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A Study of Collective Subjectivity and Political Representation within the Economic Freedom Fighters in the North West Province.

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Johannesburg, March 2016

Abstract

The emergence of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) as a new and 'radical' political party significantly altered the shape of the political landscape in South Africa. As one of the starting points in this paper, I show how the EFF comes out of a history in the ANCYL before turning attention to public discussions on the organisation. These contemporary debates about the EFF have taken numerous forms, oftentimes in deeply polarised ways - from those who argue that the EFF is pejoratively populist or fascist to arguments that the party is a crucial left alternative. Within the context of these debates, this research paper grapples with the question of the political character of the EFF, ultimately arguing that the EFF is populist. I use, however, a framework for populism set out by Ernesto Laclau thus marking a break with most discussions on the EFF that are often theoretically limited. This research works with both the empirical and the theoretical – in doing this I utilise Michael Burawoy's 'extended case method' to ground the discussion and to provide a method that encompasses the field research – I used semi-structured interviews and participant observation – with a theoretical inquiry. This research is based on the Marikana Branch of the EFF, in the North West Province.

In using data from respondents, a number of conclusions about the EFF in Marikana are drawn out around the membership base of the EFF, organisational structures, the relations with other organisations as well as the class, gender and age substance of the party. These conclusions partly stand on their own in building an understanding of the EFF. They are also used in a central discussion around populism in the EFF and the building of a collective political subjectivity that is premised on the popular. In this way, this research works on two interlinked levels that feed into answering questions around the EFF as a new political formation. In line with Burawoy's method that is used throughout this research, I also outline some of the key limitations of using Laclau's theory of populism in understanding the EFF and how we move from these limitations through the work presented around the Marikana Branch.

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the requirements of the Degree of Masters in Political Studies (by coursework and research report), at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Tasneem Essop

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Date

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1. Introduction

In October 2015 the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), led by Julius Malema, organised a march through the streets on Johannesburg to hand over a memorandum of demands for 'economic freedom' to the SA Reserve Bank, the Chamber of Mines and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Reports on the day estimated that around 40 000 people attended the march. This was, of course, not the first time that a large march for economic freedom had taken place in post-apartheid South Africa. In 2011 the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) - again with Julius Malema at the helm – led thousands in marathon economic freedom march from Johannesburg to the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The space between these two marches marks an event characterised by a reconfiguration of left political forces, and the emergence of the EFF as a new political challenge to the ruling party.

At its formation the EFF characterised itself as a radical and militant organisation, At the centre of its platform was the idea that the transition from apartheid had only secured political freedom, necessitating a new 'generational mission' in form of a intensified struggle for economic liberation (EFF, 2013). In the last General elections, held on the 7th of May 2014, this foundation helped the EFF secure over 1.2 million votes, garnering just over 6.35% of the national vote (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2014). As a consequence it also became the official opposition to the ANC in two provinces – the North West and Limpopo (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2014).

At the time the party was less than a year old and had launched without any clearly defined branch and regional structures. And while the ANC maintained its resounding majority across most parts of the country, the election results pointed to very real popular support for the EFF (especially in areas such as the platinum belt in the North West and mining areas in general).

Its growing popularity does not, however, mean that the EFF will win over the hearts and minds of the majority South Africans any time soon. Nor can it be assumed that the EFF has set the basis for a new hegemonic political project. What the emergence of the EFF does point to are significant realignments within the political field and new potentialities taking

shape in the shadow of this event. This research report helps throw light on this event by focusing in on the constitution of EFF 'on the ground' and unpacking its significance for understanding political practices in present.

A number of important questions and debates have emerged relation to the EFF – who and what it represents, why it has had the impact that is has and how to characterise it. In grappling with these questions, this research report undertakes an analysis of the EFF that unfolds on two levels. At its core this paper represents a study of a branch of the EFF in Marikana in the North West. However, the empirical data collected about the branch is also read in relation to a set of theoretical debates centered on questions of political forms, representation and subjectivity. As such the focus in this paper is both on understanding the practices, structures and forms of organising that are developing within the Marikana branch of the EFF, as well as the political character and representation of the EFF.

With regards to the first level then, a number of conclusions are drawn about the EFF through studying the Marikana Branch. Here I elaborate on the historical political allegiances of its membership, decision making practices at branch level and in relation to the broader EFF collective, local political and social alliances, and the crystallisation of EFF structures and forms of organising. In so doing I present a detailed profile of the organisation 'on the ground' in Marikana.

Debates within the public realm and existing literature on the EFF provide the terms taken up at the second level of analysis. As I show later, the EFF has been the subject of wide ranging characterisations – from those that see it as negatively populist and fascist, to others that insist that the EFF ought to be seen as a new leftist movement. In this paper I argue that one of the limitations of many such interventions is their theoretical shallowness. Part of what the research report tries to do then is to place the debate over the EFF on firmer theoretical ground. In so doing I shift away from categorising the EFF in form of the 'political extremes' of contemporary discourse in which the EFF is either seen as a crucial and necessary representation of leftist demands, or as a degenerative and socially regressive organisation. Like others, I argue that the EFF should be seen as populist. Drawing on the work of Laclau, however, I show how, rather a pejorative characterisation, seeing the EFF as populist allows us to better understand the forms of political identification and subjectivity taking shape within this party.

Finally, in marrying these two levels of analysis, in line with my deployment of the framework of Burawoy's 'extended case method', I also attempt to push beyond Laclau precisely by opening up a conversation that cuts across the insights emerging from my fieldwork (based on participant observation and interviews) and my discussion of Laclau's work on collective subjectivity and the populist form. In brief, what I offer is a characterisation of the EFF focused on the question of collective subjectivity, while at the same time providing an engagement with the branch politics and the complexities inherent in the structures and strategies of the EFF. More broadly, this report provides a window into a moment of political change and contestation and some of the forces animating it.

1.1. Outline of the Report

This report is made up of six chapters including this one. In the section below, I set out my research questions and methodology, as well as give a brief introduction to the area my research focused on – Marikana.

Chapter 2 focuses on presenting an account of the emergence of the EFF and a background to the party in order to understand the self-framing of the organisation. The chapter begins by tracing some of the roots of the EFF in the ANCYL, especially between 2008 and 2012. The third chapter, partly in extending the work of the second chapter, presents a review of the literature on the EFF as well as a view into the theoretical framework of populism. The literature is reviewed through setting out the major debates and also cutting across these in a way that frames the later discussions in the fourth and fifth chapters respectively. Placing together the work in the second chapter and the debates about the EFF in the third, pieces together a comprehensive literature review on the topic that guides the central questions of this paper. The overview of the theoretical framework recounts, in summary, key contributions to the field of populism before engaging with Laclau's theory on the subject.

In Chapter 4, I begin to present the data from the Marikana branch with a key focus on the politics of the branch. This chapter is based on the field research and pulls out key themes around political affiliations, democratic practices, the organisational structure and strategies of the branch.

Chapter 5 looks substantively at presenting an account of populism in the EFF and the construction of the popular subjectivity. This is primarily done through an engagement between the responses of participants and Laclau's theory of populism. I then put together the central argument that the EFF is populist but also outline the shortcomings of Laclau in studying the EFF. At the very end of this chapter, I show how some of the work in Chapter 4 helps us to find a way through some of the major theoretical limitations in Laclau.

In the final chapter I provide a summary of the key points of this research. I also draw out some limitations of this paper and present some suggestions for further research on the EFF.

1.2. Research Questions and Methodology

1.2.1. Aims and Objectives

This basic aim of this research is to develop a more coherent and thorough understanding and analysis of the EFF. This research aims to give an account of the EFF from analysing the narratives of its members and supporters in the Marikana branch (North West Province). In addition, an objective of this research is to develop a better sense of the politics at play in the chosen branch of the EFF.

Building from this point, this research aims to use research data in order to develop an analysis of the EFF as a populist formation and how a collective political subjectivity and identity is being formed around the organisation. In sum, the intention is to gain a better understanding of how members view themselves as part of the EFF and what this means for our political understanding of the new formation.

1.2.2. Research Questions and Sub-questions

There is a notably weak relation between the main questions and the sub-questions in this paper. The main questions answer a central thesis of this paper that is around collective subjectivity, populism and political identities. The sub-questions developed in order to put

forward a sound profile of the organisation and to link the practice of politics in the branch to the main questions. As will be outlined in later sections of this paper, the questions around the functioning of the branch and the role of members aids in dealing with the limitations of the more theoretical discussions. This also presented the possibilities of making further judgments about the political character of the EFF.

Main Questions:

1. How are forms of collective subjectivity being constituted within the EFF?

2. What type of collective politics does the EFF represent?

Sub-questions:

1. How do members of the EFF relate to and understand the organisation?
2. What informs the decision of members to join or support the EFF?
3. How do members understand their role within the EFF and their relationship to the EFF?
4. Is the EFF a populist formation?
5. How do branches of the EFF function?

1.2.3. Research paradigm and method

The use of a suitable methodology for any research is critical to answering the research questions. Social research can be qualitative or quantitative; both are valued forms of research within the social sciences (Giddens, 2006). This research report makes use of a qualitative approach as a research paradigm for a number of different reasons. Firstly, this research aimed to delve into deeply subjective issues and experiences in order to understand political and collective subjectivity as well as forms of representation.

Secondly, qualitative research is able to account for socio-economic, political and ethical issues that may be present in the field research given the context and subject matter of this paper. A qualitative research method is interpretive and allows the space for participants to

present their narratives in detail (Devine, 2002: 199). In addition, qualitative research is useful in understanding the participants experiences and perspectives (Neuman, 1994). Finally, qualitative research is necessary in order to focus the research and use only a small number of participants whilst at the same time gaining a deep understanding (Devine, 2002: 198). It is able to account for the sheer complexity of the human experience in relation to the topic of this research and offered me, as the researcher, the ability to collect data in a way that can meaningfully answer the research questions (Gillham, 2000: 11).

More specifically, I use of the 'extended case method' as advanced by Michael Burawoy (1998) in order to ground the research in theory and context. This method is theoretically driven research that relies heavily on the theory to interpret social research (Tavory & Timmermans, 2009: 235). The usefulness of Burawoy's method is that it allows the researcher to connect various themes, contexts and experiences in answering a set of questions through interviews and observation.

One of the key ways that I use the extended case method in this research papers in in linking the data from the EFF in Marikana to the theoretical framework of populism. Unlike many of the approaches to populism outlined later, this research merges both a empirical and theoretical approach. The analysis in this paper uses theory in order to analyse a particular case – the EFF. In using the extended case method, it also deals with limitations in the theory based on this analysis of the EFF. The method utilised in this research uses both theory and empirical work in a complimentary manner that intends on building both aspects.

The extended case method is also valuable within a qualitative research paradigm due to the focus on reflexive science and research that broadens the scope of analysis (Burawoy, 2009: 32). Not only does this method account for my own social and political position within this research project – something that is present in all research – but also provides a concrete method of engaging with complex material on subjectivity and political choices.

The extended case method is driven by theory and a necessary reflexivity in relation to this. It allows for a reading of the EFF through the theory but also for a discussion around the insufficiencies in the theory where necessary. In this research there is an interaction between Laclau's populism and the EFF after which a reflection on the theory is presented. This is in keeping with the extended case method. In addition, this method ensures that the theoretical

framework is not simply empty theory but is a way to engage with the empirical. The extended case method is thematic which is analytically useful in this project as it accounts for the need to connect smaller and larger themes, within a regional and national context and from an individual level to a collective one.

Given the subject matter of this research, the political opinions forming around the EFF and my own political position and context, it is important that a self-reflexive method is utilised. Burawoy (2009: 39) argues that reflexive science is important in placing the researcher and participant in constant conversation. It does not assume that the researcher is naturally insulated from the participant, nor that the researcher does not interpret data through her own prisms. Rather, the researcher is fundamentally part of the world that she studies. Claims to impartiality are, therefore, are inadequate in complex socio-political research (Burawoy, 2009: 46). Asserting a sense of objectivity is misleading and unethical – given my own involvement in various political spaces - and can also lead to research that is couched in a false sense of impartiality.

In sum, the extended case method brings value to this research in terms of answering the main questions. This research deals with fundamentally complex political experiences and choices. The extended case method is useful in analysing this and connecting it to the broader political character of the EFF. This method and research paradigm is reflexive and offers a depth of field research that is linked with the theory whilst also accounting for the subjective position of the researcher that is embedded in the context of the research.

1.2.4. Overview of research

I opted to use a variety of strategies and tools in carrying out this research. I began with developing a literature review on the topic as well as doing archival work on the ANCYL as a prelude to the formation of the EFF. Archival work was also done on the area where the field research was conducted so as to get a better sense of the history of the area and the daily issues faced by members of the community. This literature and archival work was followed by a period orientations to the area in which acquainted myself with the area and with the members of the EFF.

One of the first events I attending was an EFF post-election rally in the area that I incorporated as part of my observations on the workings of the branch. During this stage of my research, my colleagues who had worked extensively in Marikana – and had already established relationships of trust with many individuals in the community - introduced me to a number of EFF members in the branch. These introductions gave me a smoother transition into the field research as I could develop relationships with community members from early on, making it easier to gain an entry point into the branch and to build networks of contacts in the area.

The next phase of my research took the form of participant observation that included attending public meetings. It was during this stage of the research that I began to narrow the scope of the project to looking at just one branch as opposed to a number of branches in the North West. The Marikana branch of the EFF, which was the site of my first orientation and introduction, offered already complex socio-political content due to crucial events over the last few years and its longer-term history.

In addition, the relationship between the community and the EFF was already well established. I also discovered that the branch was considerable in size, was active and involved in the community. Despite being introduced to members of surrounding branches, I took a decision to limit the research to just one branch as this would allow for more depth in the analysis and would not water down the dynamics that were already present in that branch. Importantly, the research questions could be answered using just one branch and not overburdening the fieldwork or analysis. My general sense was that in order to gain an in-depth and useful account of the branch, and given the time and resource constraints on this research, that looking into one branch was sufficient.

Moving beyond this decision, the participant observation continued throughout the field research in the branch. I began to interview members of the branch once I had gained a broad sense of the area, the branch and crucial political and social histories. I conducted a total of twenty-three semi-structured interviews over a period of around four months. After I had conducted these interviews and collected enough useful data from the participant observation, I began to transcribe interviews and enter into an analysis phase of the research.

1.2.5. Data collection

As mentioned in the previous section, the semi-structured interviews formed the backbone of this research whilst the participant observation allowed for a better grasp of the politics of the Marikana branch. The two methods of collecting data in the field were complimentary and broadened the level of understanding of the EFF in Marikana. The interviews were guided by a set of flexible questions clustered around themes of interest in this research.

The first set of questions was around the participant's social history. The second set referred to the workings and politics of the branch. The third set of questions related to the role of the participants in the party and the identification with the EFF. The interviews were varied in length. Some interviews took over an hour whilst others were just over ten minutes long; on average most of the interviews took between thirty minutes to an hour to complete. The participant observation, on the other hand, was broad and included simply observing daily interactions between members as well as attending events and meetings of the EFF branch.

During the initial period of orientation, prior to the start of the interviews, it became clear that I would require translation in many of the interviews in order for the participants to fully express their social and political experiences. Whilst some interviews were conducted in English, the use of translation assisted in allowing participants to speak more freely and at length around their involvement in the party. The interviews aimed to allow the space for participants to provide their own experiences and narratives around the EFF - this required the use of translation in some instances.

1.2.6. Participants

Participant sampling was given special consideration in effort to gain as wide a sample as possible. Important factors around sampling that were considered included issues around power relations, the status of the participant within the community, gender and more practical issues such as language and access. The access and availability of participants was relatively easy due to networks that I created within the organisation following my introduction to certain members as outlined above.

Despite its usefulness, one of the problems of using other researchers' networks was that the area had been extensively researched since the Marikana Massacre of 2012. To some degree, this hampered my access to certain participants, as they had a type of fatigue around researchers interviewing them. In addition, there was a level of suspicion due to perceived links between journalists (who are seen as having a bias against the mineworkers and the community) and researchers.

Even with these complications, I managed to build links with community members and eventually I experienced a surprisingly low level of suspicion from members of the EFF. This process was also made simpler due to the fact that many individuals had a high regard for those who guided my initial introduction to the community. In a short space of time I developed a relationship with one of the community members, who had previously worked as a translator for other researchers, to be my guide and to assist with translation of some of the interviews.

The sample of participants was relatively balanced in terms of gender. There was a concerted effort made to interview both male and female members of the EFF, especially given pertinent claims on the EFF and gender dynamics. However, by the end of the process I had interviewed more women than men; ten of the interviews were with male participants and thirteen with females. Many of the active members of the branch are women and it was easier to build networks with the women of the branch. This forms part of the later analysis in this report.

Other factors such as age, employment status, gender and the participants role in the community were also considered in order to gain a broad range of participants. This was done so as to get a sense of how people identify with the EFF and explain their role in it. In addition, I attempted to ensure that the data was not skewed towards ant particular pre-existing group – for example the leadership or political elite of the community. In other words, the subject-position of the participant was an important factor that was considered for this research.

A number of the participants were part of the leadership structure in the Marikana branch (five in total). All of the other participants were ordinary members of the organisation. This was done so as to include various voices and narratives about the EFF from different

perspectives in the branch. In terms of age a good spread was sought within sampling, however the majority of the membership of the EFF in the area fell outside of a category that is generally considered to be 'youth' (between the ages of 18 and 35). This fact is also not random or simply a bias in research but will also be considered in a later section and explained as part of the make-up and character of this branch of the EFF.

Finally, given the area of research, many of the participants were mineworkers or involved in the mining industry in some way. This was not an intentional factor that was considered prior to conducting the interviews but developed in the field due to the nature of the area that I was researching. In the final analysis, this was a useful inclusion to the sample as it provided a basis of analysis around the relationships between EFF and different organisations based in the area, such as the Associated Union of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU).

1.2.7. Ethical Considerations

This research aimed, at all times, to remain ethical and not harm or violate participants during the interviews and observations. From the outset, this research did not aim to look at a specifically vulnerable group within society and did not aim to delve into sensitive personal details of the participant's lives. Rather, the interviews were based on political decision-making, identities and identification. All of the participants were over the age of 18 and were made fully aware of the purpose of the interviews and participant observation. Informed consent was gained for every interview and all participants were informed verbally and in writing of the purpose of the research. Issues around confidentiality were also made clear to the participants prior to the commencement of the interviews. Informed consent was also sought for the recording of the interviews together with a full explanation that the recordings would be kept safe and confidential. The participants were encouraged to raise any questions or concerns that they had about being interviewed. All participants were made aware of the fact that they were not obliged to answer any questions nor were they obliged to carry out the interview to the end.

Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed and kept on a password protected laptop. Participants were assured of confidentiality as well as anonymity during the writing of the research. Full anonymity could not however be guaranteed due to network sampling that

relies on interactions between people. It was therefore inevitable that participants would know others within the community who had been interviewed. I have opted to use pseudonyms for all participants in order to preserve their privacy and anonymity during writing. I determined that it would be better to avoid any possible negative ramifications for any participants that took part in this research.

For participant observation, I ensured that I gained permission from the leadership of the branch in order to attend events and meetings of the organisation. In all of the branch meetings and smaller events, the branch chairperson outlined my role as a researcher. The members were also all given copies of my information sheet that explained the research in writing to compliment the verbal information. It was made clear that should I be requested to leave for any reason, by any person in the meeting, that I would do so.

1.3. Contextualising Marikana

Marikana is a diverse area that, outside of its recent political significance, has an important post-apartheid social and cultural history. It represents some of the major challenges, economic and social, in the post-apartheid dispensation. Prior to the Marikana Massacre and after it, the area raises significant questions around mining, inequality, poverty and unemployment, colonial and apartheid legacies, the failures of local and tribal authorities, race, gender and ethnicity. These are just a few of the important themes that are quite evident upon visiting the area. Research has been done on a number of these topics, some of the analysis in this paper feeds into this body of work. This section will provide a basic background (that is largely descriptive) on Marikana and will draw out some key points that will focus later arguments. This section will also provide the reader with a better understanding of the importance of studying the Marikana branch of the EFF and the political significance of the area for the party.

By way of prefacing this discussion, the use of the term ‘Marikana’ needs to be clarified. This report uses ‘Marikana’ to describe the general area within which the research was conducted and this is based on a political, social and geographic space. Officially, the area is split into a number of different sections that are often referred to using different names – the Lonmin mine which sits on *Bapo ba Mohale* land in Wonderkop (this includes the hostels

and accommodation facilities provided by the mine), the Nkaneng informal settlement which situated next to the mine, the town area, as well as areas under the direct control of the *Bapo ba Mohale* tribal authority. These areas come together to form what is known as Marikana – a term that has been publically used and recognised to describe this general area, especially since the 2012 strike and the Marikana Massacre.

A large number of the participants in this research resided in the Nkaneng informal settlement and in the immediate areas around it, this included the accommodation provided by the mine and the Bapo villages around the informal settlement. Nkaneng is a post-apartheid informal settlement that developed within the context of the platinum mining boom in the early 1990s. The settlement has very little infrastructure, no roads and little provision of basic services (Chinguno, 2013, 2014; Chaskalson, 2013). Outside of those employed at the mine, there is a reliance on the informal economy accompanied by high levels of unemployment and poverty.

Ethnic backgrounds and identities are an important part of the general area and these have implications on service provision and governance. The Bapo villages around the informal settlement are made up of mainly those from the Batswana ethnic group and fall under the governance of the tribal authority. Most of those that are within Nkaneng are largely of different ethnic origins with a large proportion of the residents originating from the Eastern Cape Province (Chinguno, 2013). The informal settlement of Nkaneng has developed on land that is technically 'owned' by the Bapo but was occupied illegally from the early 1990s. Given this history of the area, there is some level of conflict between the different groups and people who live in different areas as well as contestation over land rights and governance in the area. In the field research there was an effort made to interview those who reside in Nkaneng as well as those who live in the accommodation provided by the Lonmin mine and members of the EFF who live in the Bapo villages. However, it was clear that far less support was drawn from the surrounding villages than from those that lived on the Lonmin mining complex or in Nkaneng.

Marikana falls within the Platinum Belt of the North West Province; this means that specific emphasis must be placed on the mining sector within the literature and research. The Platinum Belt in South Africa, that cuts across both the North West and Limpopo, is a mineral rich area that accounts for a large part of the worlds platinum reserves currently. The

area was chosen for this research due to its bearing in relation to the EFF on a number of accounts.

The first and most obvious explanation is based purely on electoral support for the EFF in the area. As mentioned earlier, the General Elections of 2014 gave a clear indication of where the EFF's major areas of support are. The Platinum Belt was one of these general areas, and Marikana in particular displayed a high level of support for the party. The EFF became the official opposition in the North West and Limpopo (both of which have large mining areas) at the elections. Moreover, the EFF won a majority in a handful of voting stations in these areas, most of which were stations that were directly linked to mining communities. The EFF also won a majority in a few of the voting stations in Marikana and has displayed on a number of occasions that it has a high level of support in this area. Based on this quick look at electoral results, it is clear that Marikana, and other parts of the Platinum Belt, are spaces of growing support for the EFF. Whilst remaining an area of political contestation, there is a level of popularity that the EFF commands in Marikana and other platinum mining areas.

Secondly, outside of being a politically and socially important area more broadly, Marikana has remained a site of popular mobilisation and support for the EFF. The EFF has been seen as one of the only political parties to have taken a firm position in relation to the Marikana Massacre of 2012 (SAPA, 2013; Munusamy, 2013:1 - 2). This has been linked to Julius Malema's own position in relation on the issue and his actions following the Massacre. It is widely held that Malema was one of the first and only politicians, then still affiliated to the ANC, to have gone to Marikana after the Massacre had occurred on the 16th of August 2012. Since then, other political parties have joined commemoration events and the general outcry concerning the Massacre, yet none have done so with the same popular support received by Malema (Moyo, 2014).

The EFF has maintained its public stance on the issue and the Marikana Massacre has become a point of symbolic mobilisation within the organisation. This symbolic value has been displayed at numerous points including at the official launch of the party in Marikana (Suttner, 2014: 1; Pithouse, 2013: 1; Sosibo, 2014; Harvey, 2013). Malema explained in an interview the significance of Marikana in launching the party, stating that 'we (the EFF) have chosen Marikana for simple reason because our people died in that place, fighting for economic freedom' (Gernetzky, 2013). The EFF has consistently re-inserted Marikana into

the public discourse and has utilised the events in the area as a way to point out the failures of the state in recent times. A key example of this type of mobilisation of Marikana in the EFF's strategies include sittings of the National Assembly wherein the EFF carried out protests against the ANC for its involvement in the Massacre and called out the Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa, for his involvement terming him a 'murderer' and arguing that he has 'blood on his hands' (Makinana, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a policy significance in relation to the Platinum belt in general for the EFF. The large mining area is a jarring display of the stark inequalities of South African society. The Platinum Belt is an area of immense mineral wealth but also of widespread poverty. Fine & Rustomjee's (1996) influential piece on the Mineral Energy Complex places the mining industry at the centre of South Africa's political economy. Platinum mining in particular has grown in importance to this industry since the early 1990s both as a source of capital accumulation and employment (see Capps, 2012). Despite containing large reserves of platinum and being a source of wealth generation, the distribution of this wealth is severely uneven in the area and many of those who work and live there continue to face various socio-economic inequalities (Mnwana & Akpan, 2009). The history of platinum mining in South Africa is intersecting and deeply complicated and has allowed for massive amounts of wealth generation and exploitation to occur simultaneously.

