

The creativity of action: Property, Kin and the social in African artisanal mining.

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Abstract

Analyses of neo-liberal change in African mining tend to frame discussion through the lens of an overarching structural perspective. Far less attention has been paid to the way change is enacted within social relations in mining communities. To this end, our chapter considers how development in the Tanzanian mineral sector transforms people's relationships and stimulates new iterations of power and agency within local trajectories of development, focusing on the case of artisanal gold mining in Mgusu village in Geita region, Tanzania. The aim is to trace how neo-liberal change configures market rationality and property relations in ways that can fundamentally alter social relationships within the local community, occupational groups and families, raising both opportunities for wealth accumulation and the potential to entrench poverty. The creative action involved in these processes generates new associational ties and repertoires of practice, as miners' respond to change and the need to protect their livelihoods.