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The Paradox of Impermanence:

Africanist Political Imaginations and Rights Claiming in Johannesburg

by

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I the undersigned, Claire Lindsay McDonald, hereby declare that the work contained in this MA research report is my own original work and has not previously, either in part or in its entirety, been submitted to any other university for a degree.

C. L. McDonald ..... 13/02/2018 .....

Signature **Date**

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Abstract

New ways of conceptualising patterns of human mobility and the political, economic and social effects of these movements are driving current migration research. Furthermore, there is a call to develop greater understanding of both the spatial and temporal aspects of migration. This includes understanding how these aspects affect the experiences of migrants in claiming rights and establishing a sense of belonging in a host state. The following research report responds to this call by developing a theory around 'the paradox of impermanence' which I construct from empirical research conducted with migrants living in Johannesburg, South Africa. This paradox identifies two distinct forms of impermanence which are caused by the following factors: insufficient access to state immigration documentation that regularises a migrant's stay in South Africa (state-imposed impermanence); and the personally expressed desires of migrants to return to their home countries (self-imposed impermanence). Further analysis develops the concept of 'African brotherhood', which I argue provides an explanation for how migrants construct their political imaginations in order to claim rights, in spite of their experiences of this paradox of impermanence.

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Chapter One: Contextualisation and Rationale for the Study

1.1 Introduction

Normative conceptions of migration suggest a process whereby individuals are uprooted from their home country and subsequently undertake steps towards incorporation into a new host society (Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc, 1995). This view has been increasingly challenged in recent migration literature, much of which suggests that people are moving in varied and changeable ways, and that new patterns of settlement and transience are evident in global mobility trends (Landau, 2006b; 2014). Furthermore, these new patterns of mobility equally reflect new patterns of social and political interactions that occur between locals and foreign 'outsiders', as well as between these foreign migrants and host states.

Drawing on interviews with nineteen cross-border migrant individuals who originate from nine different African countries and who currently reside in Johannesburg, South Africa, this research project identifies the concept of 'impermanence' as a major factor structuring the lives of migrants living in Johannesburg. This impermanence reflects temporal uncertainties that are linked to two factors: insufficient access to state immigration documentation that regularises a migrant's stay in South Africa; and the personally expressed desires of migrants to return to their home countries. In the first part of my analysis, I argue that these two distinct experiences of impermanence – state and self-imposed impermanence, respectively - are at odds with each other, creating a paradox of impermanence, which ultimately produces contradicting temporal orientations. Migrants in this study expressed frustration and disdain about the South African state immigration system which denies them permanence and the rights that are associated with this. On the other hand, they also expressed future desires to return home, which reflect their intention to leave South Africa one day. These self-expressed future desires appear to be re-enforcing their own sense of impermanence.

The question thus arises as to how migrants respond to these conflicting experiences of impermanence, and what their narratives around rights claiming suggest about how they construct their political imaginations, given these conditions of impermanence. My question asks: on what basis do migrants living in Johannesburg make claims to the right to be granted formal permission to settle permanently in South Africa, when they explicitly express their (future-looking) intentions not to settle permanently in the country? I argue that a third narrative is at play that suggests that the concept of 'African brotherhood' provides an

explanation for how migrants construct their political imaginations in South Africa. This concept is used to justify their claim to rights in the country, despite the paradox of impermanence that they encounter.

The remainder of Chapter One provides necessary context and background. It begins by outlining the theoretical framework and rationale of this study, followed by brief discussions of the methodological and ethical considerations reflected in this study. Finally, I define key terms that are used throughout the project to establish conceptual clarity. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature to appropriately situate my research within the existing analyses and theoretical frameworks. This allows comparison and identifies gaps my research intends to fill. The third chapter addresses the research approach and methods followed while conducting this study. Here, I discuss the specific approach of grounded theory that informed my research design, and I detail the project's data collection and analysis phases. Chapter Three also addresses ethical concerns and discusses my role as a researcher in producing knowledge. Chapter Four discusses the analysed data. It is here that I theorise two distinct forms of impermanence and the contradicting temporal orientations that arise. Following this, I relate the concept of 'African brotherhood' to ideas around migrant rights claiming in the South African host state. Chapter Four therefore presents a coherent summary of the theoretical concepts that have been developed out of the empirical phase of this research study. A final chapter concludes the overall findings of this study.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Rationale