Without drifting too much into discussions around platinum mining in South Africa, what is outlined above serves to show, the importance of platinum mining to the South African economy, to situate the importance of the industry and to highlight the massive inequalities and contradictions inherent in the current system. This leads into the EFF's position on mining and the platinum industry. The Founding Manifesto of the EFF, and many subsequent documents of the organisation, recognised the need to nationalise South Africa's mines within a state-led framework as the only way toward economic freedom for workers within that sector. This position has remained a central one for the EFF, both in electoral campaigning and messaging. Crucial points here include the organisations support and solidarity role in the Platinum Strike of 2014 and their messaging in 2014 General Election campaign around an affirmation of the R12 500 minimum wage demand for workers within the mining sector (EFF, 2013b).

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the Marikana Massacre has been seen as an important moment for reconfigurations in the South African political landscape. A number of scholars have linked the Marikana Massacre to a moment of political rupture, or apolitical turning point, in the country. The emergence of new formations on the left, such as the United Front and the EFF, can be traced in the aftermath of the Massacre – one of the most grim failures of the ANC in government – and has been a firm part of new political struggles (Naidoo, 2015: 436; McKinley, 2015: 457; Gentle, 2014; Veriava, 2015: 437 ; Webster, 2015 ; Alexander, 2013). Nieftagodien (2015: 446) argues that Marikana has been an important rallying point for the EFF, and indeed this is evident in self-representations of the organisation. Part of the importance of Marikana for the EFF is to point out and exploit the Massacre as an example that highlights some of the critical failures of the ANC, especially so in relation to poor and working class, black South Africans (Gentle, 2014). This general importance of Marikana as of turning point in South African political struggles further enhances its significance as a point of research for new political formations such as the EFF that were formed in a post-Marikana Massacre context.

2. Born in Congress – The ANCYL and the Emergence of the EFF

2.1. Introduction

The story of the EFF is incomplete without an account of its pre-history in the ANCYL. Tracing the emergence of the EFF, therefore, does not begin in early 2013 when a new political party platform was announced, by expelled ANCYL president Julius Malema. Additionally, as outlined earlier, the emergence of the EFF also occurred within a particular political milieu. During this initial formation of the new political party, the EFF also had to lay down it's ideological framework and set itself within the political life of South Africa.

This chapter, like the one that follows it, takes the format of a literature review, however it is also based on archival work focused on documents and news reports from the ANCYL. It traces the formation of the EFF out of the ANCYL. The significance of this account extends beyond political personalities and the biographies of the EFF leadership but speaks to the popularisation of discourses of economic freedom. In addition, certain political traditions from the ANCYL have been carried through to the EFF. This includes forms of mobilisation and organising as well as modes of decision-making and democratic practices.

This chapter will also provide a background on the EFF and looks at the policies, political positions as well as the party's self-framing and representation. This will provide a basic understanding of where the party situates itself on the political spectrum and the types of strategies that it has been employing. As with most political parties, it is an almost impossible task to attempt to account for every strategy, statement and position of the organisation. What is attempted here instead is an account of the emergence of the EFF, its political positioning and documents that have shaped common understandings and perceptions of the organisation.

2.2. ANC Youth League 2008 – 2012

As hinted to above, the lineage of the EFF can be traced directly from the Congress Movement. More specifically, many of the political traditions and rallying points of the EFF

emerge from the ANCYL. As Veriava (2015) outlines, the EFF has mobilised some of the Congress tradition and the organisation has placed emphasis on the use of similar strategies and ideologies from this tradition. For example, the EFF's references to documents such as the Freedom Charter – a key part of the Congress history – is indicative of this mobilisation and the placement of the EFF within this broader history. This section provides a brief history of the ANCYL and the organisation particularly from 2008 to 2012, including the changes in the political stance of the ANCYL that occurred during that time. It will also recount some of the crucial debates on the ANCYL and Malema at this time and show how there is convergence between these and pertinent arguments on the EFF.

The replication of leadership figures from the ANCYL to the EFF is significant. Many of the top leaders of the EFF started their political careers in the ANCYL and ANC-affiliated organisations – including the current President Julius Malema and Deputy President Floyd Shivambu, both of whom were expelled from the ANCYL. Other prominent leaders of the EFF were also actively engaged in the politics of the ANCYL or the ANC. There is also a common perception that this connection extends down to branch members and supporters who exited the Youth League to join the EFF.

It goes without saying that the history of the ANCYL begins long before the entry of Malema and others into the organisation. The Youth League was founded in 1944 and immediately began to have a profound impact on the fight against apartheid followed by a period of decline and banning (SAHO, 2012). The organisation was re-launched after the unbanning of political organisations in 1991 (SAHO, 2012). Many interpretations of the ANCYL have often pointed out the massive role that the organisation played in advancing a more radical programme in the ANC. The youth organisation has been perceived as being more militant than the ANC, yet mobilising within the overarching framework set out by the mother body (Glaser, 2012; Mafatshe, 2015).

The Youth League had a clear influence on both the political direction of the ANC in the struggle against apartheid and also in key campaigns and mass mobilisations. This included the Defiance Campaign from 1951 and the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955, after which fractures within the organisation became more prevalent and the banning of political organisations contributed to the decline of the ANCYL (SAHO, 2012). The historic radicalism of the ANC Youth League is seen to be carried through in the organisation from

2008. The affirmation of the political slogan 'economic freedom in our lifetime' and the leadership of the ANCYL under Malema marked a break in the politics of the Youth League in democratic South Africa. Since the democratic breakthrough in 1994, the ANCYL was largely focused on mobilising the youth behind the vision of the ANC rather than putting forward a more radical and militant agenda.

This break in the politics of the ANCYL can be seen from the types of discourses and mobilisations that were used in the immediate post-apartheid period. Since its official re-launch in 1991, the ANCYL's focus had been primarily on the 'twin tasks' of mobilising the youth behind the banner of the ANC and championing youth interests (Botiveau, 2011: 8 ; Mafatshe, 2015: 112). In 1998, the 20th National Congress of the ANCYL was held under the slogan 'Youth mobilisation for the consolidation of people's power' and was largely concerned with the solidification of the post-apartheid state (ANCYL, 1998). The ANCYL congresses of 1998 and 2001 also focused on mobilising young people behind the ideal of a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa – a catchphrase of the ANC at the time. Beyond the slogans and broad programmes, the policies and positions of the ANCYL also affirmed this general thrust. The organisation was supportive of the economic policies of the ANC and aimed to support its efforts at social cohesion.

By 2008 the ANCYL began to take a more radical approach once more, this time in specifically looking to economic policy and social transformation. In 2008, the organisation reaffirmed the goals of the Freedom Charter of 1955 and its resolutions began touching on issues of land redistribution and the continued problems of 'white monopoly capital' in the South African economy (ANCYL, 2008). It was at the 24th National Congress that the ANCYL that the 'Programme of Action for Economic Freedom in Our Lifetime' with the 'seven cardinal pillars' of this struggle were put forward and adopted by members of the organisation (ANCYL, 2011b). These seven pillars included expropriation without compensation, nationalisation for industrialisation, land restitution, decentralised economic growth and the building of a developmental state (ANCYL, 2011b). Regarding social transformation, the ANCYL reintroduced discussions around the lack of real racial transformation and the need for more tangible racial redress. These policies marked a significant shift from those of the ANCYL since its re-launch.

Malema and his leadership of the ANCYL also strongly remobilised discourses of nationalism and attempted to fit themselves into a romanticised notion of the struggle against apartheid. Hart (2014) outlines this in her discussions around the argument de-nationalisation and re-nationalisation in South Africa that is used by the ANC in a hegemonic discourse. One of the points that Hart makes is that Malema returns to a radical nationalist approach to economic and social policy. This nationalism is in keeping with attempts to re-nationalise the political discourse. Effectively, it was this leadership of the ANCYL that placed the organisation and themselves as part of the struggle for national liberation – this time as an extension from political freedom to economic freedom. From 2008, the leadership of the ANCYL made frequent reference to a comparison between themselves and the generation that founded the organisation. The reaffirmation and centralisation of the Freedom Charter from 2008 is a further indication of this shift in the organisation that occurs as Malema takes centre stage. These nationalist tropes and discourses of national liberation that place the anti-apartheid history at the centre are carried through in the EFF. The EFF is based within this matrix of nationalist politics that borrows from the ANC and the ANCYL.

It is common for discussions about the Youth League from 2008 to 2011 to focus heavily on Julius Malema and his role in the organisation. This centering of Malema has been the general trend with regards to discussions around the ANCYL – this is entirely similar to discussions on the EFF. This is one of the problems with a major section of analysis of the ANCYL in that it focuses too heavily on the political figure at the expense of understanding the organisation and its politics. This limitation with the analysis of the ANCYL continues in discussions around the EFF wherein there is a conflation of discussions on the politics of the organisation and discussions on Malema. Having said that, as much as the organisation, its values and ideologies transcend any single political figure, Malema did have an important role to play in how the ANCYL put forward its positions in the public and he became an incredibly important public figure during this time.

It was during this period in the ANCYL that Malema's own political profile was secured, both within the party and outside of it. This has an obvious bearing on the emergence of the EFF and the popular support that it gained right from the start. Malema's rise to power was the subject of numerous discussions and debates. He did not enter the political scene at random but rather built a profile within the ANC-affiliated, Congress of South Africa Students (COSAS) and the ANCYL in his home province of Limpopo (Forde, 2011).

Malema was elected as President of the ANCYL at the 23rd National Congress which was heavily contested and called into question the traditions of lobbying and supporting candidates in the organisation. Despite this contestation, by the 24th National Congress, Malema emerged unopposed and uncontested as the Youth League's President for a second term (Grootes, 2011). By this time, Malema had a strong popular support base and appeal as the ANCYL President (Crowell, 2012: 48).

At the same time, Malema was an immensely polarising figure in the public, enjoying broad support but also a significant amount of disdain and even fear from others. These debates, that are outlined below, should be kept in mind when thinking through the EFF. Many of the arguments share a similar sentiment about Malema and how the EFF has developed – these similarities will be made clearer as the literature review unfolds.

Malema enjoyed considerable public support in spite of the fact that many political commentators and authors critcised his leadership for a number of reasons. These criticisms ranged from arguments around authoritarianism to pejorative and racial populism. Duncan (2011) highlights the similarities between European fascism of the twentieth century and the ANCYL under Malema through comparing the politics of the two. Duncan uses points around the mobilisation of right and left wing discourses simultaneously in the ANCYL, the use of monetary compensation to secure political influence from a section of the bourgeoisie and the prevalence of forms of misogyny as being parallel to fascist politics and economics. Similarly, Xolela Mangcu (2010) argued that there were points of convergence between Malema and the 'language' of fascism. The argument of fascism in the ANCYL under Malema also put forward by the South African Communist Party (SACP). Many others have argued along similar lines that there was a fascist or proto-fascist tendency in the ANCYL at that time (see Bell, 2012; Green, 2013).

Other commentators have acknowledged that Malema has elements of an authoritarian leadership style but have steered clear of the fascism debate or have out rightly denounced it. Pithouse (2010) illustrates in an article how Malema is anti-democratic and demagogic but is not fundamentally fascist. In a later 2013 article, Pithouse further argues that this style of leadership was consistent in the ANCYL during the Malema era and that Malema himself showed no commitment to popular struggles and spoke in a language of Stalinism. Building on this, one of the prominent critiques of Malema was advanced by Achille Mbembe (2011)

in his forward to *The Inconvenient Youth*, a book that focused on Malema and his rise to political power. Mbembe (2011: VI) argues that Malema plugged into a tradition in the history of South African politics that is characterised by 'lumpen radicalism' – referring to a politics of 'unruliness' that encapsulates male power and desire with an appetite for consumption.

A number of commentators also argued that the ANCYL could best be described as populist (Bloom, 2010). This is also one of the prominent critiques made against the EFF. Hart (2013) points out that there was a populist trend in South Africa at the time through looking at the swift rise of both Jacob Zuma and Julius Malema to political power. Malema and the ANCYL during this time are seen as critical figures to this 'populist emergence' of Zuma within the ANC (Shapiro, 2011: 10; Glaser 2009). This analysis of populism often varies in terms of the main crux of the critique and the theoretical underpinnings it. For example Hart (2013a, 2013b) tends towards using a Gramscian framework to explore her argument whilst Vincent (2011: 5 - 10) and others argue around populism that plays into emotional appeals or populist rhetoric with a charismatic leader and a tendency towards racialised and gendered statements.

The literature on populism in the ANCYL also often makes reference to a manipulation of the genuine interests of the poor by a leader that is involved with a political and economic elite. This argument is somewhat problematic in their implicit suggestion that those who support Malema or the ANCYL are 'manipulated, mindless masses', as Hart (2013b) explains. Whilst the problems with this argument are apparent, there are elements of Malema's leadership and lifestyle that do stand out for questioning. Both Posel (2014) and Kotze (2012: 259) indicate that there is an inherent problem in Malema utilising a rhetoric around the poor and disenfranchised whilst simultaneously indulging in a lavish lifestyle. Similarly, writing from an anarchist/syndicalist perspective, Sizovuka and Van der Walt (2013) argue that Malema's representation of the black poor amounts to 'posturing' in order to continue to build networks with a wealthy, black political elite and by extension amass wealth for himself.

Moving away from the arguments related to fascism, authoritarianism and populism, Malema has also been described as an important 'symbolic counterpoint' to the dominant narrative around former President and anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela and the project of the 'rainbow nation' (Posel, 2014: 35; Mokoena, 2012: 1). Weaved into this argument is the fact

that Malema, without rejecting the ideals of non-racialism espoused by the ANC, brought to the fore challenges faced by the poor, black youth. Additionally, Malema raised critical issues around economic oppression and the control over the economy by 'white monopoly capital'. However, Du Preez and Rossouw (2009: 27) argue that Malema has always been a polarising figure in the South African political landscape.

Despite Malema's massive popularity amongst the youth both within and outside of the ANCYL, the relationship between the ANCYL and the ANC began to deteriorate tremendously during Malema's second term (Shapiro, 2011: 29). Together with his National Executive Committee (NEC), Malema was rebuked on numerous occasions for bringing the ANC into disrepute and for polarising the organisation through factionalism (Shapiro, 2011: 29). This eventually led to a series of disciplinary hearings centred around the ANCYL's comments on regional politics in the main. Ultimately, a number of members of the NEC of the ANCYL were expelled as a result of these comments and the general fractures between the youth organisation and the ANC.

What has been outlined in this section is just a brief overview of the history of the ANCYL, important points of discussion from the Malema era and the pertinent debates on Malema and his leadership. This provides a foundation upon which we can begin to understand some of the traditions that have carried over from the ANCYL to the EFF. In addition, the policy position that developed in the ANCYL that have been carried over into the EFF. A crucial point that should be taken away from this discussion is around the major debates about the ANCYL at this time – this will be further reflected on in the next chapter.

2.3. Background to the EFF

Providing an analysis of the ANCYL as a prelude to the EFF lends itself to explaining some of the key foundational points in the EFF. Setting aside the leadership element, the EFF builds on the policy stances of the ANCYL as a basis for forming a political party aimed at attaining economic freedom. These policy stances include the key positions around the nationalisation of mines and the redistribution of land without compensation. In the first declaration of the EFF, drafted on the 27th of July 2013, is outlined the seven 'cardinal pillars' of the movement that form its basis and foundation (EFF, 2013: 1). These points

differed slightly from the seven cardinal pillars of the ANCYL's 'Progamme of Action' (2011). However, there are still major ideological currents that come across in the declaration and points of convergence between it and the Youth League's POA.

The EFF sets out its broad ideological framework in the Declaration mentioned above, asserting that it is a Marxist-Leninist and Fanonian organisation, drawing inspiration from all of these broad ideological points to converge in a way that will deliver socialism and anti-colonialism for the attainment of economic freedom (EFF, 2013: 1). The EFF places itself, through its founding documents, within the tradition and culture of resistance in South Africa since colonialism. They indicate that their role is the ultimate overthrow of white monopoly capital and the economic status quo that is upheld by the current ANC government (EFF, 2013b: 1 -2). Moreover, the Declaration describes the EFF as a 'protest movement'; this is an important factor to consider in relation to political subjectivity within the South African context and will be addressed in later sections of this report. In his speech in Parliament - on the 2014 State of the Nation Address - Malema (2014c) sums up in the aims of his party, those that they purport to represent and the organisations critique of the ANC:

> Our people mandated this movement (the EFF) to come and speak on behalf of the homeless, the landless, domestic workers, security guards, farm workers, cleaners, waiters and waitresses, recipients of social grants, construction workers, the unemployed and poverty stricken masses of our people who are forgotten by the ruling elite which are in bed with the oppressors and the imperialist forces.

This quote illustrates a number of important points. Firstly, there are links between this statement and the nationalism of the ANC, mobilising discourses focused on 'the people' as a pre-existing category. Secondly, it also draws on the radicalism of the ANCYL. The 'groups' – homeless, landless, workers, cleaners and so on - that Malema refers to here were often the subject of the policies of the ANCYL. Despite this strong connection to the ANCYL, on of the critical departures that the EFF makes comes with the inclusion of a Fanonian ideological framework. The EFF places Fanon with Marxist-Leninism – the latter has been a common ideological point in reference in South African politics especially so in the Congress movement. This ideological triad marks a shift from the ANCYL not only in its overt assertion of a socialist framework but also in its theory of race and race relations that was somewhat underdeveloped in the ANCYL.

The EFF partly draws together parts of the South African traditional left as well as elements of the black consciousness movement that existed during the struggle against apartheid and in varied forms in post-apartheid political formations. This inclusion of black consciousness ideologies is evident in the absorption of organisations such as the September National Imbizo (SNI) into the EFF (EFF, 2013c). The SNI was a social movement formation, not a political party, which used a black consciousness philosophy as its ideological underpinning. The work of thinkers such as Biko and Fanon held particular primacy in the organisation but other black consciousness and pan-African thinkers and writers were too an important part of their ideological orientation. The organisation focused on issues such a land restitution, service delivery failures, accountability of the state and the lack of policy that aimed at reducing black poverty and inequality, ultimately arguing that the ANC government defends and maintains the interests of the white minority as well as the new political elite. Together with the absorption of the SNI into the EFF, one of the coordinators of this movement, Andile Mngxitama, was placed on the first National Central Command Team of the EFF (SAHO, 2015).

This ideological strand in the EFF is an important one for its own differentiation from the ANCYL and other ANC affiliated formations. The Fanonian element of the organisation was critical to laying a foundation for the politics of the EFF as fighting for racial justice, being anti-colonial and liberatory. Mngxitama (2014) – who has since been expelled from the party – as well as Shandu (2014) made the argument that the EFF essentially decolonised class theory in South Africa with the inclusion of an element of black consciousness. Mngxitama further argues that "We need Fanon, the black thinker of anti-racism, to keep in check the European sensibilities of the first two [Marx and Lenin] in the holy triumvirate".

Despite the importance of this ideological differentiation there has been some discontent between those that entered the EFF with a Fanonian or Bikoist political background and others in the party. Following the initial entry of the SNI and a Fanonian framework the party has seemed to have an acrimonious relationship between members of the EFF and what is perceived as a 'black consciousness group' (Kgosana, 2014). There were a number of points both before and after the National Assembly of the party that indicated that there was some split in the party in this regard, more on this will be outlined later.

Since the official launch of the organisation a number of important moments for the EFF have occurred. The General Elections of 2014 were crucial to delineating the EFF's support and it gave the party a broad platform to garner support for the organisation, both in terms of electoral results as well as building structures and recruiting members in communities. The party campaigned on an election manifesto that had twenty main points, most of which formed part of the basic principles of the organisation to fundamentally shift the economic and social policies of the country and to create a more equitable society through the redistribution of resources and wealth (EFF Election Manifesto, 2014). The election manifesto echoed the party's general ideological outlook from the beginning but also solidified, in a short space of time, the overarching aims of the organisation.

Following their positive showing in the General Elections, the EFF formed part of the South African Parliament – having 25 Members of Parliament - and held its own National People's Assembly (elective conference of the EFF) – these are further points for consideration in the development of the party. As a related aside, their support in the General Elections was partially mirrored by a growing electoral support for the party's Student Command at universities and colleges. With regards to Parliament, it has been widely held that the EFF has reinvigorated the structure through radicalising the National Assembly (a structure of Parliament) that has come to be known as dull and bureaucratic (Butler, 2014; Makhanya, 2014 ; Van Onselen, 2014). The EFF has been an effective parliamentary opposition party, some however argue that it has been the most effective one since the dawn of democracy (Nieftagodien, 2015: 446).

The EFF has turned Parliament into something of a political theater, often involving various forms of protest. Their parliamentary dress code – red workers uniforms – formed a dramatic formal entry into the space. Suttner (2014) argues that the EFF's powerful use of symbolism in their dress code linked the party to the poor and exploited in the country. The use of this dress code sparked the interest of many South Africans in Parliament as a body of accountability and debate (Davis, 2014; Butler, 2014). The EFF also held the prominent 'pay back the money' campaign leveled against President Jacob Zuma. This campaign in the National Assembly consisted of various forms of protest and disruption of normal proceedings. In this sense, the EFF has carried out a number of, what can be termed, 'elite protests' in Parliament wherein the top leadership carry out the protests on behalf of those they represent.

The National People's Assembly, held in Mangaung, of the EFF is another crucial moment in the party's short history. The Assembly was made up of branches, regional and provincial structures that had officially launched in a short space of time across the country. These structures were formalised after the General Elections until which point the EFF functioned off of interim strucutres. Apart from the conference affirming the EFF's general underpinnings in the form of the cardinal principles of the organisation, the conference also deliberated on a wide range of topics including social transformation, land matters, local government, health and education, the media, international relations and economic transformation (Zwane, 2014). Important resolutions included those that spoke to the abolishment of provincial government, the invasion of unoccupied land, the nationalisation of health services and the establishment of a state-led bank.

Despite this, it was the activities outside of the policy discussions that held more of the public limelight. This included the perceived factionalism between Malema and the Gauteng delegation – or the 'black consciousness faction' and the denouncement of the conference as using 'slate politics' (Kgosana, 2014; Letsoalo & Zwane, 2015). There were claims from within the Assembly of the EFF that it had turned into a 'democratic farce' and that the process of nomination and voting for party leadership had been agreed upon by Malema and those close to him even prior to the commencement of the Assembly (Letsoalo & Zwane, 2015).

Following a public back-and-forth between the party leadership, three members, Mpho Ramakatsa, Andile Mngxitama and Khanyisile Tshabalala, were suspended from the organisation, the official reason for the expulsion was for calling a press conference without the go-ahead of the leadership (Nhlabathi, 2015). The expulsion followed a number of public incidents and unconfirmed accusations, including that the EFF was involved in financial mismanagement, silencing of opposing voices and ongoing factionalism (Whittles, 2015). There were also allegations of the use of violence by party members as a means to silence those that were raising their disgruntlement with the way the party was handling its affairs. These claims of anti-democratic and authoritarian practices in the EFF are widespread and are used as part of arguments that problematise the characterisation of the EFF as a leftist, radical and Fanonian organisation.

2.4. Conclusion

The development of the EFF is ultimately intertwined and connected with both the recent history of the ANCYL and the political figure of Malema. What happens in the years prior to the formation of the EFF sets the stage and opens the space for a new party to be established. Part of the interest in the EFF has been that they occupy, at least in principle, a different political space to the ANC and other major opposition parties. The EFF has placed itself as a radical and militant organisation with its name (in splendid simplicity) standing for its overarching goal of attaining economic freedom. The policies and principles of the organisation continue to be important in defining political debates. This follows a similar trend to the broad support that the ANCYL garnered in its Programme of Action for economic freedom and the connected discourses.

The EFF has also used different political strategies, such as the elite protests in parliament that have allowed the party to build on its image and support base. At the same time, the party has had its own negative internal dynamics - the National People's Assembly stands as a moment when practices in the party were called into question and denounced by those within the organisation. Regardless of this and the split within the party, the EFF continues to characterise itself as a Marxist-Leninist-Fanonian organisation.

3. The EFF and the Question of Populism

3.1. Introduction

This literature review aims to map out the various opinions and analysis formed around the EFF. In attempting to understand the prevailing perceptions and analysis of the EFF, popular media sources and opinion pieces provide valuable insight in this case. What follows moves from the premise that the EFF has had considerable impact on the public discourse and that it continues to command attention within the public space through this. At the time of writing, there have been only a few scholarly articles written about the EFF, hence the emphasis here on popular media and shorter opinion pieces in understanding the public characterisations of the organisation.

