.8%, n=48), and ploughs (51.9%, n=41); nearly all of which are agricultural items reliant on human and animal labour-power, with only 24% (n=19) owning a sprayer, and only one homestead owning two tractors. Non-agricultural assets that had a fairly common incidence were radios held by 44.3% (n=35) of homesteads, gas and paraffin stoves held by 38% (n=30) and 35.4% (n=28) of homesteads respectively, and bicycles held by 20.3% (n=16) of homesteads. This shows a community that has the potential to engage in expanded agricultural production with some support.

This section has shown that beyond the legal right, the community resists the mining model of rural development citing their activated agricultural fields, grazing lands, harvests from natural resources among other wider livelihoods benefits, which outweigh envisaged mining benefits. For some of the households, land- and ocean-based activities are central to having achieved a position of relative wealth, while for others they are critical to the maintenance of day-to-day life. However, in all cases land-based livelihoods are essential in enabling households to create a higher standard of living. However, the government has appealed against the court ruling, continues to back the non-voluntary acquisition of land, marshals rural elites such as traditional leaders and hired local groups to coerce the community to submit to its vision of large-scale capitalist development. Up to this stage, this study has fallen into the trap of looking at the Xolobeni community as a homogeneous group. The next section therefore does further class analysis.

Class differentiation

As observed so far, the livelihoods of Amadiba homesteads rely on combining a variety of forms of production and income sources that make distinguishing those who are better or worse off difficult. Below, is an attempt to classify surveyed Amadiba homesteads by combining two sets of categories. The first divides homesteads into four groups according to their total estimated income from jobs, grants, sales, and the estimated value of carbohydrates consumed from crops. By this metric, '1' represents the poorest group and '4' the richest. The second group distinguishes homesteads by the presence of employment and the relative importance of sales to overall income, including virtual income from the estimated value of carbohydrates consumed from staple crops. Those homesteads without any members in formal employment and who rely on sales for less than 30% of income are labelled as subsistence-oriented producers, representing 32.5% (n=26) of the sample and represented largely in the poorest income groups. Those homesteads without formal employment that receive over 30% of their income from sales are categorised as market-oriented producers, representing 16.3% (n=13) of the sample, and are almost entirely represented in the poorest income groups. Those homesteads that have at least one formally employed member and who rely on sales for over 30% of their income are defined as wage- and sale-reliant. These are the least common home-

steads, representing only 5% (n=3) of the sample, but notably are all in the richest income group. Finally, 47.5% (n=38) of the sample is categorised as wage-reliant, referring to those relying on sales for less than 30% of their income, but holding at least one job, and are concentrated in the richest income groups. This is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Income quartiles by class group

Class Groups		Income quartiles				Total
		Poorest 1	2	3	Richest 4	
Subsistence-oriented producer	N	12	8	4	2	26
	Row %	46%	31%	15%	8%	100%
Market-oriented producer	N	5	6	1	1	13
	Row %	38%	46%	8%	8%	100%
Wage- and sale-reliant	N	0	0	0	3	3
	Row %	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Wage-reliant	N	3	6	15	14	38
	Row %	8%	16%	39%	37%	100%
Total		20	20	20	20	80
Cramer's V	Value	0.376				
	Approx. Sig.	0.000				

Subsistence-orientated homesteads

Across all wealth groups, subsistence-oriented producers rely mainly on state social grants for the bulk of their income, and income from sales stem mainly from crops. Most (46%, n=12) subsistence-oriented homesteads are in the poorest income group and the second-poorest group (30.7%, n=8), although there are significant differences between the two. The second-poorest group claims more than double the estimated average annual income of the poorest (R12,363 compared to R34,275), mainly because the second-poorest group claims on average more than double the social grant income of the poorest (R23,040 compared to R9,720). Both groups are marked by the relative absence of the old-age grant, which was held by only 25% of homesteads in both cases.

In addition, the second-poorest group also produces three-times the value of crops (R13, 257 compared to R4, 309 [average]) and owns more than four times the amount of animal values (R80, 281 compared to R18, 720). Consequently, not only does the second-poorest group consume nearly three times its minimum carbohydrate requirements from staple crops as that of the poorest group (337% compared to 115%), but it also sells more than four times as much in value terms (R5,284 compared to R1,250).

