



Published by the UFS

<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at>

© Creative Commons With Attribution (CC-BY)

**How to cite:** Cilliers, J. 2019. Review. Mining and community in South Africa: From small town to iron town. *Town and Regional planning*, no.74, pp. 79-79.

## ***Mining and community in South Africa: From small town to iron town***

**Edited by:** Lochner Marais, Philippe Burger and Deidre van Rooyen

**Published by:** New York: Routledge, 2018

**Reviewed by:** Prof. Juane Cilliers

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/2415-0495/trp74i1.7>

Mining has dominated the development in South Africa for over a century. Although the South African economy is no longer dependent on the mining industry, this book clearly indicates that the mining industry still plays (and will continue to play) an important role in the social and economic fabric of the country.

Mining and community in South Africa reflect on the challenges and opportunities related to the mining sector within the South African context, debating contemporary issues from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Reference is made to a broad range of complex matters that have received hardly any attention to date, including the local impact of mining on unemployment, adequate housing provision, inequalities, business development, well-being, governance and broader planning approaches entwined in fragile municipal finances, changing social attributes, and impacts on the physical environment. The broad scope included in this book makes it a suitable contribution for a diverse range of disciplines.

The authors' expertise contributes to the interdisciplinary discourse and academic dialogue on mining towns and the transformation of such small towns into iron towns. As a point of departure, a comprehensive historic overview is provided on the development of the mining sector in South Africa, the transformation of this sector over the past decade, and the impacts of such transformation on numerous sectors and departments. These developments within the mining sector are also discussed in context to related economic and social developments, and in context to spatial impacts. As a result, issues as to how to plan simultaneously for both growth and decline are debated within the broader context of sustainability and resilience-thinking.

Context-based evidence is continuously provided by means of case studies and scenario-setting, providing a valuable contribution to translate academic literature into practice. The content provides a critical analysis of the mining sector and current realities experienced in South Africa, and progresses interdisciplinarily to conclude on governance, environmental, housing, and business challenges as a direct result of mining activities.

The book successfully documents the interaction between mining communities and local communities and explains the complexities of community development in a mining town from diverse interrelated perspectives. The book

emphasizes the highly contentious notion of community sustainability, as applied in mining towns.

The pertinent contributions of this book include:

- Documenting the transformation that took place in the mining sector with regard to social dynamics (increased numbers of contract workers, new inequalities, government responses) and related planning approaches (economic diversification, mining-town development and changes in production methods), and the role of economic power.
- Reflecting on the Postmasburg case study in an attempt to bridge the South African literature gap concerning the effect of mining growth and transformation.
- Considering the effect of mining and government relations of spatial planning, along with the dynamics of power relationships and collaborative planning approaches.
- Elaborating on different views regarding renting versus home ownership as sustainable solution for mining towns.
- Reflecting on staples theories within the South African context and discussing inequalities, labour markets and the well-being of mining employees.
- Identifying areas of further research to substantiate the findings of the Postmasburg case study and to explore different scenarios, the potential of changing land uses and planning for the transformation of the mining sector and related impacts.

Ultimately, this book captures the essence of the impact of the mining industry within the local South African context and emphasises the important role that mining plays (and will continue to play) in the social and economic fabric of the country. The content and message of this book is well supported by the arrangement of the book and the quality of the scholarly apparatus.

Prof. Juane Cilliers, Unit for Environmental Sciences and Management, Urban and Regional Planning, North-West University, South Africa.  
Phone: 018 299 2486, e-mail: <[Juane.Cilliers@nwu.ac.za](mailto:Juane.Cilliers@nwu.ac.za)> ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8581-6302>