A number of important theoretical poles of debate around the EFF can be mapped out from these sources (this is independent from the EFF's own framing of itself as a radical, militant, left-wing and anti-colonial organisation). Arguments here include perspectives that the EFF is fascist or totalitarian, pejoratively populist as well as vanguardist and a new (youth) leftist movement. The literature review therefore outlines these arguments and shows how the research presented in this paper builds on this work but also pushes beyond it in presenting a different way of analysing the EFF.

The second part of this chapter focuses on outlining the theoretical framework and Laclau's concept of populism. The theoretical framework forms a crucial part of the methodological approach of this research, as is mentioned earlier. Moreover, it is this theory that will hopefully set this work apart from other analysis of the EFF in South African politics – this research will hopefully begin to build towards empirically based and theoretically interrogated understandings of the party. This theoretical framework will outline major contributions in the field of populism and will summarise the basic literature on the topic. It will then elaborate on Laclau's work on populism and touch on a number of critiques of this work. Later sections of this report make observations and arguments around the branch life of the EFF; this is used to counter some of the prevailing understandings and characterisations

of the EFF. Furthermore, the fifth chapter of this report specifically makes the argument that the EFF can be understood as populist. Whilst populism in the EFF is a widely discussed topic, the argument here looks at populism from a different perspective and utilises a different theoretical framework.
These critiques are also integrated in a later section on the limitations of Laclau in understanding the EFF.

3.2. Debates on the EFF

3.2.1 Populism and Nationalism in commentary on the EFF

One of the common points in the literature, especially in popular media sources, is that the EFF can be characterised as a populist formation. It must be acknowledged that for the most part this characterisation is negative and populism is deemed as a degenerative form of politics. The use of populism negatively within public discourse is not unusual but follows a global trend in the reading of populist movements. D'eramo (2013: 20), infact argues that populism has come to be seen as a political 'abomination' – a meaning that was acquired over many years.

As mentioned earlier, linking the EFF to populism is also a continuation of the critiques of the ANCYL between 2008 and 2012 and the centrality of Malema in both of these political organisations. As will be illustrated in the later sections on the theoretical framework, one of the problems with such arguments is that the concept of populism is broad and gets deployed without clear agreement on a theoretical grounding. In addition, the arguments around the EFF being a populist organisation have been predominantly negative.

In this respect, it is possible to draw out the literature on populim in the EFF along four broad lines of argument. The first focuses on the centrality of Malema and his character. The second is on the opportunistic appropriation of demands by Malema and the EFF. A thirdly, and more theoretically inclined argument, is on 'political style' of the EFF. Finally, a handful of arguments suggest that the EFF is a 'left-populist formation'.

The arguments that focus on Malema are dominant in the narratives on the EFF. Reference is often made to the notion that he exemplifies the problematic popular leader and that the entire party is built around this one political figure. Populism is therefore characterised by this centrality of Malema and his role in the party. These arguments often see the central role of Malema as running counter to valued democratic and organisational practices. Duncan (2015) whilst not arguing that the EFF is a populist organisation, points out that a kind of politics linked to the necessity of a 'big leader'. In addition a cult that forms around this leader, Duncan argues, is detrimental to the progress of the organisation and has negative implications for democratic practices.

This can be extended into arguments that Malema is 'autocratic' and that the EFF displays 'autocratic totalitarianism' with populist tropes (Masoga, 2014). Masoga (2014) argues that Malema holds his views as crucial and unchallengeable and that despite claiming to speak on behalf of struggling people, he lives an 'opulent' lifestyle. This is similar in some ways to the prominent argument that Malema is a 'demagogue' who manipulates popular sentiments without any rational argument behind these appeals (Sacks, 2014; Posel, 2014: 43). Posel (2014: 32) further argues that Malema, as one of the most prominent figures in South African politics, plays on the politics of spectacle in a manner that consistently provokes emotional responses. In such arguments, Malema's 'populism' is set against formations that seem to have a more well thought through approach to left politics (Southall, 2014: 91). These characterisations problematise either the role of the leader in the EFF or elements of his character and political style.

As noted, the second line of argument in relation to populism centres on what is seen as the opportunistic appropriation of demands and struggles. This analysis still often takes into consideration the centrality of Malema mixed with a sense that the EFF has no particular grounding outside of gaining momentum off of the already existing positions of different groups. Munusamy (2013) and Sosiba (2014) have argued that the EFF's position on issues such as nationalisation of the mines and the expropriation of land tap into popular sentiments within the South African public, yet they are not based in any sound reasoning or response to the actual socio-economic problems within South Africa. Munusamy (2015) continued this argument into her analysis of the xenophobic attacks in the country claiming that the political space in South Africa is littered with a few elites that simply play on these popular sentiments to gain further political relevance.

As part of the EFF's appropriation of discourses, the party is understood at attempting to bring the poor and disenfranchised behind a particular popular project that is fundamentally disingenuous (Ndletyana, 2014). This popular project is inspired by a deep socio-economic inequality in South Africa that allows for populism to flourish, it is this that is exploited and utilised by the EFF and leaders such as Malema (Ndletyana, 2014; WASP, 2014). Once more, one the of the key points in arguing that the EFF is disengenuous is around the wealth and behaviour of the leadership as well as the involvement of a section of the wealthy, black elite in the party. Implicit in this is the suggestion that the EFF cannot truly represent the views of the poor, working class or marginalised due to its relationship with opposing class groupings. In sum, the EFF is populist preciesly because it appropriates popular struggles and demands in order to gain support and relevance in the public.

Sithembile Mbete (2015) puts forward an interesting argument on populism in the EFF in one of the few theoretical pieces on the party. Mbete (2015: 35) argues that the EFF fits into a 'global pattern of populism' that specifically concerns electoral politics. The argument is based on the theoretical work of Moffitt and Tormey (2014) that sees populism as a 'political style' linked to a particular performance of politics. Mbete (2015: 38) argues that the EFF fits into this notion of populism. This is argued through showing that the EFF displays the three main elements of populism as political style; that is an appeal to 'the people', a crisis or breakdown socially and 'bad manners'. It should be noted that this argument marks a shift in the general discourse around the EFF and populism given that it moves from a theoretical premise and does not immediately cast the EFF in a wholly negative light.

The final argument relates to the characterisation of the EFF as a form of 'left-populism'. Gumede (2015) argues that the EFF displays signs of 'African populism' that is on the left of the political spectrum. Nontheless, for Gumede, populism is still undesirable as a political form in Africa. Similarly, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) (2014) have advanced an argument of 'left-populism' in the EFF in that the party makes appeals to the poor against the wealthy. In their article on how to characterise the EFF, WASP argues that 'populism is characterised by a radical appeal to "the people" against "an elite" '. In this account the EFF can be considered progressive and a left-populist movement but with an ever-present danger of moving to the right or to facism if they do not continuously articulate and refine their

progressive agenda and goals, especially with regard to the party's relationship to the black elite and bourgeious (WASP, 2014).

As a prelimenary starting point, this research paper contests these arguments on populism in the EFF. Many of the pejorative understandings of populism are generally not sufficiently grounded in theoretical and empirical work and instead rely solely on the force of Malema to make an argument. Furthermore, other arguments that point to the 'political style' and aesthetics of the EFF are analytically limited and do not allow us to probe the direction of the EFF nor begin to analyse the political identities taking form. Sections of the literature on populism seem to fall into knee-jerk reactions against the party but do engage the substance its public positions or r what this may mean in our broader context.

Nationalism and populism are of course linked in a number of ways. Most obviously, populism commonly makes reference to a 'people' which is also a central aspect of populism. Not surprisingly then, pejorative analyses of the EFF and populism have focused on linking the EFF to a dangerous form of radical nationalist politics. Nationalism has a long history in South Africa – spanning from Afrikaaner nationalism to nationalism in the ANC and other liberation movements and ideologies (Chipkin, 2007). Nationalism has also remained an important part of the constructions of post-apartheid identities. The EFF poses questions about post-apartheid nationalism(s) and how particular constructions of a 'people' come to the fore in a new political climate.

The nationalism of the EFF is also firmly rooted in the history of national liberation and the making of a post-apartheid identity. Gillian Hart (2013b: 13) argues that whilst nationalism was an important part of the struggle for liberation in South African, post-liberation nationalisms still have popular appeal. Nationalism and populism come to coincide powerfully in the post-apartheid context, this is specifically so due to the ANC's emphasis on the 'national question' and the mobilisation of nationalist tropes in maintaining a hegemonic project (2013: 23). Despite no longer being in the ANC or part of that political project, the EFF still often mobilises around similar histories and questions. The EFF is a nationalist organisation – that places a central emphasis on African.

The notion that Malema is a 'radical, African nationalist' emerges from this history in the ANCYL (Sacks, 2014). Radical, African nationalism is viewed as hampering elements of the

leftist political project in South Africa and being limited in its integration of class and race (Sacks, 2014; Harvey, 2014). Broadly, the literature associates the EFF has with a particularly negative and destructive form of nationalism (SASCO, 2013; Friedman, 2014; Harvey, 2014; Sacks 2014). Argument here advance a position that the EFF has a dangerous and ill-developed from of African and Black Nationalism that is not sufficiently grounded in ideology but is again simply used to garner support for the EFF as a party rather than focus on nationalism for social equality and justice.

3.2.2. Fascism and the EFF

Claims of fascism in the EFF were especially common when the party was in its initial stages of formation. There are some links between the pejorative populism arguments and those on fascism. The latter is seen an extension of populist politics with inclusions on a particular type of social constitution and tendency towards radical nationalism. A number of popular commentators, from a diverse spread of ideological and political backgrounds, have argued that EFF is a proto-fascist or fascist organisation (Baccus, 2013; Donaldson, 2014; Mantashe, 2014; Bell, 2013; Van Onselen, 2013). There are, however, significant points of disagreement on why and when the EFF can be seen as a fascist organisation. A good summary of the arguments around fascism in the EFF is offered by Fogel (2013) who points out that despite some disagreements, most who advance the argument of fascism point to the social composition of the EFF as a mixture of a disenfranchised youth and an aspirant or isolated bourgeois with a perceived radical and militant political project.

Baccus (2013) argues that Malema is ‘corrupt, demagogic and authoritarian’ and that he has emerged through a general crisis in South Africa that has opened the space for fascism to emerge. A similar argument is advanced by Bell (2013) who urges that there is an economic crisis and growing levels of inequality in South Africa that have allowed Malema to emerge alongside an intolerant, undemocratic and authoritarian form of politics. These arguments link the perceived emergence of proto-fascism to social conditions and the ability for these to be manipulated under a disingenuous politics that is not steeped in real class based solidarity or struggles.

Mantashe (2014), the Secretary-General of the ANC, on the other hand argues that the EFF is fascist based on its type of aesthetic and the fact that there is a 'hollowness' behind the rhetoric of the EFF. In a similar way to the literature on populism, the arguments on fascism also make reference to political style. Other analysts disagree that there is this hollowness to the principles of the EFF but rather argue that the organisation is fascist precisely because of the ways in which it preys on the poor and disenfranchised whilst using matters of political expediency, such as Marikana, to gain popular traction behind the party (Sangoni, 2014 in Ndlozi & Sangoni).

Finally, the EFF has also been marked as fascist based on it's hyper-militaristic and masculinist culture. This includes both aesthetic elements, such as the military-styled dress and structure of the organisation as well as the political substance of the party. The use of military berets and leadership titles such as 'commander-in-chief' is, it is argued, reminiscent of twentieth century, European fascism. Important policy positions that are identified as fascist include those on supporting Zimbabwe and the ZANU-PF (Baccus, 2013).

These arguments have been heavily contested in public debate and discussions. Many have come out strongly against this tendency in the literature and have pointed out that it is 'inflammatory' and without useful content (Mbete, 2015: 36). The analysis of the EFF as a fascist organisation has been disputed by Pithouse (2013: 1), Fogel (2013), Butler (2013) and Mbembe (2014), amongst others, who have argued that the EFF's political project is fundamentally divergent from fascism given their 'progressive' policy positions on various issues - including homosexuality, patriarchy and anti-xenophobia – as well as their official, public characterisation as a Marxist-Leninist-Fanonian organisation. Rather than being a fascist organisation then, the EFF is seen as shifting towards a leftist politics in the democratic dispensation, even if this is somewhat idealistic or even problematic. Attempts to categorise the organisation as fascist are therefore done in an effort to delegitimise a 'radical project' (Fogel, 2013). Moreover, as Mbembe (2014) puts forward, it is precisely the threat to the status quo that the EFF has launched that is the reason for this deligitimisation through the charge of fascism. Arguing that the EFF is fascist is fact 'abusive' and does not have a sound empirical or theoretical basis (Mbembe, 2014).

There have also been a number of responses from within the EFF and from members of the EFF to the claims that the party is fascist. In his 2013 response to Imraan Baccus, Andile

Mngxitama argued that Baccus lacks any credible grounding for this assertion that the EFF is fascist. Rather, Mngxitama argues that the claim of fascism is advanced by those who see themselves on the 'white left' – which is actually much closer to the right - and who are genuinely afraid of a black, militant, revolutionary movement such as the EFF. Similarly, Ndlozi (2014 in Ndlozi & Sangoni) argues that the critique put forward by the ANC that the EFF is akin to the Nazi Party is actually a reasoning of the white, liberal left and points to an ideological *cul de sac* in the ANC itself.

3.2.3. The EFF as a (Youth) Leftist movement

The previous two sections of the literature have dealt with predominantly negative commentary on the EFF. Those that view the EFF in a more balanced or even in a positive light have argued that the EFF is an important leftist organisation and a necessary addition in the South African political landscape. The central notion here is that the EFF has opened up a new left-wing space in South Africa, a space that they could come to dominate given the perceived failures of the ANC government in bringing forth radical economic and social change (Munusamy, 2013; Pillay, 2014b; Suttner, 2014: 3).

The 'traditional left' has, for many years, remained mobilised behind the ANC and the Alliance. Important organisations such as the SACP and COSATU, that have historically formed a crucial part of leftist and workers struggles, are being contested by new formations such as the EFF. As outlined in the opening part of this report, the EFF is part of a particular post-Marikana politics that has seen a rupture and significant reconfigurations on the left.

In this line of argument, the rise of the EFF should not be seen as a random political moment or as an electoral mistake but rather speaks to the deep sense of injustice that many feel in relation to the democratic project of 1994. The EFF is said to be moving into a 'political gap' on the left caused by the ANC's weaknesses in relation to implementing a real leftist project. Mngxitama, when he was still in the EFF, advanced the position that EFF and Julius Malema have 'decimated' the left and that it would be 'childish' and inappropriate to peruse a leftist agenda outside of the party (Sosibo, 2013b). Mbembe (2014) further argued that the EFF represents a real leftist alternative to the ANC and the current neoliberal trajectory (Mbembe, 2014).

A significant part of the commentary on the EFF and leftist politics is the perceived mobilisation of a radical youth behind the party (Khuthala, 2013). This notion that the EFF represents a leftist turn complimented by a revival of youth activity is an important consideration. Nieftagodien (2015: 449) argues that the EFF is the most important youth organisation on the left since 1994, this despite the inherent problems of elitism and vangaurdism in the EFF. The youth in South Africa, regardless of the democratic breakthrough of 1994, currently face massive socio-economic challenges, unemployment and hardship and the EFF has become attractive to the youth in their calls for economic freedom and radical change (Nieftagodien, 2015: 450).

Although there is a significant amount of scholarly weight behind these arguments, others have maintained that the EFF does not represent the left. The fundamental contention here is that the EFF cannot be conceived of as a leftist movement due to its narrow nationalism and 'misguided' views about what economic transformation would look like (Mboweni 2013, Orleyn & Lephatsa, 2015). Rather, the EFF mobilises a leftist rhetoric for an essentially unsustainable political project based on an elite, nationalist ideology wherein a 'seat at the white masters table' is seen as true inclusion into the economy for poor, black people (Orleyn & Lephatsa, 2015). The political project of the EFF therefore cannot be seen as leftist as it does not aim directly at destroying the basis of capitalism or even the white-supremacist social order in South Africa. In some ways these responses to the claim that the EFF is a leftist formation operate on a similar terrain to the populist argument.

3.3.4. Masculinity and Militarism in the EFF

The militaristic and 'hyper-masculine' culture of the EFF has already been linked to fascism in an earlier discussion, however even arguments that avoid the fascism debate entirely have pointed this out as a problem. Militaristic masculinity and elements of hyper-masculinity have been concerning for many commentators, especially those writing from a feminist or gendered perspective (Pithouse, 2013; Davis, 2014). Once more some of these arguments are a continuation of those made against Malema and the ANCYL during his term as president (see Mafatshe, 2015; Smith, 2014; Mokoena, 2012). The EFF, as with the ANCYL, officially argues that it is a non-sexist party, yet there are a number of aesthetic and symbolic elements

that have led to this narrative being disputed. The EFF undoubtedly uses an aesthetic that has tapped into imagery conveying military power. Elements of this can be argued to hark back to popular imagery around Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and historical notions of defiant militarism in South African history (Suttner, 2015). The EFF has used an aesthetic that is 'performatively militaristic' and has re-deployed powerful images of the anti-apartheid struggle (Nieftagodien, 2015: 447).

Magadla (2013, 2014) outlines that this militarism depends on a certain form of violent masculinity and maleness, to the exclusion of women (Magadla, 2013; Magadla, 2014). At the same time, the party is severely limited in contesting violent masculinities, even on paper (Magadla, 2014). Suttner (2015) further argues that the militaristic masculinity of the EFF is historically based and reinforces dominant patriarchal narratives. Despite having women in leadership positions in the party, the self-representations, portrayals and symbolic engagements indicate that the EFF is a predominantly patriarchal organisation (Suttner, 2015). In addition, the EFF's celebrates and remembers a male-centred history to the detriment of integrating and acknowledging the immense contribution of women in the collective history (Nieftagodien, 2015: 453). A very real question around this matter is whether or not, and how, the EFF privileges an ideal, male subject that works towards the exclusion of women from their 'revolutionary' project.

It should be clear that more still needs to be done in terms of analysing the EFF and its politics. It is evident from this brief look into the literature surrounding the EFF that much of the opinion formed is impressionistic and needs to be pressed further. An important question here is why the EFF has provoked the kinds of responses that it has, especially in the media? The literature shows a clear trend in negative commentary, this even in light of the party's growing support outside of the middle class public opinion. Interestingly, these negative commentaries to the EFF have come from across the political spectrum – both the left and the right.

A large section of the literature is focused on claiming that the EFF is populist or uses similar arguments in critiques of the EFF. Given that part of the aim of this research is to contribute to scholarly work that will allow for a better understanding and analysis of the fledgling party and questions around South African society and politics - the populist argument is a particularly crucial one for further contestation and debate.

3.3. Grappling with Populism

To each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds.
Peter Wiles (1969)

In the introduction to *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy* (2005), Panizza notes how it has become a cliché in academic spaces to simply lament the lack of clarity in the term 'populism'. Indeed this is the case in most discussions of populism (including this one) – it is the first thing that is spoken of, often defeating the very aim of attempting to coherently analyse 'populist' formations. Populism is a contested topic, and even in the space between Peter Wiles 1969 argument around the lack of clarity in the term and Panizza's introduction to a comprehensive book on populism, the same problem remains. Panizza (2005: 1) goes on to argue that populism is a contested concept and that there is not much academic value in trying to merely summarise all literature on this topic. Instead, one should work to distinguish the various approaches to populism. In a similar vein, this theoretical framework will attempt to provide only a brief overview of different approaches to the topic and will finally show the usefulness of Ernesto Laclau's theoretical contributions with regards to this particular research.

There are number of prominent approaches to the political phenomenon of populism. From the outset however, despite major disagreements on the content of the term, a basic consensus amongst many theorists is that populism involves a particular relationship between the category of 'the people' and a political leadership or 'elite' as well as an increase in political participation by average people (Stanley, 2008: 96; Ionescu & Gellner, 1969: 3; Germani, 1978: 95). Moreover, populism is specific to the modern era and often emerges within liberal democratic spaces (Arditi, 2004: 136). A final concept that is frequently referenced in populist literature is the role and prominence of the leader in these movements or organisations (Arditi, 2004: 136; Comaroff, 2009: 6; Carmack, 2000: 151, Di Tella, 1965). The role of the leader is in many cases and to varying degrees considered to be a different role to those played by fascist or totalitarian leaders – although there is disagreement once

more on how this is constituted These traits of populism seem to be a grounding upon which the majority of theorists base their contributions.

Panizza (2005: 3) and Canovan (1982: 544) argue, albeit differently, that the approaches to populism can be clustered in order to make sense of the broad literature around the term. Canovan (1982) sees populist literature in two approaches, the first is the practice of bringing various case studies under one theoretical understanding and the second is what is termed the 'phenomenological approach'. The first approach focuses on studying the empirical data and historic facts in various cases that can be considered 'populism' in order to develop a coherent theory out of this material. The phenomenological approach on the other hand is one that describes populism rather than explaining it through case studies. In the final analysis, Canovan asserts that the first approach is often too broad – allowing for nearly all political activity to be termed populist - and that the second is too narrow – it leaves too much out of the definition. Rather, Canovan advocates for a typological approach as this neither essentialises a theory of populism nor broadens the term unnecessarily.

Canovan's delineation of approaches is important but the typological approach still does not provide the researcher with a workable theory of populism that can be applied to other instances. Simply classifying and ranking cases of what can be considered populism does not do justice to the type of definitional work that is needed in order to even begin a useful typology or to be able to read practical experiences of populism against a theoretical approach.

Following Canovan, Panizza (2005: 3-9) identifies three approaches to populism; empirical generalisations, the historicist approach and the symptomatic reading. The first is very much the type of study that authors such as Wiles (1969) utilised in attempting to employ case studies in order to develop a theoretical approach. The historicist approach on the other hand attempts to link populism to historical generalisations, this approach was employed most frequently when analysing Latin American populism of the twentieth century. Scholars such as Carmack (2000), Di Tella (1965), Collier & Collier (1991) wrote on Latin American populism from the early advances of the phenomenon in Latin America and fit into this approach. Carmack (2000) historically postulates two phases of populism in Latin America, the first being classical with the cases of Brazil, Argentina and Mexico fitting the description, the second being contemporary with cases such as Peru and Chaves' Venezuela. The final

approach, the symptomatic reading, pulls together the case study material, the theory connected to this and historic generalisations about periods of increased populism. This approach incorporates the two previous approaches and fundamentally argues that populism divides society and is a mode of identification that operates within a discursive field. In doing the symptomatic reading aims to illustrate how a theoretical approach concerned mainly with identification and the dichotomisation of society is the most useful one.

Within this broad schema of approaches outlined by Canovan and Panizza, many other contributors have added their weight behind specific definitions and understandings of populism as it has played out in modern societies. Important considerations were made by theorists such as MacRae (1969: 163) who argues that populism has certain ideologies that allows for a subversion of reality. In addition, whilst populism can take on many forms, it is at the root a fervent and passionate politics. Stanley (2008: 106) further argues that populism can be seen as a 'thin ideology' in that it is neither a random political phenomenon nor however, can be present a coherent political programme that lasts over some time. Populism for Stanley (2008: 106) is not a phenomenon that can transcend a momentary existence and is by nature temporary.

A notable feature of the literature on populism that is recounted above is that most of the discussions on populism do not explicitly see it as a wholly negative phenomenon. There are some approaches, such as the typological approach, that do not specifically classify the value or merit of populism as a political form and strategy. Having said that, there are definite indications that the use of the term in the public is pejorative and some of these perceptions of populism prevail even in scholarly spaces. Of course there are theorists have a commitment to arguing that populism is a degenerative form of politics, this is a theoretic contribution in and of itself. In this way, populism is often described as being contrary to democratic practice and values, which many hold as cherished principles both in theory and practice. D'eramo (2013) writes of the negative uses of the term:

> Populism is not a self-definition. No one defines themselves as populist; it is an epithet pinned on you by your political enemies. In its most brutal form, 'populist' is simply an insult; in a more cultivated form, a term of disparagement. But if no one defines themselves as populist, then the term populism defines those who use it rather than those who are branded with it.

D'eramo (2013) goes further still to show how the conflation of the terms 'fascism and populism', often used simultaneously, has extended the confusion and negativity surrounding the term. Zizek (2006) although not a proponent of populism suggests that for certain section of society – the 'liberal-technocratic elite' – populism is already proto-fascist and lacks political reason. The suggestions made by D'eramo partly expose some of the problems with the literature around populism in the EFF (discussed in the literature review); the term is often used to describe the EFF by way of 'insult' rather than a way to understand and characterise the organisation.

It is here that Laclau provides a useful perspective in urging that populism must be seen as form and not content, from this perspective one must not assume a specific ideological stance for a populist movement but rather analyse the form first and the content within this. Moreover, Mouffe (2005) cuts through the kind of assumptions of negativity around populism and outlines what can be termed 'right-wing populisms', using a similar discursive-theoretical approach as Laclau does. This intervention allows for an ideological categorisation inside of populism – that whilst populism is a form of political mobilisation, there can be a variety of ideological underpinnings to different populist formations and that these can exist on both the right and the left of the political spectrum. Fundamentally however, the definition of populism has the malleability to remain the same across right-wing and left-wing varieties, the key difference will be the conditions that allow these divergent ideological forms to appear in society.