The 15% (n=4) of subsistence-oriented homesteads in the second-richest group are distinguished again mainly by their receipt of much greater grant income (R48, 600), but also significantly greater harvesting of ocean resources (R15, 143 compared to R9, 000), and more than double the number of animals (R228, 813 compared to R80, 281).

The 7.7% (n=2) of subsistence-oriented homesteads in the richest income category, meanwhile, are distinguished mainly by their far greater production of crops (R28,692, compared to R12,338) and significantly greater sales of their harvest of ocean resources (R22,548 compared to R15,143). While not resulting in greater sales, these two homesteads consume 7.5 times more than their necessary minimum carbohydrate requirements. Also notable, however, is that these homesteads own far fewer livestock (R80, 000) compared to the second-richest group. As livestock values were not incorporated into the income measure, the richest group may, consequently, not be substantively richer than the second-richest group.

Market-oriented homesteads

While all homesteads are engaged in some way in the sale of some products of their own-production, market-oriented producers, representing 16.3% (n=13) of the sample, are distinguished by their reliance on sales for 30% or more of their income. Indeed, on average, market-oriented producers rely on sales for over 55% of their income.

Most market-oriented producers are in the poorest (38.5%, n=5) and second-poorest (46%, n=6) groups, and on average are both slightly poorer than subsistence-oriented producers in the same income categories, on average receiving R10,046 (compared to R12,363) and R28,258 (compared to R34,275) respectively. The most immediate reason is the far lower level of grant income received, with the poorest and second-poorest market-oriented producers receiving on average only R1,728 and R7,920 respectively (compared to the R9,720 received by the poorest subsistence-producers). In place of grants, sales make up the majority of income, 80% of which are from crops. Although the value of own-production of both poorest and second-poorest market-oriented producers is almost similar (at R83,1077 and R89,802), the second-poorest produce significantly more crops (R20,973 compared to R14,451) and harvest more resources from the ocean (R25,998 compared to R13,797) from which sales are derived. Moreover, the second-poorest group consumes a greater amount of carbohydrates, at 375% their estimated minimum requirements, compared to 256% for the poorest group. Nonetheless, it is notable that the poorest group on average claims more value from animals than the second-poorest group (R72,100 compared to R42,832).

Market-oriented producers also include one (7.7%) homestead in both the richest and second-richest income groups. Compared to the second-poorest homesteads, the homestead in the second-richest income group receives both a higher grant income (R12,960 compared to R7,960) and also has more sales (R29,900 compared to R15,815), but unlike the other market oriented producers, 83% of sales income comes from the sale of animals, and indeed this homestead owns far higher animal value at R165,780, with most of the balance coming from some sales of harvested ocean resources at R91,476. Indeed, cropping for this homestead is reserved almost exclusively for own consumption, at a value less than the second-poorest market-oriented producers, but still providing 408% of the homestead's minimum carbohydrate requirements. The richest market-oriented producer, meanwhile, enjoys an income more than double that of the second-richest producer at R111,217, a consequence of not only doubling its received grant income, but a substantial growth in overall value of own-production. Unlike the second-richest market-oriented producer, sales income emanates mainly from cropping, which further allows the homestead to consume 1600% of its minimum carbohydrate requirements. This homestead also owns more animals than the second-richest homestead, but notably only slightly more than that of the second-richest subsistence-oriented producers.

Wage- and sale-reliant homesteads

Homesteads having at least one employed member while relying on sales for more than 30% of their income, accounted for only 3.8% (n=3) of homesteads, but were notably all in the richest income group, including the richest homestead in the sample. These three homesteads claimed relatively substantial average incomes from employment (R17,000), social grants (R39,000) and particularly from sales (R79,000), which are larger than that of the biggest market-oriented producer, and 92% of which was garnered from the sale of ocean resources. Although the virtual income from cropping (R7,898) is comparatively less substantial, these homesteads also meet 260% of their minimum carbohydrate requirements from crop consumption.

Wage-reliant homesteads

Homesteads that have at least one member with some form of employment, but for whom sales represent less than 30% of sales, represent the largest single class grouping, and are concentrated mainly in the richest (37%, n=14) and second-richest (39%, n=15) income groups, and further represent the vast majority of homesteads within those income categories (at 75% and 70%, respectively).