This study responds and adds to a number of theoretical concepts that exist in migration literature. It attempts to draw these concepts together into a new framework of thinking about the experiences of migrants in South Africa, and their ideas around rights claiming in their host state. In theorising about the concept of impermanence, my analysis is informed by a greater project carried out by Bourdieu (2000). Bourdieu (2000: 228) set out to "catalogue and analyse" systems that use 'waiting', and the exercise of control over other people's time, as a means to exercise power. At the same time, my study furthers research on transient mobility patterns, and adds to the debate around reconceptualising the intentions behind migratory activity (Landau, 2006b). Consequently, this study adds to the literature by challenging normative conceptions of why and how people migrate, and through empirical evidence explores how migrants construct their own temporality in the South African host state. Thus, my study is valuable in that it contrasts two forms of impermanence – state and

self-imposed impermanence respectively – and it links these two bodies of literature that have otherwise not been associated. The project also argues that an Africanist claim is at the heart of migrants' attempts to negotiate their belonging and their access to rights in the country. Other theories have attempted to explain these practices, notably Landau and Freemantle's (2010) discussion of 'Tactical Cosmopolitanism'. However, this study uses the collected empirical evidence to suggest that narratives of rights claiming have a distinct Africanist tone that is used to respond to the paradox of impermanence.

1.3 Methodology and Data Collection

The choice to use a grounded theory approach for this research project was guided by the recognition that raw data can produce new and interesting findings that can then be used to build theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Through the collection of data, a researcher is thus able to facilitate the co-construction of theories by interpreting the meaning that people make of their experiences (Hardy, Gregory and Ramjeet, 2009). In this way, I began the research process with a set of basic questions and loose hypotheses with the aim of letting the data reveal its own meaning. In designing the research, a qualitative study was deemed most appropriate for collecting the type of data needed for this grounded theory approach. Interviews of a semi-structured, but in-depth nature, allowed for the collection of detailed narratives. From these interviews I have drawn analysable data and constructed a theory around the politics of impermanence and Africanist imaginations around rights claiming. The specifics of the research approach and the methods that I used to conduct this study will be detailed in Chapter Three.

1.4 Ethical Considerations

The ethical concerns of consent and confidentiality were identified as the two most important and relevant elements for ethical consideration to this study. After creating a broad interview schedule, it became evident that the line of questioning I wished to pursue was not particularly sensitive, and did not require participants to reveal information that may expose their vulnerability. To ensure that consent was maintained throughout the process however, participants were asked to sign a form of consent stating that they understood what was involved, and that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any point during or after the interview took place. Furthermore, pseudonyms have been used to replace the names of participants in the written report to protect their identities and maintain confidentiality. A

more detailed explanation of these ethical considerations and the measures taken to maintain ethical integrity will be discussed in Chapter Three of this report.

1.5 Key Terms

1.5.1 Political Imagination

The concept of 'political imagination' is used as an analytical tool throughout this research project to describe the ways in which cross-border migrants engage with, and perceive their engagement with, their social and political environment within the host state. 'Imagination', as a "process deeply connected to how we experience the world at every moment" (Glaveanu and de Saint Laurent, 2015: 558), thus informs the formation of a political and social identity. This process involves drawing on "existing cultural resources, as well as past experience, in ways that enrich our here and now" (Glaveanu et al., 2015: 558). It also includes imagined possibilities of the future. The concept thus involves an implicit set of framing and belief that provides a scheme for evaluating the world and setting goals. This project ultimately seeks to understand which specific idioms inform the construction of the political imaginations of migrants living in Johannesburg as well as the effects that certain temporal experiences (specifically experiences of impermanence) have on its construction.