Two final considerations must be made before delving into Laclau's work; the relationships between populism and nationalism as well as populism and democracy. The links made between populism and an attachment to nationalism or ideas of the nation seems to be fairly self-evident and it is difficult to pin down clear examples of populism that has transcended national boundaries. As stated previously, populism is mostly constructed around the idea of a nation and of a 'people'. The idea of a 'people' is, in numerous interpretations, constitutive of the populism in itself. Stewart (1969: 180) argues that populism is in fact a kind of nationalism and that it fundamentally mobilises behind the idea of the 'nation' or the national community of the people. It is clear that in much of the literature around Latin American populism, nationalism seems to be a common theme to most of the populist movements (Carmack, 2000: 151). The simple mobilisation of a category of 'the people' within a

national context holds nationalism as a starting principle. Of course a more in depth analysis of the relationship between populism and nationalism can be interrogated, however for the purposes of this research, it is necessary simply to mention that such a relationship has been theorised and that this does have bearing on the EFF's own mobilisation of nationalism.

With regards to the relationship between populism and democracy, the lines cannot be so neatly drawn. There are a number of conflicting points here, some see populism as existing within democracy whilst others see it as a reaction to liberal democracy or even fundamentally anti-democratic. Worsley (1969) first made the link between populism and democracy in arguing that populism was part of political participation in a modern democratic society. Theorists have further argued that populism emerges on the basis of the shortcomings of the democratic elite who become impersonal, this gives rise to a politics where a charismatic leader seems to be more inclined towards 'the people' (Canovan, 1999). By this line of argument, populism highlights the contradictions that are apparent in a modern democracy.

Arditi (2004: 136) takes the view that populism rather than being an ever-present feature of democracy is rather a 'spectre' of it, it visits democracy from time to time based on the conditions of that time. This is similar to those that point out that populism is part of the limitations of democracy. Finally, Meny & Surel (2002) argue that that populists often claim to represent the truth of democracy and hold its central value dear - that there is a will of the people and that they are truly representing this will. Clearly however, the relationship between populism and democracy is a complicated one that has many contested approaches.

Laclua's work on populism forms a major part of the analysis of the EFF in this paper. His contributions include the provision of a substantial theoretical foundation to understand how populism is constructed and the constitution of a particular political subjectivity connected to it. Laclau's work on various social and political concepts is broad an extensive. As such, this research paper will look specifically to his work on populism and even more specifically to his later writing on the concept – this includes *On Populist Reason* (2005), *Populism: What's in a Name?* (2005) and *Why Constructing a People is the Main Task of Radical Politics* (2006). An important earlier piece *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (1977)*, will be engaged at a later stage in this paper in attempting to negotiate some of the major limitations of his later work on the populism.

At its heart, Laclau's theory deals with two problems in the study of populism. Firstly it moves away from analyses that views populism as an irrational form of politics and secondly it provides a coherent theory of populism that shifts from understandings of populism that are so broad that the concept loses any definite character. Laclau's starting point for understanding populism makes this fundamental intervention in arguing that populism is form and not content (2005a, 2005b, 2006).

A movement is not populist because of it's contents or ideological direction but because of the 'mode of articulation and representation' of that content, regardless of the content itself (2005a: 2). Within this, Laclau argues that populism follows a logic of equivalence and antagonism with a synechdochic underpinning in relation to demands and a populist leader (Beasley-Murray, 2005). This means that Laclau does not constrain populism within any specific existent political movement or ideological bloc, rather he argues that it is a political form under which many different configurations of content may exist. In this way, he does not rule out that both movements on the right and left of the political spectrum could indeed be populist, Laclau is concerned with how populism manifests as a form of the political. As part of his broader post-Marxist commitments, Laclau's theory of populism also does not fall into reductive thinking that privileges class struggles and antagonisms. Populism need not, in this framework, be an immediate hindrance to working class struggles or representations of marginal voices. This assertion is also a powerful entry point of the theory into this research on the EFF, especially in a space where the literature is so skewed towards negative understandings of populism.

Laclau sets out a number of critical features of populism within his theoretical analysis, most of this requires basic level of understanding of demands and social agents (2005b). In addition, Laclau's notion of populism is intricately linked to a perspective on the 'people' or a collective of social agents (2005a). Laclau begins building towards an understanding of populism and 'popular subjectivity' by acknowledging the importance of the single demand. This is the smallest unit of analysis that is directly born out of a request from a group of people against an authority or power bloc (2005a: 4). In general, Laclau's theory of populism concerns antagonisms that split society into two camps – the power bloc and the 'underdog'. This dichotomisation begins to appear when solidarity is formed in the demands.

These sets of unsatisfied demands create an 'equivalential chain', this chain in critical to the formation of populism as it speaks to the relationships of equivalence and antagonism present in instances of populism (Laclau, 2005a: 5). The relationship of equivalence between demands is something of an extension in Laclau's broader work on political theory that concerns equivalence and difference in constructing social antagonisms. Despite the particularity of the demand, each demand forms part of a larger set of social claims, hence the 'synechdochic' arrangement of populism (Laclau, 2005a: 5).

Laclau further argues that popular subjectivity is formed through a plurality of unsatisfied demands together with an 'institutional inability' to absorb these demands (Laclau, 2005a: 6). To return again to the dichotomisation of the social, the equivalential chain is premised on a division of the social into 'power' and 'underdog', this would mean a shift away from fighting for singular demands to fighting a structure (2005a: 5). A constitutive element of populism is the 'people' on one side of the social dichotomisation (2005b). It is through this process of the creation of equivalential demands – demands that link together to form a solidarity without a hierarchy of demands – and an 'internal frontier for populism' as well as the dichotomisation of the social that allows Laclau to argue for the constitution of a class of 'the people'.

Popular leaders, in Laclau's framework, come to embody this connection of demands and a common opposition. Laclau uses the conceptual tools of empty and floating signifiers to outline the role and position of the leader in a populist formation (2005a: 7, 2005b). The concept of the empty signifier requires brief elaboration due to its complexity and broad uses in political theory. Laclau's use of the term builds on the extended work of Saussure and Lacan on the concept of signification. Saussure looked at the concept from a linguistic perspective whilst Lacan extended the notion of signification to the realm of psychoanalysis. Laclau followed this tradition and focused on using linguistic and psychoanalytic work in analysing the social and political.

Saussure argued that in linguistics, signs are divided into two parts, the signifier and the signified (Kontagiannis-Mandros, *). This system is however fundamentally unstable - there is no possibility of anchoring the object – and it allows for constant change and alteration. This way of dividing signs also means that signifiers often lack full positive content, this brings difference into view as an important defining linguistic feature (Rebello, 2008: 7).

With the system of linguistics being so unstable, Lacan introduces the concept of the 'master signifier' that provides meaning to chains of signification and comes to provide some stability. Empty signifiers however, have no specific content or representative meaning; they are empty and can be filled with meaning. Populism requires an investment in a 'partial object' and become a symbol of fullness (2005a: 116).

For Laclau, within this system of signs and signification, 'empty signifiers' come to represent the system itself – it has a representative content (Rebello, 2008: 7). Empty signifiers can provide this representivity precisely because they have no content and can come to stand for a chain of signifiers. Laclau uses the concept of empty signifiers to explain a wide variety of political phenomenon, this paper uses the term very selectively from his work on populism and the role of the leader – which Laclua explains through the concept of the empty signifier. Empty signifiers can connect and embody, as a whole, various different demands and signs.

Laclau argues that empty and floating signifiers are used to draw together heterogeneous demands and social actors into one political formation. This formation has a 'popular sign' that is used representatively and for the purpose of identification (2005a: 8-9). The logical conclusion of the empty and floating signifiers within the chain of equivalence is that a populist leader emerges as the ultimate empty signifier of the movement (2005b). A 'people' therefore identify with the populist leader through the empty signifiers that are part of the construction of this popular identity. Implicit in this is that there is an obvious ambiguity within populism - this is both a strength and a weakness of this political form. Empty signifiers do not present a fullness in content. This is a strength precisely because this means that what is represented can shift and change but it is also a weakness in that populist movements are often critiqued due to their inability to present a coherent account of demands in a stable form. In sum, the place of the leader in Laclau's populism is to embody and represent the chain of equivalence and draw together divergent demands into one collective project.

A final consideration that will now be turned to is the place of collective subjectivity in Laclau's populism. Throughout the development of populism – from the demand to equivalence and antagonistic dichotomisation – a collective identity is forged around the unity of demands (2005b: iv). However, Laclau also notes that there is nothing essential or automatic about the construction of 'the people' (2005b: 2000). Importantly, for Laclau this

collective identity does not need to form part of any pre-given identity - he does not privilege a specific type of social antagonism (for example class struggle). Instead, it is the category of 'the people' that fundamentally sustain any form of populism. Laclau's theory gives an approach to the formation of the subject through a process whereby the political identity is dissolved and then absorbed into a universal collective of 'the people'. The political subject of populism is created out of this dissolution and reconfiguration.

I will not turn to looking specifically at the meaning of collective subjectivity in this paper. Laclau's work on populism identifies a mode of developing collective subjectivity through popular interpellations, building on the work of Althusser and departing from it at later points. Of importance to this research is what Mouffe (2005: 70) terms the creation of a 'we' and a collective identity that centres on the discourse of 'the people'. With regards to this research, the key question is around the creation of a 'we' in the political project of the EFF. As Domingues (1995, 2014) outlines, the attraction to understanding matters of collective subjectivity is in grappling with questions around what is constitutive of a collective subject and how this subject is constituted within a political organisation. For Domingues (2014: 5) the collective subject is never truly self-constituted – as this would take for granted problematic enlightenment values about the centred and fully reflexive subject – but is brought into a collective subjectivity through interplay with various social systems and other subjects. Subjectivity then, is relational and not isolated. This research works from this approach in attempting to understand what forms part of constituting a collective subject and how an actor becomes subsumed into this project (the creation of a 'we').

An important element of the creation of the collective subject or identity is based on the 'chain of equivalence' and synechdochic nature of populism as well as social antagonism (Laclau, 2000: 55). A political identity is formed through a representation of a particular demand through a chain of equivalence, without this there is no political. Therefore, there is an identification with a particular signifier that emerges through a chain of equivalence, creating a collective subjectivity. The 'we' that Mouffe speaks of is created when an 'I' identifies with a universal signifier, thereby dislocating itself from a previous subjectivity into a collective. It is this fundamental identification with the universal empty signifier that opens the path to a collective political subjectivity or identity. The logic of equivalence is what allows for the division of the social into an 'us' versus 'them' or a people and an enemy, thereby creating a collective political subjectivity. Interpellation here, the way a subject

becomes a subject and not simply an individual, is important in incorporating one into a political field (Brody & Schirato, 2010: 27). Finally, collective subjectivity within Laclau's conception exists within the field of discursive construction and identification – this follows other aspects of his work on discourse and hegemony (Harrison, 2014: 46).

Finally, there are a number of critiques have been leveled against Laclau's conception of populism. Briefly recounting the salient points of critique is useful in avoiding certain theoretical lacunae during analysis. These critiques form part of my discussion on the limitations of Laclau towards the end of this research report and will be considered in this light once more.

The critiques of Laclau's work vary from those that argue against his conceptual foundation to those that question a limited understanding of history and practicality in his theory. One of the pertinent critiques of Laclau's work on populism is that it does not provide a basis for understanding the difference between various forms of populism. This is a conceptual problem with Laclau's notion of the popular subject and popular interpellations. A sustained critique of this nature came from Slavoj Zizek in his *Against the Populist Temptation* (2006) wherein he argues that there are a number of critical flaws in Laclau's work with regards to the question of revolutionary subjectivity and populism.

Essentially, Zizek (2006: 554) postulates that it is impossible for populism to simply be form and not content due to the fact that any movement with a communist or truly leftist content cannot be populist as the universal (empty) signifier will always be communism rather than a populist leader. The popular interpellation, present in Laclau's work, is necessarily different from a class interpellation and therefore Laclau's popular subject lacks class content and cannot take on a leftist approach (Mouzelis, 1978: 47). Furthermore, Zizek charges Laclau with bracketing questions of 'revolutionary subjectivity' and what this means for the possibilities of populism (Weber, 2011: 15). A similar problem is identified by Hart (2013a: 304) who argues that Laclau 'empties class theory' from populism in focusing on the non-class interpellations of populism. Hart builds here on a critique of Laclau's earlier (1977) work on populism that was advanced by Ari Sitas (1990: 267) around the theory being unable to allow us to distinguish between authoritarian and progressive forms of populism with class alliances.

In response to Zizek, Weber (2011:11) shows that populism requires a political enemy, this enemy can take the form of the capitalist system or other enemies that the revolutionary subject would seek to destroy thereby not necessitating that all populism is right wing. Precisely the usefulness in Laclau's theory is this unwillingness to privilege certain political ideologies as the goal of the political. In addition, whilst the leader plays an important role in populism, this does not immediately mean that the leader is the objective of the formation. Put another way, revolutionary subjectivity and a popular subjectivity are not mutually exclusive, as Zizek would have it.

Moving beyond the question of revolutionary subjectivity, there are a number of critiques on the role of the leader in populism. Arditi (2010: 490) contends that in elevating the leader to the place of the empty signifier, Laclau undermines his attempts to view populism as a form of empowering politics. Laclau insists that populism should not simply be seen in a pejorative sense – demagogy, irrational manipulation or the denigration of the masses – but as a form of politics that can be representative of marginal voices. The status of the leader is therefore excessive precisely because it is the leader that provides the symbolic unification and embodiment of the demands of 'the people' yet it is the people that are subject to the dictates of the leader (Arditi, 2010: 491).

As mentioned above, some critiques hit at the empirical and practical limitations of Laclau. One of these critiques is that Laclau's historical analysis of populism is unfounded and incomplete (Beasley-Murray, 2005; Mouzelis, 1978: 53). Despite finding a starting point of studying populism in his own experience of Peronism in Argentina, Laclau is unable to account for why populism has become specifically prevalent at certain historical points (Beasley-Murray, 2005). In addition, Laclau attempts to trace the rise in populism to 'crisis within the dominant ideology' or a social crisis, however it is unclear how he grounds this particular claim in any empirical data. This may not be a serious critique given that Laclau often operates on a level of theoretical abstraction and political theory, however it must be considered in the context of this research and in understanding the social conditions that allow for a tendency towards populism in the EFF. Furthermore, this needs serious consideration given the claims that there is a rise in populism within the South African context (see Munusamy, 2015; Camaroff, 2009: 4).

A final critique that is pertinent to this research is that Laclau does not locate populist mobilisation within the context of organisations or political parties (Mouzelis, 1978: 50). This means that Laclau ignores the political-structural elements that play a role in negotiating populist interpellation. Therefore, one is unable to understand through Laclau's work, the role that an organisational form plays in relation to building popular support. This critique is relevant partly because this research applies a theory of populism to a particular case study centred on a formal political organisation. Given this critique, this research does take into consideration the need to understand certain organisational forms and looks into this question in some depth.

Laclau's framework on populism provides a valuable theoretical framework for analysing the EFF. Firstly, Laclau offers a way of understanding the EFF as a popular movement within South Africa in a scholarly manner that avoids the immediate pejorative nature of claims that the EFF is populist as is often the case in popular media sources and opinions. Moreover, Laclau's work on populism and collective subjectivity provides a basis for understanding how individuals come to form part of the EFF as a collective as well as the type of organisation that the EFF is, understood from a level of empirical research.

A fundamental problem in the application of ideas of populism in the South African context has been the use of the term as a way to critique and attack without utilising a framework that advances a clear position on what populism is. This is not only specific to the EFF but has also been used to explain Jacob Zuma's rise in the ANC and how populism has led to certain problems in the organisation. Pieces such as Halisi (1998: 426), Comaroff (2009) and Vincent (2011) speak to precisely this kind of analysis around populism within South Africa. Whilst there can be an acknowledgement of populism within the EFF, centred both around the character of the organisation and its leaders, this must be constituted in such a way that does not immediately fall into racialised and unformed ideological discourses that do not necessarily take into consideration why and how the EFF gains its populist appeal amongst average supporters and members. In the review of the broad literature on the EFF it is revealed that charges of populism within the EFF are often conflated with fascism and the ideological, political and policy character of the organisation. All of these link populism with specific content rather than the form of the organisation – it is here that Laclau is once more a useful point to start an analysis. Finally, Laclau's discussions on collective subjectivity and political identity are of further importance to this project. These concepts are important to

answering the research questions, as outlined earlier, and offer a theoretical grounding to these questions.

4. Branching down: The Establishment of EFF Structures in Marikana

4.1 Introduction

The establishment of the EFF presents a thought-provoking process of managed democratisation and the top-down establishment of party structures. The announcement to form an organisation for 'economic freedom' was made by Malema in early July of 2013. Following this a 'National Assembly' on the question 'What is to be done' was formed by Malema and his close supporters and allies on the 26th of July 2013. This session drafted a declaration that set out the cardinal principles of the organisation as well as its ideological perspective. Following this meeting, the party registered to contest the national elections and had double the five-hundred members required in order to register (SAPA, 2013). The EFF then set up a Central Command Team, with Malema as the Commander-in-Chief, and began to appoint 'provincial command teams' that would be tasked with setting up interim branch structures. These structures stayed in place until after the General Elections in May 2014. In the Guidelines to the National People's Assembly after the elections, the EFF acknowledges two phases in its organisational development:

> The first phase of the EFF's formation was establishment with the immediate task of contesting the 2014 General elections, and the phase we are entering into now involves building the organisation. To do so, guidelines should be provided to all members and structures of the EFF across South Africa so as to ensure that there is standard and consistent form of how the EFF is organised on the ground.

Following the General Election, official structures (rather than interim ones) were 'launched' and put in place through holding Branch People's Assemblies which are elective meetings and can only take place once their were over 100 members in the area. These permanent structures are intended to carry out the general work of the organisation outside of the electoral period. This includes involvement in the communities and running a number of programmes and campaigns of the EFF. In addition, the first official *election* of the National Command Team (CCT) happened a long time after the organisation was set up, contested the general elections and launched its branches. The first CCT was a self-appointed structure that did not have a clear grounding, official branches or grassroots formations.

One of the key drawbacks in the literature is that very little work that has been done to shed light on the day to day life of branches and the functioning of the EFF. This section of the research report aims to do precisely this work through analysing the Marikana branch of the EFF. This analysis will do three things, firstly it presents to the reader a better understanding of the life of the branch, secondly it offers a view into understanding the structure of the EFF – despite the clear limitations of looking at only one branch – and finally it throws light on the political space that the EFF occupies and forms of collective subjectivity developing within this formation. In an effort to better understand the EFF and ground the discussion in realities and experiences 'on the ground', this chapter will look at how the branch of the EFF functions and what this information allows us to say about it's democratic practices, the constituencies that the EFF attracts, as well as EFF's relationship with other organisations.

As the methodology outlines, this chapter is based on two streams on information – information gathered from the EFF's official platforms that explain its structures and the data from the participant observation and the field research (semi-structured interviews and

participant observation). The information provided by the EFF gives a background to the processes involved in the establishment of the party and building its organisational structures. The data from the field research allows us to discuss the practical functioning of the branch and provides a better picture of how members and organisers understand the EFF. For the most part, the field research for this report began after the General Elections and therefore involved observing the official launch of the Marikana branch as well as other developments in the branch leading up to the regional, provincial and national elective conferences of the EFF.

I begin by outlining and discussing the membership base of the organisation in terms of general demographics as well as previous political affiliations. I then explain how meetings are conducted and the members' understanding of the organisational structure and how the Ward/Branch Command Team relates to the national, provincial and national structures. This is followed by a discussion about the branch programmes and events in relation to the broader community of Wonderkop and Marikana. Finally, this chapter will detail how participants understand their own personal roles in the EFF as well as the relationships developing between the EFF branch and other organisations based in the area, this includes the women's group Sikhala Sonke as well as AMCU and the United Democratic Movement (UDM).

4.2. Membership Base

A number of assumptions have been made about the membership base of the EFF and the groups or constituencies that would be attracted to the organisation, yet not much is actually known about the EFF 'on the ground'. As a sort of disclaimer, it is acknowledged that this

discussion on the membership base is quite context specific – it is based on a mining area with a very specific and in some ways unique recent history. This means that the branch has particular socio-economic and political dynamics that do not necessarily extend beyond this context. The platinum industry and the spaces that have developed around this industry already have a specific dynamic, added on to this is the Marikana Massacre that significantly altered the political climate and sentiment in the area as part of significant political reconfigurations. That said, looking at the membership base of this branch offers important insights for how we think about and understand the EFF.

As an introductory remark to this section, one of the common assumptions made about the membership base of the EFF is that it is a youth organisation. This report takes youth to mean those between the ages of 14 and 35 years old – this is the generally agreed upon definition and is referenced in the National Youth Policy (2014), the African Youth Charter of the AU (2006) as well as the ANCYL constitution and the EFF resolution on setting up the Youth Command. Unlike most other political parties in South Africa, the EFF's leadership is made up of the youth and it is one of the only political parties wherein younger members are at the helm of the organisation. Given the historical context within which the EFF emerged, the organisation is perceived as having drawn large sections of support from the ANCYL. A 2013 study based on youth between the ages of 18 and 34 and their sentiments towards political parties showed that the EFF held considerable sway amongst the youth, both in terms of voting for the party but also in support for many of the organisations policies and principles (Khuthala, 2013).

As outlined earlier, scholarly and opinion pieces have also advanced this way of thinking about the EFF. In showing that the EFF is one of the most important post-apartheid youth formations, Nieftagodien (2015: 448) argues that the organisation appeals not only to a

general youth constituency but also more specifically to a black, disenfranchised youth. With massive youth unemployment, structural exclusion of the black youth from educational and economic opportunities as well as a range of other socio-economic challenges facing the youth, the EFF has been seen as able to mobilise this constituency (Nieftagodien, 2015: 450). The EFF in Marikana has quite a substantial membership given that it is a new political organisation that only recently formalised its structures. At the time of their elective meeting in September of 2014, the branch had over 400 members, since then this number has increased as active members have continued to carry out frequent recruitment drives and campaigns. This number was well over the required amount of 100 members in order to launch a branch of the EFF, according to the organisations guidelines for launching branches. To be considered as a member of the organisation, one would have to fill out the EFF membership form and submit it to the branch with the R10 joining fee. The membership seemed from the outset to cut across age and gender and appeared to have the support of a number of unions and community organisations in the area.

At the start of the field research one of the most striking features of the branch was that it seemed to be made up of older participants who did not fall into the category of youth. Given the common perception about the EFF and the youth appeal, the immediate expectation would be do see many young people campaigning for the party and spearheading its activities. Despite this expectation the Marikana Branch of the EFF indicates a very different narrative around those who are attracted to and support the party. The participant interviews for this research show a bias towards those over the age of 35, this was due to the fact that there were only a limited number of young members of the EFF who were present during the field research or who were active in the branch. This make-up of the membership and participation in the Marikana branch already calls into question the common assertion that the EFF attracts support from mainly from the youth, at the very least it complicates this notion.

Given that the research was conducted on the platinum mining belt, it follows logically that a large number of the members would be mineworkers – this was clear in the field. Importantly, a substantial part of the EFF's membership base in Marikana is made up of mineworkers who are *unionised*. These members form part of - what is considered to be - the organised working class. All of the mineworkers interviewed during the field research were members of both AMCU and the EFF and joined the EFF after having joined the union. The mineworkers were, in general, more active and influential than those that form part of the youth.

Even with the large number of the EFF members coming from an organised working class background, unemployment is a major factor and motivating force. The majority of those that were interviewed during the course of this research were either employed at the Lonmin platinum mine or remained formerly unemployed, despite some of them earning an income through informal sectors. Themes of unemployment, socio-economic challenges and social precariousness are very much a part of the EFF and its ability to mobilise. This however should not underplay the fact that even those who are employed in the mining sector face a number of serious socio-economic challenges due to the exploitative nature of this industry. This adds a layer to the discourses that the EFF utilises.

Gender was also considered in the field and once again a striking point was the involvement of women members of the EFF at the forefront of the organisation. The women's group in the area, Sikhala Sonke, also had a significant influence in the Marikana branch – this will be discussed in detail in a later section of this chapter. Given this influence, at many EFF events and meetings there was a solid representation of women. Furthermore, it was a core group of women who appeared to do a large amount of the administrative, logistical and political work

in the organisation. This presence of active women members does not refute the claims that the EFF is a masculinist organisation (see Magadla, 2013 ; Pithouse, 2013, Davis, 2014), as this would require a much deeper and more sophisticated level of analysis of gender relations, but it does suggest once more that there are a number of complexities around the role of women in the EFF.