The poorest (n=3) and second-poorest (n=6) homesteads notably receive similar average incomes from employment (R12, 800 compared to R11, 500) and are distinguished mainly by the receipt of grant income, of which the poorest receive none, and the second-poorest receive (R12, 960). The second-richest group further sees grant income of more than double (R27, 792) and from sales (R5, 129) a near doubling of salary income (R21, 450), while the richest group sees a near trebling of salary income from this level (R61, 406) and a significant growth in sales (R9, 100). On average, wage-dependent homesteads rely on sales for 9% of their cash income, across income groups.

Although access to social grants and total salary income is central to differences in income between wage-reliant homesteads, own-production still plays a vital role in bolstering cash income by providing a subsistence base, with surpluses providing further cash supplements. A common characteristic of wage-dependent homesteads across income categories is the consistency in the average value of staple carbohydrates produced for own consumption (at around R3, 200) and similar levels of minimum carbohydrate consumption met by own-production (at around 190%). The total value of crop and ocean harvesting rises gradually across income groups, due largely to growing crop production, as the total value of ocean harvesting remains relatively stable (around R8,500) for all but the second-poorest income group. Cropping similarly accounts for the bulk of sales income except for the poorest income group, for which it contributes around one-third of sales (33%) alongside sales of ocean harvesting (37%) and livestock (29%). The average value of total livestock ownership peaks with the second-poorest income group at R70, 973, with the poorest and second-richest groups claiming similar levels of livestock at around R51, 000 and the richest group notably owning the lowest at R37, 608.

This section used a class analytic approach to identify four social groups in Xolobeni that is subsistence-oriented; market-oriented; wage- and sale-reliant; and wage-reliant households. It further showed the differences between and within the groups. The various sources of value and income, if combined, would see many households from the sample living above the poverty datum line. What is evident, is a viable agrarian base in contrast to the theses of deagrarianisation and deactivation of fields in South Africa. This is important when debating the future of rural development policies.

What is the future? Pursuing alternative models of development

This section presents three recommendations. The first is for the state to pursue the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and the fair valuation of the community's multiple livelihoods. The second recommendation is for greater government investment in eco-tourism in the Xolobeni area. The final recommendation is for public investment in smallholder agriculture in this area.

Implementation of FPIC and fair valuation principles

The Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and the investing company should hold consultations in good faith with the Xolobeni community. The consultations must include those who will be directly and indirectly affected by the project. Consent must be a collective decision of all those affected, including women, not some discreet and powerful groups. There must be no intimidation, coercion or manipulation during the process. This is because undue influence will render the whole process null and void. In addition, it is the duty of government and the investor to provide the Xolobeni community with sufficient information about the project so that they are able to make informed decisions. If the Xolobeni community reaffirms its resentment, the company must then immediately abandon the project because no development must happen without free, prior and informed consent. Should the community change its decision and collectively agree, then FPIC processes should continue at all stages of the project, mindful of the fact that the community has the right to revoke consent at any stage. In the context of consent, the government must conduct an evaluation of current livelihoods for a period of at least 22 years, which is the lifespan of the mine, in addition to giving communities alternative viable land. If the status quo remains, then the following two recommendations signify the future.

Eco-tourism

A strong voice from the community is for the government to invest in tourism in the area. This is a viable alternative to a finagled mining venture. Grant Thornton (2005) conducted a useful assessment of the socio-economic benefits of the proposed tourism investment in the Xolobeni area in ways that can help decision-makers to assess the merits of the proposed mining venture.⁴ The study concluded that ‘the proposed tourism investments will have significant financial, economic and socio-economic benefits for the study area that will remain long after the 22-year lifespan of the mining operation’ (Grant Thornton 2005:10).

Table 4: Estimated benefits from tourism

Item	Stage of development	Benefit
Direct financial contribution to area	First year of operation	R 28 million
Direct financial contribution to area	22 years of operation	R 50 million
Indirect and induced expenditure	During construction phase	R 110 million
Indirect and induced expenditure	1 year of operation	R 11 million
Indirect and induced expenditure	22 years of operation	R 20 million
Direct employment	First year of operation	241 jobs
Indirect employment	First year of operation	89 jobs
Contribution to GDP	During construction phase	R 303 million

Source: Compiled by author from the Thornton study (2005).

The benefits outlined above are significant and have not been disputed by any other study. In addition, investments in tourism are likely to generate less social conflict, preserve a viable agrarian base, conserve ecological natural resources and ensure that the state has longer-term access to revenue than the envisaged 22 years of operation which will not only benefit Xolobeni but the wider South African community. The proposed eco-tourism can then be augmented by support of agriculture in the Xolobeni area.