Looking into the previous political allegiances of the participants and their support for political formations prior to the formation of the EFF allows us to map out the political shifts and reconfigurations on a lower level. Not surprisingly, the large majority of EFF members were either members or supporters of the ANC, with varying degrees of participation in that organisation, prior to joining the EFF. In all previous elections – both general and local – the ANC had maintained a good electoral majority in the area. Some participants spoke to their own previous political affiliations and also to the political histories of other members, or at least their perceptions of this history. The quote below illustrates a common response from participants in outlining their political histories in the ANC as well as their levels of involvement before joining the EFF. The general sense is that there was a stable and historic electoral allegiance to the ANC with limited active participation in the organisation:

> Participant 19: Yes, I was in the ANC. I was involved with the ANC for about three years, I was not necessarily heavily involved but I was supporting the ANC, especially during the times of elections.

Importantly, the support for the ANC was, for the most part, electoral and did not take the form of consistent political activity. As is to be expected, people's narratives on the shifting of political allegiance from the ANC to the EFF can, for the most part, be linked to the Marikana Massacre. Later sections will elaborate on the disgruntlements with the ANC

extending beyond the Massacre however in terms of the shift in support, the Massacre stands as a moment of rupture for the participants and members of the EFF in the area. For instance:

> Participant 4: We are coming from the ANC you see. I left the ANC when they took the decision to kill our people in Marikana, when the people wanted their employer to come and address them at the Koppie.

Others echoed this personal reflection in their own recollection of events following the Massacre that led to their involvement in the EFF. Following the Massacre, those that were active members of the ANC ceased to participate in the organisation whilst those who had supported the organisation without participating also took a decision to personally withdraw this support. As important part of this process of re-alignment is that after the Massacre, these members did not immediately join a different political party, as the EFF was not yet formed by then, but instead consciously left the ANC. The EFF only formed ten months after events of August 2012 and it must be kept in mind that many other political parties – including the UDM that has historically had support in the area – were active in the area to lend political support following the Massacre.

Given that this historic support for the ANC seems to have been a trend with the participants, only a very small number of members cited that their political activity started with the EFF. This response was uncommon yet still illuminates something about the powerful mobilisation of the EFF in the area. One respondent, despite being over the age of 60, in particular was clear about this and her reasons for participating in the EFF:

> Participant 12: No, it [the EFF] was the first organisation that I joined, since I was not interested in the ANC, because I was not a politician. I started to be a politician with Malema.

This illustrates the impact that the EFF, and Malema, have had on the Marikana community. However, it was only a minority of participants who were not active in politics before the formation of the EFF are accompanied by an even smaller minority of those interviewed that were involved with a political party other than the ANC. Only two participants stated that they were supporters of any organisation other than the ANC; one member was with the UDM and the other a supporter of the Democratic Alliance. The presence of the UDM in Marikana is picked up on and discussed more thoroughly in a later section which deals with the EFF's relationship to other organisations in the area. The DA on the other hand was largely non-existent in the area.

A number of conclusions can be made in terms of the membership base of the EFF in Marikana. The Marikana Branch is predominantly not made of active youth members. Instead, those that are active in the branch are older than 35 with some of the participants even being over the age of 60. In addition, one of the major streams of support for the EFF comes from those that are employed and unionised with a political background stemming from union activities. Furthermore, this discussion indicates that the strikes in the platinum industry and the Marikana Massacre were key reasons in the decline in support for the ANC - who enjoyed a majority in the area - they were also critical to the support for the EFF once the party was formed.

4.3. Branch meetings and decision-making

The ways in which decisions are made, and how branch meetings function forms part of understanding the character of an organisation through its practice of politics. In addition, consideration must be given to whether and how the political tradition of the ANC and the ANCYL has filtered into the EFF. The key focus of this section is on how the EFF in Marikana practices politics.

The branch of the EFF in Marikana was launched and became an official structure on the 6th of September 2014. Prior to this it had existed as an interim structure for a number of months. During the elections campaign, the EFF nationally had set up various Ward Command Teams (WCT) that were appointed, interim structures that coordinated the EFF within different wards or regions and recruited members. The WCT is typically made up of a Convener, Coordinator and eight other members (EFF, 2014b). These WCTs were crucial in the mobilisation for elections, particularly in the Marikana area wherein participants noted that the WCT coordinated door-to-door campaigns (these involve canvassing support by going to each household and campaigning) as well as visibility campaigns in order to get members of the community to vote for the EFF:

> Participant 1: …you know before the [General] Elections we were doing house to house, and then playing music for the people, we used to be there next to the taxi rank and there next to the stadium, we were standing in all places.

Door-to-door campaigns are a common electioneering strategy in South African elections and require a number of members to conduct the campaign in order for it to be successful. Other participants echoed this account of the work carried out by the WCT and other members

during this period. The election campaign was a significant time for the EFF nationally to recruit members and consolidate a support base in a relatively short but intense period. A few participants in this research indicated that they too had joined the EFF during the campaign after being approached by other members and the WCT. Following the elections, and a generally good showing of support for the EFF in the area, the WCT continued to focus on recruitment drives in order to gain enough members in order to constitute the Branch People's Assembly (BPA) and officially launch the structure in Marikana. According to the EFF's Central Command Team Guidelines leading to their National Peoples Assembly (NPA), a BPA should elect a Branch Command Team that is made up of the following:

> Branch Command Team refers to a committee, which is elected in a Branch People's Assembly by members of the EFF in a specific ward. The BCT should have a 1) Chairperson, 2) Deputy Chairperson, 3) Secretary, 4) Deputy Secretary, 5) Treasurer and 10 Additional Members.

The BPA of the EFF in Marikana sat, on the 6th of September 2014, to elect people into these positions. The branch had already decided to stipulate the portfolios of various members of the BCT, these portfolio's included communications, land and rural development, mining and minerals, social development and fundraising. The elective meeting was officiated by a 'regional deployee' who presided over the meeting and ensured that the election of a BCT occurred at the meeting and that the branch had the sufficient membership that was required in order to hold the BPA.

From the start of the meeting there was little political discussion and it focused solely on the election of a BCT and the official establishment of the branch. Overall, the meeting ran smoothly and did not have a lot of contestation however, it did take a considerable amount of

time to explain to the members of the EFF how the election of a new BCT would take place. The need for a drawn out explanation was an initial indication that many of the members did not have extensive organisational history or experience with branch elections processes. This was especially so given that the running of the meeting was similar to the way in which the ANC's elective meetings are held and that many members were previously affiliated to the ANC. For example, the process of nomination and election followed a similar procedure to those in the ANC. The process to be followed at a BPA is outlined in the EFF's guidelines here again:

> After the presentation of the political overview, the RCT deployee should ask for nomination of the Branch Command Team (BCT), whose positions should be Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Treasurer. After the election of the Top 5 positions, the deployee should preside over the nomination and election of 10 additional members. In instances where there is contestation for the Branch Command Team, voting shall be by show of hands. All BCT's of the EFF shall be constituted by a minimum of 50% females, meaning that in a WCT of 15 Members, a minimum of 7 shall be females. (EFF, 2014b: 4).

At the Marikana Branch launch, the regional deployee outlined this as the process for nominations and elections - the meeting did not follow this process as it is stipulated. Instead, once the deployee opened up for nominations for the chairperson of the branch, a list of names was given to the deployee that comprised of all fifteen members of BCT. This list was presented on the basis that it was the desired list for the leadership of the branch. The deployee, in an effort to follow some democratic procedure, requested from the membership if there was any other name or contestation for any position on the BCT or if the list was the

generally accepted view of the branch members to which the members responded that there were no further names and no contestation. The members adopted the list of names and a new BCT was officially established in the branch.

This process raised a number of noteworthy issues for analysis. Firstly the length of time that it took for the deployee to explain the elections process to members, as was mentioned above, provided an indication of the levels of organisational participation of the members. More importantly, the lack of contestation and an absolute absence of disagreement with the list that was presented were striking. There are a number of possible reasons that could be thought through regarding this way of electing a branch leadership. One of the suggested reasons was that the members held informal consultations in the build-up the meeting. In political organisations informal meetings to discuss the election of members into positions are not uncommon. The types of discussions and informal meetings that may have informed the decision by members to accept the list without contestation became a point of interest in this research.

In addition, a link that can be made between the EFF's elections process at its National People's Assembly and this BPA. In many respects they were similar, barring the lack of complaint or disgruntlement with the process at the branch level. During the National Assembly, many dissatisfied members of the EFF accused the party leadership of formulating a list with a 'leadership slate' to be elected and not allowing for open and transparent contestation of elections (Zwane & Letsoalo, 2014). Similar complaints were made at a number Provincial Assemblies wherein reports of 'arbitrary disqualifications' from standing for elections were leveled against the party's top leadership (Pillay, 2014). There are points of convergence between these wider practices that are alleged to be common in the EFF and the election of a branch leadership in Marikana.

Following the BPA, one of the questions that was added to the participant interviews was around the process that was followed both before and during the meeting. None of the participants interviewed registered any sentiments of disagreement with the list or the way in which the BPA was run and handled. However, there were a number of contradictory views on the elective meeting and how the list for the meeting was developed. Participant 1, who is one of the additional members of the BCT outlined that the list was developed out of a common understanding amongst the members of the branch:

> Participant 1: People here, around Wonderkop, some of them they know us so I think because they know us, this one can be good to be the Chairperson, this one can be good to be the deputy chairperson, this one can be good to secretary all that stuff. I think its just because they know us, our weak points and our strong points, they know us. Some of them, when they were voting there, who is going to be chairperson were voting, raising their hand, they know us well…we didn't discuss before the meeting, we just decided with the top 15 then we go to their and address the community. We said we would go to that [BPA meeting] and give the names and then they [other members] will give us, the community will give us their names if they don't agree.

This account is in itself unclear. On the one hand the participant argues that there were no prior meetings yet it does seem that there was an understanding amongst those who would later make up the BCT on who should be on it. Ultimately, Participant 1 notes that the community and other members were happy with the decision that was made around the leadership – the interviews and participant observation provided no indication that this was not the case. Participant 5, quoted below, is not a BCT member outlines that there were 'caucuses' or informal meetings that took place to decide on who should lead the branch:

> Participant 5: Prior to electing the leadership, there will obviously be caucuses. We will go into meetings in our homes and so on. We had an interim structure and then this structure came, all along when they were operating they started coming together in caucuses and saying this is his part or her part, who is not doing well and so on. So when the time came to elect a permanent structure they already knew who was the relevant candidate and we went to the meeting, went to the nomination process and came out with credible people.

This understanding and experience of the build-up to the BPA runs contrary to those of other members who indicated that there were no explicit discussions that took place on the question of leadership. Participant 3 provides a further divergent view on the build-up to the BPA:

> Participant 3: No, we never discussed it [who should lead the branch]. At the meeting the guy [chairperson] was elected there at the meeting. We all agreed about that because the guy was being elected by the members, so we all had to agree with that.

These three different accounts illustrate just a few of the varying responses that were given on this question during the interviews. The responses also indicate the differing perspectives and understandings of the BPA and the list that was presented at the meeting. There is no clear answer on how the decision was made prior to the meeting or what types of consultations took place nor how broad these consultations or caucuses were. In effect, some members may simply have not formed part of the caucuses whilst at the same time not disagreeing with the decision that was taken. At the very least it is clear that there were EFF

members that were part of informal meetings before the BPA and formed part of making the decision.

The interviews did not present any clear explanation or offer a way to better understand the development and general consensus of the leadership constitution – this is also due to the extreme variations in the responses to this question. To be clear, there was no reason to believe that there was any strong disagreement with the way the BPA was conducted or with who was elected to occupy leadership positions in the branch. The 'Top 15', from the participant observation, appeared to have the support of the members that were interacted with during the field research. Hence, whilst the networks of decision making with regards to the BPA are difficult to make clear sense of, the list that emerged did seem to represent the leadership preferences of the majority of the members.

It is noteworthy that, the BPA stands in contrast to the way in which most other branch meetings were run after constituting the BCT. As outlined above, the BPA did not have much discussion and ran for a short period of time without any dissenting views coming from members. The general branch meetings that were observed had much more debate and discussion with most members offering their own inputs on a variety of matters. Quite frequently the inputs of the members differed with those of the leadership and other members of the branch. There was a clear disjuncture in the running of the BPA by the regional deployee, and even the official guidelines for these meetings, *vis a vis* the average branch meetings. The former seemed to lend more from organisational procedures and practices that are found within the ANC and ANCYL with well established procedures for meetings and elections. On the other end, the branch meetings appeared to include elements of direct democracy and relied strongly on consensus building. Typically, the branch meetings were relatively informal and allowed ample space for discussion and decision-making based on

gaining broader agreement rather than an outright majority. Furthermore, the meetings did not follow any strict protocols but flowed according to the points that needed to be discussed in the meeting.

These full branch meetings with general members were called frequently during the period over which the field research was conducted. In addition the BCT members met more regularly to discuss immediate and pressing issues or organisational details before reporting back to the membership of the branch. The BCT was scheduled to happen once a week but due to the various commitments of members these meetings often happened on a fortnightly basis (and during the December and January period with less frequency than this). It was evident from the interviews that members of the organisation felt that they had a space to raise their views and that decision-making would be based on consensus building. The participants outlined their role in meetings and how they experienced the running of meetings in the branch:

> Participant 18: … What I can say is that, when I do go to the meetings, we do discuss things and I can see that the things that we discuss in the meetings, some of them are going ahead and some of them are doing better than expected… if I raise something to be discussed in the meeting, it is discussed and we try to convince each other of finding a way through. That is how I feel as though my suggestions are being taken because they are being discussed and we do convince each other with different ideas and ways of doing things.

This focus on various opinions and points of view being taken up and considered came across strongly in the participant observation and was reiterated in the responses from members. An important point to keep in mind is that this explanation of the meetings and decision-making

came largely from members who did not form part of the leadership but simply attended meetings as and when they could. Participants 21 and 22 provide a similar view of the practices in the branch meetings and suggest that the meetings were run as openly as possible:

> Participant 22: We discuss and we convince each other since no one person can be solely making all the decisions. We try to show each other and discuss things as broadly as possible and get to a decision that we all agree on or broadly support.

> Participant 21: …in these meetings my recollection is that they were run well, smoothly and there were not any issues in the meeting… I won't lie but in my experience of the meetings I have attended, when decisions are made this is done after they have taken everybody's opinion. Obviously we are not like a body of water where we all go in one direction, there will be differences, but we use that space to convince each other and that is where the decision will come from.

The meetings of the branch used forms of extensive participation and broadly democratic practices as well as consensus building. These practices are at odds with both the practices of other political parties that have historically had support in Marikana (such as the ANC) and the widely reported on practices of the CCT. The practices in the branch did not emerge randomly in the EFF but, it can be argued, follow a tradition of community meetings in the area as well as traditions formed during the mineworker strikes, particularly the 2012 strike.

Sinwell (2013: 6) argues that in the prelude to the strike of 2012, mineworkers in Marikana and other areas organised themselves in 'autonomous worker committees' and held mass

meetings to discuss the strike, these meetings happened outside of the traditional trade union formations (NUM and AMCU). Sinwell goes on to argue that these *ad hoc* committees that were set up before and during the strike represented a form of 'direct democracy' and that the workers often developed consensus during both the committee meetings and mass meetings (Sinwell, 2013: 10). Naicker (2015: 6) argues further that these traditions of consensus building and organising are not a new phenomenon in the platinum mining sector but actually have much deeper roots and history in the industry and worker organisations. Given that many of the members of the EFF in Marikana had been part of this strike and that some of the leadership of the EFF branch were also participants in the strike, a link can be made between this worker organising and the meetings of the EFF.

Furthermore, forms of civil society organising in the community prior to the development of the EFF also have some impact on the political practices in the branch. Many of the members of the EFF recalled being involved in these civic organisations under the banner of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO). Not much is known, from the literature or recent research, about the details of how these organisations functioned or how they were structured within this area. However a few of the participants in this research did indicate that these civil society formations also had loose, informal and broadly democratic practices. These elements are not unique or new but have rather developed in community organising over a long period of time in South Africa. With these links to worker committees and community organisations in the area, it is clear that the EFF branch borrows some of these practices whilst at the same time maintaining a hierarchical structure that emphasises the role of the elected leadership.

The way the branch ran its meetings, and made decisions, also brings up a further contradiction between the branch and the higher structures of the organisation. Questions

around democracy have often been raised in the EFF, especially from a national perspective, with many arguing that the party is fundamentally anti-democratic. The Marikana branch of the party is clearly not anti-democratic and employs a wide variety of democratic practices in its day-to-day work. In addition, there is also a disjuncture between the way the leadership conducts meetings in the branch and the centrality of Malema as well as his apparent control over the organisation. In other words, the branch is not a simple reflection of the party nationally but exposes the complexities of branch politics in large organisations with numerous structures.

A final point around the turnout to meetings and the participation of members in different meetings of the EFF in Marikana – there was a significant drop in turnout between the electoral and standard branch meetings. The BPA had a high turnout, with over half the members on file present on the day in order for the meeting to reach a quorum. The number of members that attended meetings naturally dropped over the following months. Partly, this is to be expected in any political organisation that goes through periods of intensive activity – such as an elections period or the official launch of a structure - that is followed by the formalisation of a structure and a petering out into day-to-day organisational activities.

The lower levels of participation must also be seen in light of the circumstances, including the changing of the venue for meetings and the time of the year that the meetings are held in. For example, the venue for meetings was changed from a central location outside of the Wonderkop stadium to the EFF office (a shipping container placed in the yard of EFF MP from the area, Primrose Sonti) that was set up within the informal settlement. Despite this dip in attendance, the BCT continued to hold recruitment drives and to bring more members into the organisation, this means that there is always a steady flow of new members who attended different meetings at different points. To put it differently, whilst the numbers of members

that attended meetings increased and declined periodically, there was always a core of active members that continue with the daily, often mundane, running of the organisation.

4.3. Organisational Structure

Throughout this chapter there has been a constant reference to the fact that the EFF has been in the process of establishing and solidifying its organisational and administrative structures. As such, building up an understanding of this structure and how various components link together is a crucial part of getting to know and understand the EFF. In addition, a crucial part of this research has been the focus on the participant's understandings of their roles – this section keeps this central focus in discussing the phases of organisational development. As far as the national documents of the EFF go, the party has set up four levels of the organisation. This includes numerous branch structures, regional and provincial structures as well as a national Central Command Team. Given that the core of this paper is the Marikana branch, the related regional structure was of interest in this regard. Building a basic understanding of the regional structure also aided in informing an analysis of the relations between the Marikana branch and its neighboring branches.

The National Peoples Assembly was the final step in the process of launching branches and electing regional and provincial structures. The Marikana branch was part of these assemblies, after having elected two delegates to attend each of the assemblies. The EFF in Marikana falls into the Madibeng Region of the organisation, which is already quite an extensive region with numerous branches in place. The regional structure is responsible for overseeing the branches in the area, coordinating their activities and providing resources or

support to the branches. There are joint programmes that are held between the branches in the Madibeng region.

At the Regional Assembly, where the regional leadership was elected, none of the members from the Marikana Branch were elected on to this structure. This came as an immediate surprise given that the branch was active and had a substantial amount of members. The participants explained that there was a level of confusion around the Regional Assembly and that this made it difficult for the branch to understand the processes that were being followed. Some participants, most of whom were part of the branch leadership, noted some disgruntlement with the regional structure and blamed this on factionalism in the party and even tribalism in the region due to the fact that many of the members from Marikana are of Xhosa or Sotho origin. These dynamics were hinted at earlier in the outline and background on the Marikana area. One of the participants, who is a leader of the Marikana Branch of the EFF and of Xhosa origin, spoke of these factors in region and the impact that it had on the Regional Assembly:

> Participant 23: So we failed there [the Regional Assembly] and I told them if we don't have people from Madibeng nothing will happen for us here. And what you also find is that there is this apartheid because the people that are dominating in numbers are Tswana people and if you are leading you cannot have that apartheid because each and every person must be made happy, not focusing just on the interests of one group. But in due time I think this will be sorted out because they are still young.

The regional structure is intended to assist in coordinating the activities of branches and ensuring that the branches are functional and supported, yet in this instance historic issues in

the area seem to have had a considerable impact on the running of the organisation. In general, the delegates to the various assemblies, four of whom were also participants in this research, mostly spoke about a lack or organisation in the assemblies and that they happened in a relatively haphazard manner. Despite these problems, the delegates that were interviewed outlined what they perceived as being the role of the regional and provincial structures of the EFF as coordinating bodies that would assist the branch with resources but that would also intervene to resolve any crisis in the branch that may present itself. However, the general members (who did not attend the assemblies) generally did not have a good grasp of how the regional and provincial structures are constituted, nor which branches make up these structures. This is partly due to the fact that these structures are new and are still not well understood by members, some of these members have had little experience with this type of political organising and administration in the past.

Following on from this, a key consideration is to begin to understand how members view their own roles in the organisation and how they conceive of their own political activism or activity. This goes some way in explaining the level of involvement of branch members as well as understanding how they believe their involvement will contribute to political and social change. Through the interviews, most of the participants outlined that their primary role is to support the work of the BCT, to recruit members for the EFF and to mobilise the community during times of elections. This was notable primarily because there was a marked absence in the responses around the EFF's involvement in community issues and the resolution of certain problems facing the community.

Only one member mentioned the party's involvement in a community issue that related to the provision of toilets. Additionally, some participants also indicated that their function is to ensure that the EFF carries through on the promises that it had made before the elections.

Participant 2 explained this focus on electoral politics and delivering to the community in this sense:

> Participant 2: [my role is] just to come and teach the people that you can do this, which is good, and that which is wrong. That's what I want. I don't need the position, I need it [the EFF] to be good in Marikana…in my branch we try hard to deliver something.

The participant refers here to the need to be part of the moral and social fibre of the community and to ensure that the EFF delivers in Marikana. As will be seen later, a large portion of the activities and campaigns of the EFF in Marikana are focused on recruitment and elections. In particular the participants outlined that the upcoming 2016 Local Government Elections are a crucial part of the future of the EFF in Marikana. One aspect that came across strongly was the need for the EFF to win the elections in the ward so that they could have a representative in the local government that would work to ease the problems faced by the community. There was a revealing emphasis that participants placed on the Local Government Elections and the prospects of gaining an EFF Ward Councilor in the area:

> Participant 17: I can't clearly say at this point in time, but with time going forward and with local elections coming up I can say that if we have a Councilor that is an EFF person, there will be more service delivery. More things will be able to be done in this area for the people. So we will see that things are changing and getting better when we have a Councilor that is EFF because now it is still not our Councilor in the area.

Many other participants echoed this sentiment that an EFF ward councilor would be able to bring about better service delivery and positive changes. This says something about the character of the organisation in that it is heavily focused on winning electoral support and capturing parts of the official state structures rather than working outside of these structures or using forms of protest against local government structures that are perceived as being defunct and not delivering services effectively.

Ultimately, the characterisations of the EFF are inconsistent - the types of campaigns and events as well as the way the participants understand their roles in the party fits with a typical electoral politics concentrated on gaining state power. There is a gap between the self-framing as a 'protest movement' and that of the EFF as a 'government-in-waiting' as the elections catchphrase for the party indicated. If we are to assume that the EFF intends on performing both of these tasks simultaneously – that is be a protest movement and campaign for access to state power – it would seem that the latter takes greater priority in the campaigning of the branch and the roles of the party members.

As a final point on the organisational structure, and to link this to the previous discussion around decision-making, some participants emphasised the ways in which the work of the EFF is carried out on a collective basis, despite the hierarchical structure of the party. The participant quoted below reflects this narrative of collective engagement and participation in the EFF:

> Participant 4: I don't have a specific work that I do in the EFF, I am an ordinary member. *What we do, we do it collectively*. There are other elected committee members who are tasked with attending meetings and running the branch [emphasis added].

This echoes the responses that were given with regards to meetings and decision-making and is illustratative of the kinds of collective politics that are being developed in the EFF's Marikana Branch. The participants who have not been elected to the BCT still believe that their role is to work collectively with other members in order to strengthen the branch or to ensure that those who are elected carry through on their responsibilities. Even within the hierarchical leadership structure of the EFF, the participants were still committed to act as a collective and to hold the elected leaders accountable to this collective.

4.4. Branch programmes and campaigns

The branch programmes, events and campaigns provide a telling account of how active the branch is as well as what types of campaigns the branch in actively involved in. It can also indicate the levels of support for the organisation in the community and help to better explain networks in the organisation.. As a starting point, the branch of the EFF is Marikana held frequent campaigns and events during the period of the field research. As recounted earlier, the period before the General Elections was a time of increased activity in the branch with many members participating during this time or being recruited into the EFF. The EFF held a number of campaigns in the build-up to the Elections, these were mentioned earlier in terms of the recruitment and mobilisation strategies. Following the elections, the branch continued to carry out campaigns – a large part of which was the recruitment drives.

Immediately following the 2014 elections, the branch was part of a series of 'Thank You Rallies' that were held in a number places on the Platinum Belt where the EFF had managed to garner significant electoral support (Bates, 2014). During the rally in Marikana, the top

leadership of the EFF, including Julius Malema, thanked the members of the branch and the residents of the area – especially the Nkaneng settlement - for their show of support for the party. Due to the timing of the rally and elections – held during the protracted mineworkers strike of 2014 - Malema emphatically claimed at this rally that he and the leadership of the EFF 'will never sell you out, we are part of you' in reference to the strike and spoke predominantly to the numerous issues facing mineworkers in the area.

Recruitment drives, both before and after the elections campaign, formed a large part of the activity in the branch. The recruitment drives usually involved members going through the streets in the settlement and stopping at different dwellings to request individuals to join the organisation. The members of the community reacted well to the EFF and often agreed to join the organisation. Many community members joined the EFF without hesitation– as if they had simply been waiting for a form – and it was usual to here the community members speaking of their support of Julius Malema. At no point during the participant observation was there any indication of hostility from community members. There was no sign of antagonistic sentiments towards the party during these recruitment campaigns and only a small number of people indicated that they were affiliated to a different organisation.

The response from the community was positive towards the EFF however, there was never a particularly large group of EFF members that participated in the recruitment drives. Not more than a handful of, mostly women, members would actively go out and recruit during these campaigns. On a number of occasions it became clear that the women members of the branch had taken on the bulk of the organisational tasks. This included preparing for meetings or events and carrying out the work of the campaigns. The recruitment drives therefore were not an anomaly in this sense and this had been a consistent point throughout the field research.

One of the reasons why this is important is precisely because the Marikana area, as part of the mining region, has had historically high levels of male participation given that the composition of the primary workforce is predominantly male. The women that were part of this research had different backgrounds and social histories. Some of them were spouses or partners of the mineworkers, others had come into the area to seek out employment or economic opportunities whilst others still were part of the BaTswana community and worked around the region. As an important note, there are women mineworkers in the area, this is one of the ways that women have earned a living in Marikana.

Together with the mobilisation for the EFF, which happened within the local women's group Sikhala Sonke, the continued involvement of Primrose Sonti (an EFF MP) in the community also contributes to the greater presence of women members. Sonti was still actively involved in Sikhala Sonke whilst this research was being done, this despite her occupying a high level position in the EFF. On a number of weekends during the field research Sonti would be in Marikana and her house, where the EFF offices are, became an informal meeting point for many of the women of the EFF. Due to this becoming a space where women members would meet, the politics of the branch would be informally discussed and activities planned amongst this group. Without dwelling much further on this topic it is, as the very least, an interesting observation that the most active members, those that ensure that activities of the EFF do occur with frequency, are the women members.

Outside of the recruitment and 'visibility' campaigns, the EFF branch in Marikana also participated in campaigns of other branches in the region. More recently, the branch has been involved in the land occupation campaign of the EFF in the Rustenburg area, two members of the Marikana branch had been arrested in these activities. The land occupations began just as I was concluding the field research for this paper and may suggest a shift in the type of

activism in the branch that was predominantly focused on elections and recruitment. In addition, this campaign formed part of a larger call from the EFF for members to occupy 'unoccupied land' (Magubane, 2015). This may have had some impact on the direction and participation of the branch in the campaign. In sum however, the events and campaigns outlined in this section indicate that the branch is active and does have frequent campaigns. Primarily, the branch was still in a phase of recruitment, electoral campaigning and positioning itself to gain further electoral support.

4.5. Relationship with other organisations

The EFF in Marikana has relationships with a number of different organisation in the area. Grasping these relationships between organisations on the ground gives a sense of the types of alliances and fragmentations that have a broader impact in South African politics. The organisations that have a presence in Marikana range from political parties to trade unions and civil society formations. In terms of political parties, the ANC and the UDM that are active in the area and both have a history in the area. Being a mining area, the trade unions AMCU and the NUM have both been crucial in the political space over many years. The area also has community organisations, some of which are political in nature. A notable community organisaion for this research is the women's group Sikhala Sonke.

This section outlines the relations between these organisations and the EFF. It also looks particularly at basic engagements with AMCU, the NUM, UDM and Sikhala Sonke. The discussions on the EFF and the ANC are excluded from this chapter and held off until the next chapter on populism and political subjectivity. It is argued in the next chapter that the perceptions of the ANC have a fundamental bearing on the political character and the

collective politics of the EFF. As such, the analysis of the ANC is more useful within the context of a discussion on populism and social antagonism.

The trade union AMCU, that only recently gained large swathes of support in the Platinum Belt, appeared from the outset to have a strong relationship to the EFF in Marikana. This is particularly noteworthy given AMCU's official commitment to being a non-partisan trade union, thereby distinguishing itself from the ANC-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers. AMCU is the largest trade union in the area after the NUM lost the majority of its support in the months before and during the 2012 strike and the Marikana Massacre.

AMCU first made its entry in the platinum industry in 2008 but generally had difficulties with breaking through in an industry that was dominated by the COSATU and ANC-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (Chinguno, 2013: 18). It was during 2012, and specifically from January until November of that year, that AMCU made massive inroads in the platinum industry and had an over 500% increase in members during this time. Most of these new AMCU members had entered the union simply due to their disgruntlement with the NUM (Chinguno, 2013: 19). Many mineworkers left the NUM because of a wide variety of perceived failures, including corruption and collusion with the management. These issues tangibly meant that the union began losing legitimacy amongst its members (Botiveau, 2014: 130). AMCU, on the other hand, solidified its support in the 2014 platinum strike and is now the majority union at a number of sites, including the Lonmin Mine in Marikana. AMCU has significantly distinguished itself from the kinds of social movement unionism that has been historically common in South African unions. Ideologically, AMCU maintains that it is a non-partisan and apolitical union that is committed only to fighting for its members and their interests (Chinguno, 2013: 19).

Despite this formal delinking then between the EFF and AMCU there are considerable connections between the two organisations in Marikana. This is apparent from the outset in the duplication of leadership from both the organisations. There are a number BCT members of the EFF that are simultaneously AMCU leaders and shop stewards. As mentioned earlier, there is also a considerable portion of the membership base of the EFF that is made up of those who are also members of AMCU. A general perception from members is that the two organisations are fighting towards a common goal and for similar issues, this is especially so for the mineworkers, as is outlined by some participants who are members of both organisations:

> Participant 20: What I can say is that yes the EFF and AMCU are very similar, this was very clear for me during the strike when EFF was willing to support AMCU and workers during that whole process of being able to donate money and help is with food throughout that period. So that is one of the ways that I can say they are the same thing.

The notion that the EFF and AMCU are the 'same thing' came across a number of times in the interviews. This indicates that both of the organisations are seen to represent a similar political discourse for mineworkers. In addition, the EFF is seen as having taken up and assisted in the struggles of mineworkers that are being advocated for through AMCU as a trade union. The one key difference that is mentioned by the participants is that the remit of the EFF is wider and that the EFF fights for the interests of those inside and outside of the mining industry. The goals and interests of mineworkers is seen as part of the broader political project of the EFF, as it outlined by Participant 21:

> Participant 21: I will not say that they are exactly the same or that they do not have relations, there are some sort of good relations, but what I can say is that they both want to fight for the same things and speak about the same things. They are both pushing for the rights of miners. EFF has also spoke on the issue of miners, domestic workers and the people who are working on farms.

In this response, the driving principles of the two organisations are seen to be in line with each other but the EFF does this on a much larger scale. In other words, the EFF is a political party for all people and AMCU a union that should tackle workers issues specifically. Certain participants also touched on what is perceived to be a close relationship between the leaders of AMCU and the EFF respectively as well as the relationship between these leaders and the mineworkers:

> Participant 13: When the miners start to strike…EFF and AMCU are close because Malema was close to the miners and to the President of AMCU, Mathunjwa, they are very close…The EFF and AMCU push the miners to go forward with the strike because the miners want a R12000 and Malema and Mathunjwa want the miners to get what they want.

These responses are indicative of the relationship that has developed between the two organisations in the area despite the official line that splits and the EFF. Given that AMCU has often differentiated itself from the NUM and other unions of the basis that it is non-partisan, this kind of informal but strong relationship is a crucial one to understand. An example of the relationship that Participant 13 speaks of was provided during the Thank You Rally of the EFF that took place in Marikana. During Malema's speech a large portion of his time was spent on urging workers to accept the wage offer that AMCU President Joseph

Mathunjwa has developed in negotiations. Malema spoke of Mathunjwa in high esteem and encouraged workers to respect the decisions that the trade union leader had made. In addition, during important events of the EFF there was a consistent AMCU presence with many leaders of the union supporting the programmes of the EFF in their capacity as leaders of AMCU. Furthermore, during the elective meeting of the EFF many leaders of AMCU, including regional leaders, were present to support the official launch of the branch in Marikana.

However, some participants did acknowledge that there are no formal links between the organisations and this relationship is dissimilar from the official relationship between the ANC and the NUM. By contrast, the relationship between the EFF and the NUM in the area is an antagonistic one. The NUM has a long and complex history on the platinum belt and was the majority union for most of the post-apartheid period. Without going into detail about this history of the NUM in Marikana, which in itself could account for many more research projects, it suffices simply to say that the NUM and the EFF have a hostile relationship that is not unlike the EFF's relationship with the ANC. Given the events leading up to the Massacre on the 16th of August, the NUM is seen as having completely betrayed and acted against the interests of the mineworkers. All of the mineworkers that participated in this research were members of AMCU and former members of the NUM. During the interviews, the participants rarely raised the NUM in their answers and the few who did, did so in pointing out the failures of the NUM and how this speaks to the broader problems within the ANC.

Unlike the antagonistic relationship with the ANC and its affiliates, the EFF and the UDM in Marikana have a working relationship that appears to be based on mutual support. This is so even though the UDM is a political party that contests elections in the area. The UDM, and in particular their leader Bantu Holomisa, have maintained a low but consistent level of support

in the area, which predates the formation of the EFF (Sosibo, 2013). There are a number of commonly held perceptions around the UDM's support in mining areas. It has been postulated that many of the mineworkers are originally from parts of the Eastern Cape (wherein the UDM has larger levels support) and that they have carried this support over to their working areas. In an alternative account, it has been reported that Holomisa personally assisted mineworkers in securing certain wage increases and following up on problems in these workers investment schemes (Sosibo, 2013).

Holomisa and the UDM have also maintained a consistent support for the Marikana community following the Massacre. Questions around the relationship between the UDM and the EFF – two organisations with a somewhat divergent ideological approaches - sprung up when Holomisa attended the official launch of the EFF in Marikana and delivered a welcome address at the event (Setumo, 2013; Sosibo, 2013). This is a strange occurrence as leaders of an opposing political parties seldom attended the launch of a new party that will effectively contest for the same space.

Furthermore, the UDM was often present at events of the EFF and had a particularly pronounced attendance at larger events. For example, the UDM members often joined the EFF Thank You Rally. UDM members appeared in a section of the crowd wearing their party insignia and were vocal in their participation. The UDM was described by the participants as a partner organisation and as one of the legitimate alternatives to the ANC. Those that support the UDM in Marikana are not isolated by the EFF but are rather seen as allies. The participants that spoke of the UDM in the area agreed that the relationship with the UDM was not acrimonious, unlike the relationship with ANC members:

> Participant 1: We have a good relationship with UDM. EFF and UDM, we work together, we don't mind [them]. Even the UDM President came here and EFF President came here, they [are] walking together those people, we don't mind. That's why you see some of them are walking here with those t-shirts…You know, by the time I think those people who are the UDM were the UDM before [the EFF was launched], and then the President of UDM came here to support the mineworkers. Then those who were ANC members decided to change to be the EFF members, because they were the ANC members first.

> Participant 23: We work together with the UDM. We find that there is a common spirit between the UDM and the EFF…There is a good relationship because we have an understanding and are willing to work together.

These responses are revealing of the relationship between the organisations and their collaboration. Whilst the parties do not always work together on every project, there is some common ground and understanding amongst the members. The members of the UDM are viewed as having been part of the UDM over a longer period of time. In addition, the perception in these responses is that UDM members did not defect in large numbers to the EFF but rather, remained UDM members. Rather those that were within the ANC left this party in order to join the EFF. Finally, the responses around the UDM indicated that the members do not perceive the UDM as having a same ideological or political project to the EFF, but that their politics are not completely opposing. The opposition to the ANC on the part of both parties is the major point of convergence in this instance.

The final organisation that has a relationship with the EFF in Marikana is the community-based women's group, Sikhala Sonke. Sikhala Sonke, which directly translates from IsiXhosa

to ‘we cry together’, plays an important role in Nkaneng and has a strong relationship to the EFF. The organisation was set up as a women’s community group to deal with issues in the aftermath of the Massacre. It is a support structure for women of the area and the organisation has urged that it was established to bring some ‘peace’ and stability to the area (SAPA, 2013). Sikhala Sonke carries out various different activities in the community and has done so since late 2012. The women of the organisation have been vocal in speaking out about the impacts of the Massacre on the widows of the deceased mineworkers and other women in the area. One of the other projects of the organisation has been to start a community vegetable garden that some of the women could later use to support themselves through small-scale farming.

Many of the participants that reflected on the relationship between Sikhala Sonke and the EFF indicated that the two organisations do not work together officially. However, there is a strong relationship between the two given that most of the women of Sikhala Sonke are members of the EFF and many of them are active and engaged members that lead the branch. The participants that were active in both organisations spoke to this strong yet informal relationship between the organisations and how the women of Sikhala Sonke came to join the EFF once the party was formed:

> Participant 4: There are similarities between the organisations. Sikhala was formed as a response to the Massacre; EFF in the same way emerged as a result of the Massacre. We decided in Sikhala Sonke that we should all be members of the EFF because the EFF is a way to change things.

The participant outlines here that the immediate link between the two organisations is based on their common response to the Marikana Massacre. This response also provides a telling

account of the emergence of the EFF – the EFF is perceived to have emerged as a response to the Massacre. This narrative is not far removed from many academic readings of the development of the EFF in the aftermath of the Marikana Massacre as part of political reconfigurations. A further implication of the response from participant 4 is that the EFF is perceived to understand the position of the women in relation to the Massacre. Participant 22, quoted below, links the interest of the EFF in Marikana to Sikhala Sonke and uses this to highlight one of the key problems with the ANC:

> Participant 22: EFF and Sikhala Sonke have had a close relationship since the forming of the EFF. From there you can see that one of the chairperson's of our organisation, Sikhala Sonke, is involved with the EFF. One thing I can say with the ANC they have not shown an interest in the area or the people here. The EFF definitely showed an interest and hence the close relationship with the EFF.

In a similar way to the EFF and AMCU in Marikana, the women that are closely linked to Sikhala Sonke are also leaders and active members in the EFF. The members of Sikhala Sonke view the EFF as being able to assist and support in its projects and achieving its aims. However, there is an independence between the two organisations and participants often reiterated that Sikhala Sonke is not simply a section of the EFF in the area. Sikhala Sonke works on the broad issues facing women in the community and this is separate from the overarching campaigns of the EFF. In addition, the events, meetings and activities of the two groups are not carried out simultaneously. Whilst many of the women of Sikhala Sonke participate in the EFF, they often made reference to the fact that their involvement in both organisations in 'separate' and therefore should not be conflated.

4.6. Conclusion

The analysis provided above begins building towards a more textured understanding of the politics of the EFF, specifically at branch levels where a large part of the work of any organisation is carried out. Looking at the make-up and practices of the branch takes the analysis one step further in our understanding of the EFF.

It has been demonstrated that at the local level, looking at the Marikana branch, that the EFF may attract a large section of support from the disenfranchised black youth but in one its major strongholds – such as Marikana - a unionised working-class base is a significant source of support. This observations links to arguments around the importance of the Marikana Massacre and the platinum strikes to the shifts in our political landscape more broadly. Undoubtedly, the Marikana Massacre significantly shifted the political allegiances of the mineworkers and the community in Marikana.

Secondly, there are a number of complexities that need to be considered in relation to gender and how to understand the EFF as a masculinist organisation in certain spaces. Thirdly, based on this research, the EFF appears to tend more towards being a standard political party in that its primary goal is the contestation of elections, gaining electoral support and occupying official structures of the state. This appeared to be the main focus of the Marikana branch and this is consistent with the party's approach in their insistence that they are a 'government in waiting'.

Fourth, based on both the National Assembly and the launch of the Marikana branch, there are instances of weak democratic practices and a lack of open and transparent party processes. However, probing deeper into the decision-making and meetings illustrated that

there are branches of the EFF, such as the Marikana branch, that have different types of democratic practices and traditions. These differences, I argue, can be attributed to the different forms of organising that have developed in the area. The traditions and political cultures will inevitably continue to shift and develop with the continued worker and community struggles.

Finally, the EFF has a considerably strong connection to AMCU in Marikana. This relationship on the ground level also mirrors the informal but apparent connection between the two parties at higher levels. It is also significant that there is this strong connection between a political party and trade union that have both received notable levels of support in opposing the ANC and its affiliated organisations. The party also has a positive relationship with the UDM in Marikana and once more this is echoed in a basic reading of the relationship between the two parties at a national level. Lastly, Sikhala Sonke has been a crucial part of the Marikana community in the aftermath of the Massacre, this women's group also has strong ties to the EFF whilst maintaining its formal independence. These relationships must be held in the frame when analysing the antagonistic portrayal of the ANC in the following chapter.

The information presented in this chapter on the branch sets up and frames the discussion on populism in the EFF and collective subjectivity. However, as will be outlined towards the end of the paper, some of this analysis also takes us further than the theoretical interrogation in terms of telling us about the character of the EFF. In sum, this will show that the analysis presented in this paper provides a useful account of political practices and how we can understand these within the context of populism in the EFF.

5. 'Singing the people's song' – Locating the Popular in the EFF

5.1. Introduction

"…then came the EFF, then they sing the song that the people want to sing, they join the song, that is good for me."

The quote above from one of the participants offers an important insight into the EFF and speaks directly to the theme of this chapter - populism. The EFF's ability to claim and appropriate popular demands and narratives, and to become the purveyor of these within a broader context is crucial to its populism. This chapter aims to engage substantively with the empirical data and the theoretical framework in order to construct an argument around the EFF and populism as well as deal with issues of collective subjectivity and identities that are forming within the EFF.

The field research probed the participants understandings of the EFF, their reasons for joining the organisation, what they believe the EFF represents socially and politically and how they view the EFF as a driving force for fundamental socio-political change – it is this data that is collated and analysed in this chapter. The literature review in this report, as a starting point, illustrates how little theoretical and empirical analysis has actually been done on the EFF and that there are many gaps in our collective or public understanding of the character of the organisation.

This chapter reads the responses of participants against Laclau's theory of populism and argues using this theoretical framework that the EFF is populist with a 'popular' collective

subjectivity. It further postulates that the creation of a 'we' in the EFF and the engagement in a collective political project is married to a populist one; the ways in which participants articulate their identification with the EFF is indicative of this. This analysis begins by outlining the responses of participants that can be clustered into themes – the demand, the centrality of Malema, the impact of the Marikana Massacre and the platinum industry strikes and the perceptions of the ANC. This is then integrated with Laclau's theory of populism to present a reading of the EFF within this framework. The final element of this chapter deals with the limitations of Laclau's perspective on populism in understanding the EFF.

5.2. Issue based reasoning/ the demand

The demand - a social, cultural, economic or political claim - often forms the basis of ones entry into a political space. Therefore, the demand is predominantly, as it is for Laclau, the basic building block of a political formation. It is the motivating force that stands at the very foundation of political and social movements. The participants in this research provided rich information about the primacy of certain demands to their own affiliation with the EFF. These demands are oftentimes varied and diverse but are crucially important for each participant respectively. The content of the demands ranged from basic service delivery concerns to broader issues facing individuals and the Marikana community at large, including the R12500 wage demand for mineworkers.

Many of these demands came across in the interviews but it was equally evident that many participants were unable to articulate the EFF's position in relation to their demands. This is important to keep in mind and is a basis for further analysis of the relationship between the individual, their demands and their identification with the EFF. One of the key findings of my

research was that some members often only had a vague sense of the EFF's political position in relation to their individual demands but they nonetheless believed that the EFF would be able to deliver on these demands should they be elected into power. The participants were asked questions about the policies, principles or promises from the EFF that relate to their situations and individual or communal experiences. Many of the participants were unable to answer questions about the policies of the party. Alternatively, the respondents spoke broadly to their demands, especially those around service delivery issues. Furthermore, some participants urged that their concerns have been generally captured in the Election Manifesto of the EFF.

When the demands and the link between these and the EFF were made, most of the participants concentrated on service delivery concerns. This included the building of roads and infrastructure as well as the provision of housing, water and electricity, given that most of the area is an informal settlement characterised by low levels of service provision from the state. Other major concerns that arose out of the interviews centred on the quality and accessibility of basic education and the need to increase social grants. The issues and demands were mentioned but often glossed over and presented in a list of demands that briefly touched on (without much detail) a number of points. A clear example of this came from an elderly member of the EFF who listed a number of issues that she considered to be important:

> Participant 12: I joined EFF because I didn't have any political party, I joined EFF because I like their policies; education, the [social] grant, housing and also they talk about how they are going to help elderly people with the grant. And they will help people to get their land back.

Being elderly, the participant raised policies of the EFF that have an influence on her own life and her own problems, in this instance a demand of better housing and a better social grant were central. The participant is herself a recipient of a pension grant from the state and lives in a shack in the area. This listing of demands and the lack of information provided about policies and principles of the EFF do not necessarily mean that members do not understand the party that they belong to or that they do not have specific and important demands. Rather, it can be analysed as an integral part of populism wherein the individual demand does not have significant emphasis but is rather subsumed into a wider set of demands made by the EFF, thereby reducing the emphasis on any individual issue.

One of the core demands that was spoken about at more length and with more specific emphasis was the R12500 wage for mineworkers. This demand has been at the centre of the major labour struggles in the platinum mining industry. This demand grew organically amongst mineworkers who were independently organising before the strike in 2012 and became an important material and symbolic demand beyond this point (Chinguno, 2013: 29). The responses of participants and the specific explanations around this demand confirmed its overall significance in the area. In addition, the wage demand has become part of the central platform of the EFF. The participant quoted below is employed at a company that is sub-contracted by Lonmin and was involved in the strike of 2014. In this response he details why the R12500 wage for those working in the mining sector is important to him as a member of the EFF:

> Participant 7: If you check the EFF, they told us that we need the mining workers to reach R12500. If you check the ANC, they didn't promise us that much. As a mining worker, we need money because we are struggling; we are working hard under difficult conditions underground. So when you go home with empty hands,

> you see, you get diseased, you get injured, but for what? For R4000? That's painful. Then came the EFF, then they sing the song that the people want to sing, they join the song, so that is good for me.

In this response, the participant links the demand to the EFF in spite of the fact that the R12500 demand is not one that comes from the EFF but was taken on by the EFF as part of its political project and goals. The EFF here 'sings the song that the people want', rather than developing its own discourse in relation to this struggle. This speaks to the appropriation of certain demands and desires of various groups of people, which is a key part of populism. Importantly, the R12500 demand has gone far beyond the parametres of the labour struggle in the platinum industry alone and has been taken on and projected to other sectors and worker struggles. This can further be linked to the ways in which the wage issue became a central part of responses of most of the participants, whether they were mineworkers or not. During interviews and observation, this was one of the foremost issues that were raised by members, making it an important demand and focus of the community in general.

As a final point on demands, there was a glaring absence of discussion around some of the basic rallying points of the EFF nationally. In articulating the policies of the EFF, far fewer members raised prominent points for the EFF such as the nationalisation of mines – this despite Marikana and the surrounding communities being key mining areas in South Africa. The R12500 demand had far greater prominence than any discussion around the need to nationalise the mines or structurally change the way the mining industry operates. In addition, those that spoke of gaining better housing and resources hardly ever raised the goal of expropriation of land; there were only a small handful of members that spoke about the expropriation of land and none that spoke on nationalisation of the mines. The EFF's approach to both the expropriation of land and the nationalisation of mines are not only in the

seven, founding 'cardinal pillars' of the organisation but were also reaffirmed at the party's inaugural national conference. Despite the centrality of these principles, both from the EFF and in the public discourse around the EFF, the participants did not reflect this perceived importance.

In sum, the quotes provided in this section illustrate the presence of localised demands in the discourses of the EFF. Moreover, the general service delivery demands form an important part of what the participants want and how they view the EFF's support for their demands, yet the lack of explanation and elaboration requires close consideration as it relates to how to conceive of the demand as a basic political building block. The R12500 wage demand, on the other hand, is a prominent part of the discourse of the EFF both in Marikana and beyond it. This demand is not simply one that exists in isolation to the recent history of the area and the platinum industry – this includes the two strikes and the Marikana Massacre, which many participants spoke extensively about during the interviews.

5.3. The Marikana Massacre and Strike Action

As would be expected, the mineworker's strike of 2012 and the Marikana Massacre as well as the strike of 2014 all came across powerfully in the interviews and shaped how the participants identified with the EFF. These are points of identification with the EFF that have influence beyond Marikana and in many different contexts. In many respects, the strikes and the Massacre shaped the national discourse in recent times. These events lay very much at the core of the support for the EFF within the community. This came as no surprise given the sheer gravity of both incidents and the EFF or Malema's responsiveness in relation to the community.