Public investment in smallholder agriculture

Contrary to the dominant narratives of the abandonment of cropping fields, Xolobeni provides a viable agrarian base with the potential for expanded production, resulting in wider processes of accumulation from below. The farmers already produce not only for consumption but also for the market. There is significant on-farm investments. The area has natural water sources that boost the potential for irrigation agriculture. This requires massive public investment in agricultural production. A one-size-fits-all will not work given the differentiated nature of the Xolobeni community. However, there are programmes that can benefit the entire community, such as the provision of farming inputs, water schemes, roads, state marketing agencies and extension services. In addition to those, there is the need for policy-makers to recognise that Xolobeni is socially differentiated with subsistence-oriented households, market-oriented households, wage- and sale-reliant households and wage-reliant households. This would require tailor-made interventions that will both support poverty reduction and promote the expanded production for wider national economic development in ways that do not exclude women. Market-oriented households, wage- and sale-reliant households and wage-reliant households could even benefit from South Africa’s ongoing redistributive land reform programme. They would probably fit into Cousins’ (2019a; 2019b) conceptualisation

⁴Grant Thornton is a private company.

of market-oriented households who already produce fresh vegetables and livestock for local informal markets. Tailor-made policies are broadly summarised in the next table.

Table 5: Class-based policy interventions

Class category	Main state focus	Major outcomes
Subsistence-oriented	Ecological management of grazing lands	
	Subsidised crop inputs support	Food self-sufficiency
	Food production support on garden plots and fields	Food security
	Water harvesting for all-year irrigated gardens	Poverty reduction
Market-oriented	Marketing support for vegetables and crops	
	Marketing support for livestock	Increased agricultural productivity
	State marketing boards (reintroduction for the black smallholder farmers)	Expanded production
	Veterinary support	Accumulation from below
	Crop inputs support	Contribution to wider growth of local economy
	Small-scale irrigation schemes	
	Additional cropping land (possibly from South Africa's redistributive land reform programme)	
	Additional grazing land (possibly from South Africa's redistributive land reform programme)	
	Appropriate farm technology	
Wage- and sale-reliant and wage-reliant	Small-scale irrigation schemes	
	Cooperative markets	Increased productivity
	Support for livestock expansion	Expanded production
	Cooperatives for sourcing inputs	Contribution to wider growth of local economy
	Additional cropping land	
	Additional grazing land	
	Extension support services	
	Farm technology	

Source: Compiled by author.

The above recommendations are based on the class analysis provided in this paper, as a foundation to solicit detailed views on the kind of agricultural support the different social groups require and to contribute to national debate about the future of South Africa's rural development policy interventions.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that not all the inhabitants of rural South Africa are vestiges of agrarian populations spurred by long historic processes of deagrarianisation and its sub-genre of depeasantisation. The effects were uneven between and within differentiated communities. Consequently, other communities like Xolobeni do not reflect the dominant narrative of abandoned and deactivated cropping fields, as land-based livelihoods are still very central. Failure to understand the geographically and socially differentiated nature of South African communities can lead to the state's prescription for rural development policies that are not in harmony with community needs. For Xolobeni, land and agriculture remain an integral component of livelihoods and there were strong voices raised against mining in this area. Following a series of struggles, the court ruled that the community has a right to say no to a development project, in line with the international principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In addition to this legal right, the study has shown that the community actively use land for gardening, crop and livestock production for both consumption and for sale. People fetch water from the river and the spring freely, and harvest rainfall. They use forests for firewood, poles for housing and fencing, wild fruits, medicinal plants and thatch grass. The sea is important for the harvesting of marine resources such as fish and other edible resources. However, the benefits differed to a degree across a continuum of subsistence-oriented households, market-oriented households, wage- and sale-reliant households and wage-reliant households. This calls for a class-informed policy intervention in the event of the community upholding its rejection of the mining venture. The interventions could include eco-tourism and state agrarian support for both poverty reduction and expanded production to help contribute to wider national economic development. In the unlikely event that the community agrees to the mining in that area, then the state must unequivocally recognise the community's customary rights and allow for a fair evaluation of their multiple livelihoods for a period of at least 22 years, in addition to the provision of alternative land in high potential agro-ecological areas as compensation

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