The Massacre and the Platinum strikes of both 2012 and 2014 have shaped the identification with the EFF and are part of the constitution of a collective political subjectivity in the party. These events are crucial to understanding the lives and experiences of the communities in and around Marikana and also their views and opinions on the EFF. In this way, these discussions on the Massacre and strikes provide a contextual basis upon which other aspects of identification with the EFF can be fully understood. For example, without understanding the importance of the strikes, it is impossible to understand the attachment and identification that members directly have with Julius Malema as an individual but also as the leader of the EFF.

It has been reiterated a number of times in this paper that numerous scholars have already pointed to the Marikana Massacre as a critical turning point in South African politics and have argued that the Massacre has had a huge impact on reconfigurations to the left of the political spectrum. The previous chapter also outlined that the majority of the participants were previously members of the ANC; this political history helps to frame the shifts in political affiliations and the importance of the Massacre to this. The responses from the participants often place the blame for the Massacre on the ANC and its failures and link this to a strong identification with Malema and consequently the EFF. In response to this the only plausible political response for a number of participants was to move from the ANC to the EFF. The quote below, from one of the leaders of the BCT and a prominent member of the community, speaks to this identification with the EFF:

> Participant 23: So from that point [Marikana Massacre] I told myself that I am leaving the ANC then and there and I am going to join any other political organisation because of what the ANC was doing in this area. But luckily the EFF

was formed as it was not there prior and there were no other political organisations that I could see myself as part of.

This response further illustrates the commitment of the participant to the EFF in light of the Massacre. The party represents the political and social aspirations of the members whilst at the same time allowing them a space of expression for a deep disgruntlement with the ruling party. In a similar manner to the identification with the R12500 living wage demand discussed earlier, the Massacre has come to be a central material and symbolic point for the membership of the EFF.

The protracted platinum strike of 2014 was also mentioned by some of the participants when discussing their identification with the EFF. The support that the EFF provided during that strike – by then the EFF had been officially launched and was campaigning for the 2014 General Elections – for the mineworkers and the community was seen as vital and decisive. The EFF's support for the workers ranged from symbolic and political support to more tangible monetary and resource support. It was widely reported during the 6-month period of the strike, that the communities around Platinum mines suffered economically from the lost income of mineworkers (estimated to be around R10 billion in wages) (Business Report, 2014; SAPA, 2014c). The EFF displayed vocal support for the mineworkers and their demands but also played a role in fundraising for those economically affected by the strike and donating money during collection efforts (SAPA, 2014b). This tangible support from the EFF did not go unnoticed by the community and the members of the EFF; it had an impact on the perceptions of the organisation. Participant 13, the wife of a Lonmin mineworker, recounts the importance of this political and financial support from the EFF for those who were directly affected by the loss of income:

> Participant 13: After that [2012 strike], in 2014, the strike began again, it takes a long long long time, about 6 months. So in this second strike, we are starving, hungry but other organisations helped us because the strike took a long time… Even the EFF joined the strike to help us in Marikana and Gift of the Givers helped us. But the government did not help us at all. It means that the EFF is the strongest party in Marikana, because it is only one that helped us in the strike.

The EFF's assistance during the strike emerged in the interviews as an important factor in the relationship between the EFF and the community in Marikana. The EFF is seen as being the only political party that truly cared about this matter. Whilst the strike of 2014 played a smaller role, for the participants, in the identification with the organisation than the 2012 strike - the involvement of the EFF is still seen as valuable part of why members identify with the organisation over other political parties in the area. It is interesting to note here that the actions of the EFF are understood to be significantly more important than those of other political parties and NGO's or civil society organisations. The participants, as with the quote above, made mention of this support from other groups and sectors but did not see this support in shaping their political and social involvement as it did with the EFF.

Both of the platinum strikes and the Marikana Massacre clearly play a central role in how members of the EFF identify with the organisation and buying into its collective political project. A further focal point in this identification is a very specific relationship to the leader of the organisation, Julius Malema. Some of the participants indicated that whilst the general support of the EFF is important, it is the figure of Julius Malema that stands out. This chapter has thus far outlined the numerous ways in which members of the EFF articulate their relationship to the EFF, the reasons that they joined the party and their mode of identification with it. The theme of the leader has not yet been broached - this is often the common thread

across the different accounts of participants in relation to their joining and identifying with the EFF.

5.4. The Centrality of Malema

"You are only here for Julius, I am also only here for Julius"

One would be hard pressed to enter into a discussion about the EFF that did not touch on Julius Malema and his leadership of the party. The literature provides a clear account of this, with Malema often being the central subject of discussion in essays on the EFF. In the field research too, Malema was almost always a crucial topic of discussion and this happened mostly without prompt. The quote above, taken from a member of the EFF who spoke during the launch of the party in Marikana mirrors how many members see their political involvement as intimately linked to the figure of Julius Malema.

The overwhelming majority of participants brought up Malema as the President of the EFF – also known as the Commander-in-Chief – on a number of points. This ranged from their recruitment into the EFF, the symbolic support that Malema offered immediately after the Massacre and during strikes and even to the basic politics of the branch. The participants made common reference to the fact that Malema was regarded as a central part of why members joined the EFF and as an explanation of their ongoing support for the organisation. This section will aim to outline the various perceptions on Malema given by members that illustrate the type of connection that individual members of the organisation have with the leader of the party.

Not surprisingly, the perceptions of Malema that were brought forward by members of the EFF that were interviewed were exceptionally positive, often in direct contradiction to opinions formed around him in popular media sources. Where Malema has been described as a deceitful demagogue and as an elitist who manipulates the genuine experiences of the poor, the participants described him as a trustworthy and honest leader who is one of the only politicians that shows genuine care for the people of Marikana and South Africa. This polarisation is not a new feature of discussions around Malema. Some participants outlined their perceptions of Malema that shed light on the ways in which individuals who support the EFF relate to Malema and why they believe that he is the best leader for them. Participant 2, a younger member of the EFF who works outside of the mining industry, describes Malema through these positive leadership and personal characteristics:

> Participant 2: Julius Malema is a great man, he hates the liars, he does not fix the truth, and everything still is there. That's why I love the EFF…I need to look for change, to look for purpose. Because Julius Malema and the other mineworkers hate liars. I support Julius Malema because I need to look at our country and see some change.

The participant reveals a number of important points about perceptions of Malema's character, especially around sincerity and the ability to bring change. There is a sense that Malema is honest about the problems facing the area and the country and that he can deliver on real and tangible change. Even though the participant is not a mineworker, given his context the response speaks to an affinity between Malema and the 'mineworkers'.

Throughout this research, and in many elements of the public discourse, there is a particular romantic construction of the mineworkers that is, to an extent, mythologised as heroic figures

that uphold the central values of worker and community struggles. Malema is then clustered with the mineworkers and this construction is extended to him in this instance. This affinity between Malema and the mineworkers was commonly referenced by the participants and is one of the ways in which participants have an idealised imagination about Malema. Other participants echoed these sentiments around truthfulness in character:

> Participant 7: If you can check Malema, they [ANC] fired him because he spoke straight things, you see. So I decide *ke*, I join Malema, I go with Malema, maybe they [EFF] will do whatever they need to do here in South Africa – that's a lot. And I really love EFF, I really, really love EFF…

The references around Malema as courageous and truthful are extended in this response. The idea that Malema is a brave figure that speaks out about pertinent issues and injustices is an important one. Participant 7 also identifies that Malema was expelled from the ANC because of this characteristic, something that perhaps sets him apart from others within the ANC. The sense of disappointment in the ANC is linked to the silencing of voices of dissent from within the party. Malema is characterised as having been one of these voices in the ANC and it is this that caused his expulsion, according to the narrative presented here.

Some participants went further and referred to Malema as a hopeful figure who is imbued with the aspirations of the people. This is a further crucial point because it relates to populism and the representation of demands or aspirations through the leader. In light of often disparate demands and social claims, Malema comes to be a hopeful figure that is trusted to change the current circumstances of different people. Participant 18 recounts that she had always been a supporter of Malema, even during his time in the ANC and that he provides this 'hope' to her:

> Participant 18: Even when I was still in the ANC, there was something that I saw in Julius Malema when he was in the ANC that gave me hope. Now that he has formed the EFF, I then said this is an opportunity for me to be able to support him because there are a lot of things that he can do and there are things that I see in him that he would be able to make a difference and help. You can see that when he speaks he speaks in such a way that you can see the things that he can do. You need to be able to support him and give him power so that he can be able to do these things.

Implicit in this response is a theme that was picked up on earlier in this report around electoral support and a 'government-in-waiting'. The participant speaks about giving power to Malema in order to impact change. In other words, this 'change' will come from members of the EFF using their support to deliver the leader to a position of power. Furthermore, Malema is portrayed as being a pro-poor challenge to the ANC and the current status quo whilst providing a way for average members to be involved in the process through their support for him and the EFF. Towards the end of this particular interview, Participant 18 lamented the fact that she wished Malema would not betray the hope that people have invested in him in the same way that many other politicians have done. Despite this worry, the participant strongly believed in Malema and trusted that he would follow through on his promises once he was given the necessary means to do so. These responses give the sense that participants relate to Malema through his honesty and his ability to touch on issues those others may believe to be too contentious at any given time. Starting with his time in the ANCYL, and his subsequent expulsion, participants identify with Malema's ability to raise various issues and have thus chosen to follow *his* organisation.

There was a noticeable conflation of the EFF and Malema. In the responses, there is little distinction made between the EFF as a wider organisation and Malema as the leader of the EFF. Participant 18, quoted above, gives a good illustration of this conflation in the way she talks about the formation of the EFF being a moment where she could offer support to Malema. Importantly, no specific questions were asked about Malema in the interviews, the questions focused on the EFF as an organisation, yet most of the participants naturally spoke about Malema in explaining the EFF. This gave the sense that the EFF, as an organisation, does not stand on its own but is intertwined with the personality of the leader. For example, the participants did not argue that the EFF is an honest, trustworthy, caring or reliable organisation, most participants were not describing the EFF and the characteristics of the party as a whole but rather the personality and perceptions of Malema as the leader and the implications of this on the party.

To a certain extent this is a fairly obvious observation considering that the EFF was launched by Malema and a handful of other leaders, most of whom were also originally in the ANCYL. Malema already had a massive public profile and support prior to the formation of the EFF and he was at the centre of the EFF from the point of announcing the launch of a new political party that would contest the ANC. Perhaps what can be taken from this is the extent to which, despite the broad reach of the EFF in branches and particularly in the Marikana branch, the organisation is nonetheless seen to be closely and fundamentally intertwined with the personality of Malema. The EFF now has fully fledged organisational structures yet participants hardly ever mentioned other leaders of the EFF - even on a national level – and maintained that much of their support for the EFF is unswervingly linked to Malema.

A link that was picked up on earlier is the relationship between participants and Malema in relation to the Marikana Massacre and the 2014 strike. Of the many responses around Malema's support for the mineworkers and the Marikana community after the 2012 Massacre, a couple of responses provide a better sense of the symbolic relationship between mineworkers and the Malema as well as the general narrative around Malema's personal role following the Massacre. The participants below are not mineworkers and were not part of the strike of 2012. Both of the respondents are women who are involved in Sikhala Sonke and Participant 3 has been working on providing emotional support to the community following the Massacre through various NGOs. These two women focused on Malema as one of the most important figures for the mineworkers during the strike and after the Massacre:

> Participant 3: The EFF is very important because during the [Marikana] Massacre, Julius Malema was the one who came to rescue the mineworkers while they were on the mountain and he was the one who was helping them.

> Participant 11: Its because I see the President of the EFF is someone that cares about other people. Because the first strike 2012 I saw him, he was the first person that came to us. I like EFF, I like Malema more than anything in the world, he is the only person I see that cares for others.

These responses, that were fairly common in interviews, touch on the symbolic significance of Malema's support around this time. A common view of the members of the EFF was that Malema was the first and one of the only national leaders to go to Marikana after August the 16th 2012. Despite media reports of other leaders on the ground in Marikana immediately after the Massacre, it was Malema that stood out for most of the participants. If we set aside the accuracy of this claim, and place more emphasis on the perceptions of the members of the

EFF and the community, Malema's presence was undeniably significant for those impacted by the events.

The heroic narratives around Malema also continue in these responses. A clear example of this is apparent when Participant 3 argues that 'Julius Malema was the one who came to *rescue* the mineworkers while they were on the mountain' (emphasis added). Malema is painted as a hero to the mineworkers and the people of Marikana. This overwhelmingly positive narrative is put across in many of the responses. As the leader of the EFF, he plays a central role in the identification with the EFF and is at the core of many responses.

5.5. Perceptions of the ANC

As members of a competing political party, the participants would naturally have of an oppositional relationship to the ANC. An important aspect of this research is to understand the perceptions of the ANC and how members of the EFF construct the ANC in a particular way. This construction of the ANC as an 'enemy', not simply an opposing political party, is outlined in this section, and places emphasis on the role of antagonism in the construction of populism. What is immediately crucial, however, is that this antagonism is based on more than the Massacre or the necessity of political opposition, but is rooted in a wide variety of claims and disgruntlements.

On the whole, the sentiments around the ANC were particularly negative. Earlier sections of this research report have already dealt with the fact that the large majority of members of the EFF that formed part of this research were in fact previously members of the ANC and that the Massacre had an impact on them leaving the organisation. More generally, members of

the EFF spoke of the ANC as being directly involved in the continued oppression or exploitation of themselves or their communities. Participant responses ranged from general complaints about the ANC in relation to corruption to the failures of the party immediately after the Marikana Massacre and the notion that the ANC provides no possibilities for socio-economic or political change.

The participants frequently mentioned service delivery failures as well as complaints around corruption and nepotism in the ANC. In a broader context, perceptions of corruption in the ANC are particularly common in the mainstream media and in public discourse. These public perceptions were mirrored in some of the responses from participants in the Marikana area. The focus on corruption spanned from instances of it happening in the immediate municipality – Marikana and the local surrounding municipalities are currently under the control of the ANC since the previous Local Government Elections - and within a national context. The interviews gave an indication that the sentiments around corruption and nepotism are linked directly to service delivery failures and a fundamental breakdown of trust between the citizens and the state. The participant response below shows clearly the ways in which the respondent perceives the ANC as unable to provide services and being fundamentally deceitful, this is further contrasted with the perception of the EFF:

> Participant 13: The ANC all the time, the ANC, say that it want to help us by the roads, electricity but all that is lies. It does nothing about the things that they promised to give us. When I joined the EFF I see that it is clear that all the things that they promised us is real because it helped us when we are in trouble of the [2014] strike.

This response not only points to the perceived failures of the ANC but also speaks to the ways in which the EFF is seen to be able to counter these problems. Additionally, the participants have invested a certain level of trust in the EFF that is not the case with the ANC. Based on the support given by the EFF during the strike of 2014 and Malema during the strike of 2012, the EFF is perceived as a more honest organisation than the ANC and one that delivers on its promises. A part of this package of issues cited by participants was nepotism, which was a common problem, especially for those that are unemployed or struggling to find work. This was the case with the Participant 19, a young, women member who moved to Marikana with the hope of finding employment in the area:

> Participant 19: You would find situations where you are looking for work and you can't find work anywhere, you even go to the Municipality to find work and there you will find that [there are] people in the ANC are only, their family and their relatives and people they know so if you don't know anyone you won't be able to find a job.

This claim was echoed by other members of the EFF in the area, especially those that have ben actively seeking employment outside of the mine. During participant observation, numerous members of the EFF lamented the fact that ANC officials in the state only employ those that are in the ANC or family members. There were further suggestions that members of the EFF were being sidelined for employment on the basis of their political affiliations. There was also an implicit acknowledgement that the problems that the participants had with the ANC in their area was linked and replicated throughout different areas.

A key point that can be picked up on here, in relation to employment and nepotism, is in relation to patronage in local politics. This cannot be fully explored in this paper due to the

limited scope, however it must be mentioned in the context of the perceptions of the ANC. These responses explore a wider theme of patronage – that economic opportunities and services are provided to those that are within a particular network of power. The participant responses however raise an important question around the continued place of patronage even in the EFF. For example, some participants made reference to the idea that once the EFF governs over the area, they will stand to benefit from many opportunities in the same way the ANC members do currently. Hence whilst the participants lament their own lack of inclusion in the current system, they do not necessarily foresee a fundamental shift in these informal social structures.

Shifting focus from the discussions on local government issues and corruption, an important emphasis was placed on narratives around the ANC's involvement in a continued exploitation and oppression. Fundamentally, many participants, whilst willing to acknowledge the historic role that the ANC has played in South Africa, believe that the ruling party is either complicit or directly involved in their oppression – often using that term to describe their circumstances. Given the mining context, discussions around exploitation were widespread as they relate to how the ANC has failed to transform the lives or experiences of those working in the mining sector and for other workers:

> Participant 16: EFF is very much a help to us and it is important to me because ANC and the things that they do was to exploit us here.

> Participant 21: …If you also look at domestic workers and our rights here in mines, they are always trampled on and the ANC helps this oppression to take place…

These responses are a few amongst many that specifically speak of oppression, exploitation and a disregard for legal rights when discussing the ANC. This narrative is part of the construction of the ANC as the enemy. This 'oppression' and 'exploitation' was usually explained in terms of the conditions of work, access to services and access to opportunities. Moreover, these responses link up with the notion that since the dawn of democracy, 'oppression' was not necessarily dealt with by the ANC and many of the economic and social structures of the apartheid state continued into democracy. Under this theme of exploitation and oppression, participants often referenced a dichotomy in the ANC - this is the dichotomy or distinction between the ANC under the leadership of Mandela and the ANC currently. Not surprisingly, Mandela is still spoken about with a sense of reverence and deep regard whilst the ANC of today is seen as failing to deliver on the promises of freedom. Participant 21 extends his point around oppression here and refers to the ways in which the ANC has changed in the post-apartheid era:

> Participant 21: The ANC is not the same as before, it keeps declining year on year. This is because of things like corruption, how the ANC holds itself and how it rules the country. Especially with the President Jacob Zuma and how his government is running…In particular [we need] to improve the economy and give us back those freedoms that Tata Mandela fought for us to have. In a way of speaking, if you consider how the ANC is continuously trampling on the rights of people in this country, the EFF can bring about change by preventing that from continuing.

Once again this member does not discount the important role played by the ANC but rather to focuses on changes within the ANC and how this has lead to a situation where rights are disregarded and the exploitation of certain groups continues. This notion of a negative change

in the ANC (a betrayal of the values of Mandela) recognises the role of the ANC and figures such as Mandela whilst still postulating that the ANC in the current context is a completely different organisation. This view has been further brought to the fore by the EFF nationally. In a statement around the 25th Anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the EFF argued that they have 'vowed that we will defend his [Mandela's] legacy, the legacy of basic democratic freedoms: the freedom of assembly, the freedom of speech and the freedom to vote' (EFF, 2015). The statement goes on to argue that 'Jacob Zuma and company' abuse the political freedom that was fought for in the years before 1994. The views of branch members on this matter seem to echo those of the EFF's central leadership and speak too to this betrayal of the principles of the ANC and of Mandela.

Furthermore, it was highlighted in earlier sections of this paper that the Marikana Massacre played a defining roll in the way participants construct the ANC. However, as is illustrated in the discussions directly above, the concerns around the Massacre are part of a broader set of that EFF members have with regards to the ANC. In other words, the ways in which members of the EFF perceive and understand the ANC is not only defined by the Massacre but takes into account a number of different factors and circumstances. Participant 16 illustrates how the EFF has freed up the space for many to speak about the concerns that they have had with the ANC over a longer period of time:

> Participant 16: The EFF is a big help to us here because many things that we couldn't say before but now we can say them because the EFF is a big help to us. It gives us strength to be able to say what is wrong. So all the things that the ANC did that was wrong, all the messing around, we are able to speak out against it because the EFF has been a big strength to us.

The participant shows here that there is not just one single moment wherein the ANC had acted wrongly but that this was an ongoing process. Essentially, it is the EFF that has allowed this individual to feel that the collective can begin to articulate the problems of the ANC within a new framework. Related to this are the high levels of frustration that the members of the EFF has with the ANC. In passing, some members spoke of their involvement in the burning down of the local ANC office (a shack used as the party office) in Wonderkop in 2014 and that this was linked to the absolute 'hatred' that members have for the ANC in the area.

As the participants outlined their intense feelings of disappointment and antipathy towards the ANC, it became clear that many of the perceived problems in the ANC had been compounded over a period of time. Yet despite having other reasons for disliking the ANC, it was when participants spoke around the Marikana Massacre that the line of thinking that the ANC is an 'enemy' specifically came out. Participants went to on to explain that the ANC is not welcome in their space and that it was somewhat incomprehensible that there would still be members of the ANC within the Marikana community given the impact that the EFF has had:

> Participant 1: Yes, because most of the people who are working here at the mine, they have moved to the EFF, because they know that the President of the EFF was there with them, he was there with them, giving them the strong words. They mustn't be the weakest people; they have to be strong for each and every thing. You know if you remember those words from Julius Malema, you won't do such things like wearing another party's [ANC] t-shirt.

Participant 1, who is not a mineworker and is a young member of the EFF, illustrates here that even wearing an ANC t-shirt is seen as a betrayal and something that should not be done in the area. The relationship to the ANC is also tied to Malema and there is a further dichotomisation or polarisation here between the ANC and Malema and by extension the EFF. It was not uncommon for participants to contrast their sentiments around the ANC to their political support of Malema. This partially displays the ways in which the participants themselves describe this type of dichotomisation of the social and political space. Other participants extended this through explicitly describing the ANC as an enemy:

> Participant 11: I was a member of ANC. But the problem is, I saw the ANC is like an enemy to us, more especially in Wonderkop Marikana…they send the police to kill the people in the mountain, that's why it is an enemy.

Once more, participant 11 is not a mineworker and is not directly involved in any work at Lonmin, yet still the events on the 16th of August have led to her describing the ANC as an 'enemy'. The description of the ANC as an enemy extends further than an ordinary relationship of political opposition; it is not only about supporting a different political formation but is also inspired by a sense of betrayal and disillusionment in relation to the ANC. In other words, it was not simply a political choice to shift away from a particular party, but that there is a much deeper significance to the way the ANC is perceived. The notion of the ANC as 'the enemy' and the sharp dichotomisation between Malema, and by extension the EFF, and the ANC provides a final point for consideration in relation to the overarching theme of populism.

5.6. Laclau and the EFF

Up until this point this chapter has dealt with laying out pertinent points from the research and contributing to an analysis of the EFF using the responses. With this in place, this section provides an engagement and interaction between the responses of participants and the theoretical framework. As such, this discussion relies heavily on the theoretical framework outlined in the third chapter of this report and will, at certain points, elaborate on the synopsis of Laclau's work that is provided in that chapter. The final section of this chapter will focus on a discussion around some of the limitations of using Laclau in relation to this case study of the EFF.

Laclau's demand is the 'minimal unit' of analysis and is not a meaningless starting point but is part of the conceptual emphasis of populism as form and not content. Laclau uses the demand as the basic unit to avoid constructing populism as ideology or as a type of mobilisation but as a political form (2005b: 72). For example, if we are to use the 'group' as the minimal unit of analysis, this would mean that there is an already constituted group with an already constituted political framework. Instead the demand has the ability to perform the function of a floor for populism.

As outlined earlier, the demand also has the ability to be re-aggregated when appearing together with other demands – this re-aggregation is a binding force in populism. The demand is a social claim made to the power bloc, a solidarity of demands occurs when these demands remain unmet due to an institutional inability to absorb them. Laclau's demand is also a 'democratic demand', this does not mean that it was developed out of any democratic process – radical or not – but that it is born out of a deprivation or exclusion and that it represents the 'underdog' of any kind that makes a demand on the system (2005b: 125). The fact that the demand remains unmet is an important part of constructing populism as it

indicates that there is an inability of the system to absorb the demand and that there is some sort of breakdown or 'social crisis' (2005b: 149).

The participant responses put across numerous demands that form part of the member's identification with the EFF. The kinds of lists of demands that were presented by the participants, and the broad content of them, hints at this institutional breakdown and inability to ensure that demands are met. There were also compounding demands that immediately indicated a solidarity of demands. The understanding of the demands of the participants and how this links with Laclau's demand is fairly self-evident. However, two points stand out that require further elucidation, the first is the vagueness in the articulation of the demands and the second is the emphasis on the R12500 demand given that Laclau argues for a solidarity and re-aggregation of these demands.

On the first point, Laclau's framework accounts for vaguely explained demands and the lists of demands as the participants presented them. The central point here is 're-aggregation' and solidarity that are a part of constituting populism. Rather than excluding unexplained or briefly mentioned demands from forming a part of a populist discourse, populist politics weakens the emphasis on each individual demand and makes the collective far more prominent. For Laclau, 'vagueness' and 'imprecision' are part and parcel of the equivalential bond (2005b: 99). A number of points can be drawn out as it relates to Laclau's work on the demand as part of populism and the case of the Marikana branch of the EFF.

The demand, if it stands alone, is not an entirely meaningful political category. Laclau argues (2005a: 4-7) that a solidarity of demands occurs when numerous individual demands are unsatisfied, this allows for a logic of equivalence in these demands. With this in mind, when applied to the responses from the EFF members, the lists provided around demands and the

absence of lengthy explanations of these demands is part of this process of aggregation and an equivalence of demands. The individual claims or requests become subsumed into a larger political project such that the emphasis is no longer on each particular claim but rather on the sets of social claims that apply more broadly.

One note that must be made here is that there is a level of appropriation of demands that are already prominent on the ground prior to the development of a populist politics. In other words, the demands of the participants and members are not necessarily demands of the EFF, but precede its establishment as a political party. As part of creating an equivalence and aggregation, the EFF appropriates these already popular demands and represents them. Hence, when participants mention housing, education, social grants and the provision of water all at once and lumped together, it is not due to a lack of understanding of the EFF manifesto or policies but rather based on the fact that these demands are perceived as being equivalential. The demands have a similar meaning for the collective politics of the EFF. In this instance, most of the demands that are mentioned speak to an EFF that is perceived as being pro-poor and working class and providing much needed support to the goals of these groups.

This moves us on to the second point, if this aggregation and solidarity of demands is crucial to building a popular subjectivity, why does the R12500 wage demand stand out specifically from the rest? This demand is not only particular but is also contextual, yet it holds a deeper significance and has become a firm part of the discourse even beyond the borders of Marikana. In Laclau's framework, the process of re-aggregation does not negate the possibility of having a particular demand within a broader set that stands out from the rest. The representative content of the demand – its ability to symbolically speak to a wider set of demands – is crucial in this sense. Whilst the process of equivalence unfolds and manifests in

a type of aggregated social claim there is still space for a particular demand to be articulated, especially if that demand is a fundamental part of the overall, collective politics of the group. In this way, the support from the EFF of the R12500 demand and the constant reference to the Marikana Massacre and the strikes of the mineworkers form an important part of the discourse of the party. This fact is crucial in order to understand the positioning of such a demand within the chain of equivalence. Laclau (2005a: 6) does not foreclose the notion that particular demand can maintain its particularity. Instead he argues that such a case of specificity can be understood through signification; wherein the particular comes to represent a larger part of the chain of equivalence. The R12500 wage demand is emblematic of the politics of the area and of the broader political positioning of the EFF. In many respects, it represents a foundation of the challenge to the ANC and as a key indication of the failures of the ANC – particularly in relation to the Marikana Massacre, with noting that the strike was ultimately about the increase to wages. This has broadened the importance of the wage demand itself; R12500 has come to be representative of the aggregated demands.

Beyond this demand, the most prominent and frequent part of the responses from participants was around Julius Malema and the image or perception of him as well as the identification with him. As it was outlined in the theoretical framework, Laclau's theory of populism is around the place of the leader. What differentiates Laclau from the bulk of other theories is that his populist leader is the logical conclusion of the chain of equivalence and is not just a charismatic political figure. In other words, the leader does not emerge by chance and based on political posturing but rather as a necessary part of the representation of a chain of unmet demands. This is partially the appeal of Laclau's perspective on populism, that the leader is not important simply because of the support that he/she commands or political style, but instead due to the role played as a representative of the numerous and diverse demands.

In discussing the role of the leader in populism, Laclau utilises the conceptual tool of the 'empty signifier'. Laclau's empty signifier has no content and this allows it to perform a fully representative function and symbolically embody disparate demands. By extension, the leader is an empty signifier and is therefore the part that stands for the whole that is crucial to the construction of a popular identity (2005b: 96). The empty signifier is a crucial concept in Laclau's work on populism, it performs a double function of both constituting and representing the totality of the equivalential chain (2005b: 160-163).

As Di Piramo (2009: 13) shows, for Laclau the leader is integral to the construction of populism and the category of the 'people' such that that he assigns this leader the status of an 'empty signifier'; an essential unifying symbol. The empty signifier is not always necessarily the leader but given Laclau's starting point of analysing populism in Peronism the implication in readings of his work is that the empty signifier is the leader. More importantly, this elevation of the leader to this status makes sense in this research due to the overwhelming centrality of Malema. In representing the chain, the empty signifier also represents the 'people' – that are constituted through this process of equivalence, aggregation and representation – and this group stands on one side of the social dichotomy (2005a; 7-9).

The responses from the participants provide a good account of how Malema is viewed in his role as leader of the EFF. These perceptions and identifications fit with this structure set out by Laclau, beginning with the lack of articulation of individual demands and following through with Malema being a central part of identification with the organisation. It was mentioned in an earlier discussion that participants often conflated Malema and the EFF whilst at the same time acknowledging his ability to articulate or amplify their demands. It is here that the narratives presented around Malema as a 'heroic' an 'honest' political figure

also gain further significance due to the identification with the leader through a reflection of their social circumstances and political claims. Malema comes to stand for the organisation in its entirety. He is the empty signifier onto whom members can see their own individual socio-political demands and aspirations reflected. Malema comes to constitute the totality of demands and ultimately represents these demands. Malema completes the synecdochic arrangement in populism – he is the part that stands for the whole, a unifying figure in the EFF, above and beyond the different and diverse demands and social circumstances.

Having come to a concluding point of the analysis of the centrality of Malema it must be re-iterated that the analysis, in line with Laclau's general argument, does not brand Malema and the EFF as populist based on charismatic leadership. Malema is undoubtedly a charismatic political figure but this is not what is important in this reading. Rather the analysis is based on the notion that the perceptions of, and identification with, Malema can be explained through notions such as the leader as the empty signifier for the chain of equivalence.

One of the implications of the leader as an empty signifier for the chain of equivalence is that he/she will come to form an important part in the social dichotomisation. For Laclau this type of dichotomisation is an important part of populism and the building of a popular subjectivity. Laclau (2005b: 110) argues that the construction of a popular subjectivity is based on logics of 'equivalence' and 'antagonism' – the notion of antagonism is central in Laclau's work. This links back to the demand, the unmet demand is one that is made against a 'power bloc' or authority, which means that it is immediately oppositional in nature. When there is a solidarity of unmet demands and a chain of equivalence, this opposition is extended and multiplied. The popular leader therefore embodies a connection of the demands in common opposition – this is the basis of antagonism.

Populism requires an antagonistic dichotomisation of society. Society is split into two camps, one of which is the 'enemy', within an 'us' versus 'them' structure (Harrison, 2014: 55). The construction of an antagonistic camp is crucial to the very constitution of a popular subjectivity. Laclau fundamentally argues that there is a 'discursive construction of power as an antagonistic force' (2005b: 118). The key to populism is in antagonism and subversive interpellations against the dominant ideology (1977: 172). Furthermore, populism is a reification of antagonism into something that is a positive entity. In sum, the chain of equivalence is fundamentally antagonistic, this is constitutive of 'the people' and this antagonism is towards the enemy that is constructed as such in populism.

In this case study, the question to ask is who or what is constituted as the enemy and how? The obvious answer to this is that the ANC, as an organisation, is this enemy to the participants and that this is consistent with the broader rhetoric and narrative of the EFF. The particular construction of the ANC on the part of the participants speaks precisely to this dichotomisation of society and the discursive construction of an enemy. Not only do participants directly refer to the ANC as the 'enemy' in the responses but they also speak to this split between the ANC and the EFF. In particular the leader is used to make this distinction more pronounced.

Interestingly, other constructions of an enemy - that are common in South African struggles - did not come up in the interviews with participants. Despite the labour struggles in the area, the mines or mining management were not described through this kind of opposition. The ANC was argued to be a crucial part of the continued exploitation and oppression of people in Marikana. The discourses around 'white monopoly capital' and racially structured antagonisms were generally absent in the responses of participants. The antagonism of the EFF, from the research, was directed almost solely towards the ANC, in its entirety.

The participants did not appear to provide a particularly complicated or heterogeneous view of the ANC or direct their antagonism towards any specific leader or figure from that party. Instead the ANC, in its entirety and for reasons that extend beyond the Massacre, is the enemy. The ways in which participants describe the ruling party, relate to a dichotomisation where the ANC is seen as the direct object of antagonism whilst the EFF and Malema represent a counter to this as representatives of their demands. As with the participant that described that it is wrong to wear an ANC t-shirt in Marikana, there is a sense in which the EFF in the area does not want to the ANC to exist in the same space.

This point ties together previous discussions around the creation of a popular subjectivity with the equivalence of demands and the element of the leader. The creation of a popular subjectivity that is grounded in forms of discursive antagonism is a crucial point here. In other words, the EFF would not be a populist formation without the polarisation of the social space and the construction of the ANC as an enemy. This popular subjectivity means that members or supporters of the EFF identify with the leader as a representative of their equivalential demands but are also constituted in a collective through antagonism. The 'we' in the EFF is based on this representation, identification and antagonism.

5.6.2. Limitations of Laclau

As is outlined in the methodology for this research, a crucial part of the analysis that merges the empirical and theoretical is the need to question and reflect upon the theoretical framework and its limitations. There are a number of limitations when using Laclau in the case of the EFF. These relate to contextual difficulties, the drawbacks of the 'demand' as a category of study and, importantly, the inability to discuss the class character or revolutionary

potential of the EFF. This section will outline and explain these limitations as they pertain to this report as well as suggest ways in which the analysis could be made more useful through engaging with these limitations.

There are weaknesses with using the category of the demand as a basic unit of populism in this research. This is especially so given the many contextual complexities in Marikana. The demand has its uses for Laclau, namely to avoid placing any ideological content on to populism prior to even theoretically understanding its character. However, the limitation with the demand as the basic unit (with re-aggregation and equivalence stemming from this) is that Laclau forecloses the possibilities of having any other catalyst behind a populist formation. Laclau places all the steps together in the building of a popular subjectivity but does not argue that anything outside of this mode of antagonistic iteration can account for populism.

In the case of the EFF in Marikana, the overarching theory fails to account fully for the role played by the Marikana Massacre, as a particular moment or as a type catalyst for the development of the EFF and the identification of participants with the EFF. Laclau's notion of 'social crisis' and the institutional inability to absorb demands, thereby leaving them unmet, is also insufficient in this case (2005b: 85-86). It is not simply an institutional inability but a rupture that has gone beyond a low-intensity social crisis. The Massacre played a massive role in re-defining the political landscape in Marikana (and beyond); in many ways it is this moment that supersedes any demand. It also plays a big role in the collective imagination around Malema and the understandings of the ANC whilst also having a strong bearing on the collective subjectivity of the EFF members in the area.

Additionally, it is the Massacre itself that is crucial in the responses, not necessarily the demands that existed before, and emanated from, the Massacre. The Marikana Massacre

means that the fullness of the demand cannot be achieved because it comes out of a moment of rupture rather than a longer process of institutional breakdown in relation to the hegemonic class. With the case of Marikana whilst social crisis and a prolonged breakdown may be part of the broader conditions, the Massacre can be isolated as a particular political moment and breaking point that does not fit with the kind of gradual analysis of Laclau.

A further limitation of Laclau with regards to the case study presented here is around the lack of understanding provided in relation to strategies of mobilisation and organisational structures within populism. Laclau does not offer a way to grasp how certain types of mobilisation and political strategies may be distinctly populist. Extending Laclau's analysis in this way would not necessarily weaken his attempt to present a theory that is void of populism as ideology or content. Instead it simply seeks to further the basis of understanding of the *form* of populism and how modes of *doing politics* impacts on the overall character of a political formation. This is one of the critiques of Laclau that was presented by Mouzelis (1978) against his 1977 intervention on populism.

When attempting to understand the EFF and populism this problem persists in Laclau's work, even his later and more comprehensive piece *On Populist Reason* (2005). There are certain things that Laclau simply does not care about in relation to populism as a political form that we are concerned with. It is necessary in some ways to understand what organisational strategies are used and how these have a bearing on the populist formation. For example, what is the role of democratic practices in populism? How do populist formations utilise mobilisation strategies to advance its position? These are questions that Laclau does not broach even though it does not immediately speak to ideology or content. Theorising elements of the organisational structure, mobilisations and the practice of politics assist in furthering the understanding of the articulations and representations of the chain of

equivalence as well as how the antagonism between the populist formation and the enemy plays itself out.

The analysis of the EFF in Marikana in this paper dealt substantially with these questions of organisational structure, make-up and practices. In light of this gap in the theory , the fourth chapter of this paper serves two interlinked purposes. Firstly, it frames a better understanding of the EFF and shows how we can think about the EFF organisationally from a branch level. Secondly, once we reach the boundaries of Laclau in this paper, the theory has taken us as far as we can go in understanding the EFF, it is precisely this information that fills in the gaps in the theory. This is even more so when we look to a final limitation with Laclau in the emptying of content from populism.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, Hart (2013a: 304) argues that Laclau's work in *On Populist Reason* 'expunges class' as a concept in populism and privileges the empty signifier, thereby emptying populism of any class character. Discussions on class are often a privileged point of research in relation to South African politics. In relation to this research, fundamental questions remain about the EFF's character. The essential question here is, once we have established that the EFF is populist, what does this tell us about the organisation beyond its form? Harrison (2014) points out that Laclau is concerned with the hegemonic constitution of 'a people' but that there is also nothing intrinsically progressive, or regressive, about the people. The political subjectivity that is at the heart of Laclau's work limits our ability to engage with political movements on this level.

Laclau offers us a way to understand the EFF through a populist framework, but his theoretical work can only take us so far due to his insistence that populism is a form of 'political logic' that is not constrained ideologically. The question of what the EFF means

politically often comes with needing to understand the political content of the party. This can be based on a class analysis or on the basis of political leadership and the style or performance of politics by the EFF. Laclau allows us to deal effectively with the latter two suggestions; firstly, that political leadership means something more than charisma and that we can understand the EFF as populist based on the relationships of equivalence and difference. On the performance of politics, Laclau's framework transcends understanding populism simply is a political style but rather as a specific type of political logic that can take on various styles, in other words the style of politics is not what is crucial to the EFF, rather the way it constructs a popular subjectivity is.

For Laclau, the process of populism is structured around antagonism but in doing so he abandons the Marxist dialectic as well as the privileging of the 'proletariat' as the class with revolutionary potentiality (2005b: 149-156). This break, in terms of understanding populism, comes in his first work on populism (1977: 160) wherein he argues that populism has non-class contents and that individuals are bearers of multiple and intersecting political contradictions, not all of which are determined by class. The novelty of populism lies in its ability to successfully articulate non-class interpellations.

There are, for Laclau, many sites of contestation and rupture, this is not limited to one class or one site of struggle. The construction of a popular subjectivity does not privilege any one social group or base, its creation is based on a 'precarious unity' that transcends the types of pre-given identities often present in social research (2005b: 115). The EFF clearly draws together elements of the proletariat and 'lumpenproletariat', sections of the elite and other social classes – the Marikana branch is explicitly made up of those from a variety of 'social bases'. This analysis however, seems to fall short in terms of the ultimately branding what the EFF is (other than populist).

This limitation forms part of a major point of disagreement between Zizek (2006) and Laclau on populism. Zizek argues that Laclau's insistence that populism can be present in formations on any side of the political spectrum (the radical left to the radical right) is inconsistent with the very nature of revolutionary subjectivity that is required in leftist organisations. Furthermore, based on the demand being at the route of populism, it is impossible for the revolutionary subject to be populist because this subject does not make demands to power but aims to fundamentally alter the system the power. A revolutionary subjectivity requires that the making of demands shift towards the destruction of the system entirely. Laclau largely steers clear of this discussion as a theoretical principle. This however, remains a subject of critique in relation to Laclau's work and is a pertinent point in this paper on the EFF.

Finally, this research however did not make claims about 'revolutionary subjectivity' or attempt to engage in understanding what a wholly 'progressive populism' would look like. This brings us back to the value of the fourth chapter of this paper in attempting to take us forward, though not fully, from this limitation in Laclau in understanding the EFF. In essence the analysis of the branch politics - with elements of the membership base, class and gender considerations, democratic practices and electoral politics – begins to move towards an analysis of the character of the organisation from content, rather than form. Using the Marikana branch of the EFF and researching various elements of the organisation does the task of finding out more about how the EFF *does* politics and what this means politically. This is not to suggest that looking only at one branch can provide a holistic account of the organisation but that it allows us to find a starting point of analysis around the different judgments we can make about the EFF. The concluding chapter will work with the two chapters on analysis to integrate the material and show how this is possible.

5.7. Conclusion

One of the major challenges in talking about the EFF is often the understanding of what type of political organisation it is – this was clear from the start of this research when a brief scan of the literature made it clear that the major discussions around the EFF focused on whether it was fascist, populist or totalitarian. A further problem in these discussions was a lack of empirical or theoretical underpinning to any of these claims. This chapter emerged out of this gap in the literature to attempt to argue that the EFF is populist based on a both participant responses and a reading of populism theoretically. This chapter first outlined the empirical work and engaged with the responses of participants. The responses were clustered in themes that guided the discussions and allowed for preliminary suggestions on populism in the EFF to be made directly from the responses.

On the theoretical end, this chapter then took these responses and discussions and applied Lacalu's framework on populism in analysis. This took the analysis through the demands of the participants that were diverse and offered a way in to begin the analysis of the EFF. It then went on to discuss the Marikana Massacre and how this unequivocally altered the political choices and identification of the participants. Consequently, it was a point that exposed a limitation in Laclau's framework that it cannot account for particular moments within the development of populism practically. The centrality of Malema was one of the ways in which the empirical fits neatly with the theoretical and provided a solid foundation to understand the role and positioning of the leader in the EFF.

Finally, it provided some considerations around the limitations of Laclau when applied to this particular case study whilst fundamentally maintaining the usefulness of Laclau in understanding populism and the EFF. The discussions around the limitations ultimately

brought the analysis back to a focus on the politics of the branch and how this can move us beyond the major limitations in using Laclau as a theoretical framework to understand the EFF. Notwithstanding this contribution, the limitations of Laclau that are presented here also focus on the need to reflect on the theory of populism and to refine the theoretical contributions.

6. Conclusion

At its core, this research report aimed to throw light on the EFF and its political character. My starting point in this regard was to trace the trajectory of the party and to provide a discussion of its self-representation and framing. Here I also provided a background to the EFF and a discussion of its emergence out of the ANCYL. From this point it was also possible to begin to outline the gaps and problems in the literature on the EFF, and to situate this research within the context of broader discussions about the new party. My literature review therefore mapped out prominent arguments on the EFF and pointed to the gaps and limitations where this research intervenes in shifting beyond what has been said about the party.

The two main sections of this report aimed at answering identified questions about the character of the EFF. The first focused on the politics of the branch and the second on populism and collective subjectivity. The section on the politics of the branch provided a number of insights about the party 'on the ground', especially given that this is one of the first investigations of its kind and that many of the assertions about the EFF organisationally have been based on speculation..

It must be acknowledged that this analysis is limited given the scope of my research, which was confined to one branch. A further limitation on how far we might generalise from my research arises in relation to the contextual complexities that shape how politics is practiced in the Marikana branch. These circumstances would differ in other branches. While being mindful of these contextual particularities, this chapter still worked towards a more textured analysis of the EFF that complicates many of the assertions that have been made about the party.

The analysis of the politics of the branch underlined issues regarding the branch membership, the organisational structure, and the activities of the branch, as well as the party's relations with other organisations. In this respect, I showed that participants from the EFF branch in Marikana were largely former members or supporters of the ANC and a large section of the membership was simultaneously

mobilised behind AMCU. In addition, there were only a few members who were part of the youth, and even with the 'militaristic' or 'masculine' culture of the organisation, women generally drove the branch forward in its activities and campaigns.

Furthermore, there were apparent differences with respect to decision-making and the running of meetings between the official launch of the branch and general branch meetings. The former followed protocols and procedures with little discussion whilst other meetings of the branch were open and aimed to build consensus. In terms of the relationship between the EFF and other organisations, it was clear that the branch had a strong alliance with AMCU in the area and with Sikhala Sonke. It also had a positive relationship with the UDM. On the other hand, the participants pointed to deeply antagonistic relations between the EFF and the NUM and ANC. This antagonistic relationship with the ANC was analysed as being part of the development and construction of a popular subjectivity that moves towards a dichotomisation of society read off' us' versus 'them' narratives that were common in interviews conducted as part of my research.

This analysis moved us towards a central theme of this paper, that is, populism and political representation. It was argued that the EFF could be understood as populist. This was achieved primarily through highlighting the formation of a particular type of political subjectivity in the party.

In setting out this argument, I show how political identities within the EFF are rooted in demands and struggles that precede the formation of the party and which have subsequently been subsumed within its political platform. Moreover, this appropriation of demands goes together with the representation of sets of demands by Malema as the leader of the EFF. I show that it is almost impossible to talk about the EFF without talking about Malema and this is precisely so because he takes the role of the 'empty signifier', which comes to represent not only the party but also the general demands that form part of the antagonism towards the ANC. Fundamentally, I outlined aspects of the process of signification and how it is possible to use Laclau to grasp the construction of a popular subjectivity in the EFF. The responses of

participants in this regard played a primary role in illustrating the forms of identification with the EFF and how these are tied to Malema.
This research applied Laclau to the EFF and illustrated how an argument that the EFF is populist can be based on using this particular theoretical framework. In sum, there is value in using Laclau to argue that the EFF is populist. This analysis allows us to assert that the EFF builds a popular subjectivity and mobilises a broad coalition in constituting a 'people'. The EFF emerges out a more prolonged social crisis and, importantly, a point of rupture in the form of the Marikana Massacre. Finally, there is a fundamentally subversive nature to the EFF that constructs a collective subjectivity out of an antagonism against the ANC.

After having established this argument, I then outlined the limitations to Laclau's perspective on populism as well. The most important one that emerges in my discussion is that Laclau's framework is unable to account fully for the political nature of the EFF. Laclau's understanding can only take us so far in terms of grasping the kinds of politics that the EFF represents. This is precisely because he argues that populism is a form and not content. It is at this point necessary to undertake a deeper interrogation of the political character of the EFF. Here the politics of the branch tells us more about the class, age and gender make-up of the EFF, as well as the space and place of democratic practices in the party.

Drawing out some of these points shows that the character of the EFF is complex. The organisation in Marikana does appear to be made up of a broad coalition of different class groups under a fundamentally populist identity. Whilst it has elements of a distinctively working class character there are intersecting identities in the party. The branch also utilises different decision-making practices at different stages - though mostly tending towards an open form of democracy. In general, and even outside of the Marikana branch, the party has, at the very least, formal democratic procedures that it insists on. These are often complicated by informal practices that alter the meaningfulness of these formalities. It is these types of suggestions, made in the fourth chapter, that push the analysis of the EFF further.

In retrospective reflection, this research did two additional things; the first is to move away from arguments and characterisations that are primarily pejorative with respect

to the EFF (often simply because many do not like the 'style' of politics that they represent). In the main, I attempted to apply a theoretically grounded understanding of populism to the EFF. Part of this meant doing a reflection on the problems or challenges with such an application. Therefore, this report did not intend to present Laclau as an infallible framework for analysing the EFF, but rather I tried to show that he offers some valuable considerations around populism that can be useful for thinking about politics in our context.

Secondly, the analysis of the EFF is grounded in data from a branch of the party. This was important precisely because so much of the mainstream analysis of the EFF has based arguments solely on the national outlook of the organisation. This level of analysis is useful and necessary but it does, in certain instances, silence those that are most critical to the organisation – its members and supporters. These average members who do the daily grind of ensuring that the organisation operates - beyond what makes the national news or gets listed in discussion focused on the intrigues of the EFF's public figures - are the ones that are most often left on the sidelines of analysis. For this reason, it became important to bring these voices to the centre of my discussion and construct an argument primarily from this source.

Further lines of investigation with regards to the EFF are necessary, given that this research only fills a small gap in existing discussions on the EFF. The possibilities of drawing out new lines of research on the EFF are multiple. One of these possibilities is to deepen our understanding of the EFF organisationally, beyond simply one branch. A comparative study of various branches in different political and geographic locations would provide much needed data on the organisation. More analysis is also required on the political character of the organisation – a key discussion would be around understanding the political space that the EFF occupies in South Africa. This should take in to account a theoretical framework that fully confronts questions of the class character, ideology and content of the party. The already existing arguments that attempt to discuss this in the popular media must be reiterated, critiqued and reworked in an effort to refine our knowledge of the contemporary political space and the potential futures that this opens up.

In addition, what the EFF represents and means for the politics of race in South Africa is a critically important theme to consider. The EFF has brought to the fore many questions about race and race relations through its general ideological outlook - the impact of which is still not fully understood. Furthermore, probing deeper into gender, masculinity and the role of women in the EFF is another necessary and crucial area of further inquiry and research. This is especially important given the assertion by some that the EFF represents a militaristic and exclusionary masculinity. Dealing adequately with questions of gender, race and class in the EFF are crucial to engaging substantively with the organisation.

These are just a few recommendations for future research. Questions taken up in this work, on the organisational and political character of the EFF, as well as the forms of representation and subjectivity that we have linked to it, will remain important lines of inquiry in our attempts to understand the EFF as a developing organisation that is already an important part of contemporary South African politics. I hope that this preliminary piece will help enrich the discussions that will follow.

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