1.5.2 Rights Claiming

For the purposes of this paper, I use the term 'rights claiming' to refer specifically to those processes which give migrants access to legal status within South Africa and especially the set of rights associated with legal immigration documents. The set of rights associated with refugee and asylum seeker permits includes the right to work, to access health care and education and protection against deportation to the country of origin (DHA, 2018).This project is not concerned with the practices that migrants undertake in order to gain access to specific rights, but rather seeks to understand what justifies their claims to access this set of rights more generally.

1.5.3 Impermanence

The concept of 'impermanence' should be understood in this project to be a temporal descriptor which, I argue, helps to develop an understanding of migrants' experiences of living in Johannesburg. It relates to a form of temporal rupture that has effects on how migrants construct their political imaginations. The exact forms that this concept takes on in

the context of my study will be described in detail during the discussion of the analysis. The concept thus forms part of a broader theoretical understanding of temporal orientations and how the effects and use of time in social life is understood.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study seeks to develop a new theoretical framework for understanding migrants' experiences of impermanence and their ideas around rights claiming in the city of Johannesburg. In theorising impermanence, I add to a body of research that seeks to develop understanding around the temporal aspect of migration. At the same time, I conceptualise a new form of rights claiming linked to an Africanist idiom. I thus draw on a range of literary fields to inform the development of these concepts. I will begin the review with an outline of the current South African immigration system, thereby providing the context in which my study took place. This will include a brief discussion of the current debates in the literature about the functioning of the immigration system. Considering specific theoretical fields relevant to my study, I begin with those related to impermanence. Here, I consider literature that discusses temporal orientations, looking specifically at the concepts of 'waiting' and 'timepass'. I address the general literature as well as the migration specific literature on these concepts. This is followed by a discussion of the body of literature relating to temporal orientations and the concept of 'transience'. I use these ideas to inform the development of my own theory of impermanence in Johannesburg. This will be discussed alongside the concept of 'transnationalism' in order to explore the literary debate around reconceptualising understandings of the temporality of migratory activity. Finally, I address the literature on migrants' rights claiming perceptions and practices. The literature on the concept of 'African renaissance' is also considered and I use this to inform the development of my own theory on Africanist political imaginations and rights claiming in Johannesburg.

2.2 The South African Immigration Context

Since the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa has seen a surge of cross-border migration from across the continent and beyond. Not only has there been a dramatic increase in the number of foreign migrants entering the country, but the diversity of migratory activity and types of migrants that have come seeking protection, profit and passage in various forms is noteworthy (Crush and McDonald, 2002; Landau, 2014). The South African immigration system, administered through the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), includes a number of channels for obtaining secure immigration status. However, the majority of these channels – including a variety of visa and temporary residence permit options - involve completing and

submitting applications before entering the country. Many of the requirements and administrative procedures thus present significant barriers to obtaining these documents (Amit and Kriger, 2014). South Africa has notoriously porous borders along its five neighbouring countries and this makes it relatively easy for migrants to gain territorial access to the country irregularly (without legal documentation). According to South African legislation, all individuals have the right to apply for asylum upon entering the country and to reside (and work) legally until their claim is processed (DHA, 2018). As a result, the asylum system in South Africa has been inundated with claims from migrants who enter the country irregularly, and subsequently attempt to regularise their stay in order to live and work legally in the country - at least temporarily (Amit et al., 2014). This situation has led to an overburdened immigration system with massive backlogs in the processing of asylum claims. The result of this has been sharp criticisms about inefficiency in the DHA as well as DHA concerns related to the legitimacy of asylum claims made by migrants (Rugunanan and Smit, 2011). It is worth mentioning that the state's reputation of inefficiency does not only affect migrants but also affects South Africans themselves. The frustrations of bureaucratic lethargy are thus widely felt (Sutton, Vigneswaran and Wels, 2011).

These migration policy conditions exist alongside the infrastructural, spatial, social and institutional characteristics that are unique to the City of Johannesburg. A discussion of these characteristics should begin by providing a historical understanding of the politics of space in Johannesburg. The question of 'space' in South Africa, is an inherently complex concept that is linked to a history of racial and class-based physical exclusion that continues to deeply affect the contemporary democratic society. Landau and Misago (2009) argue that the spatial structuring left over from colonialism and apartheid in South Africa has effectively conflated notions of territory with political and economic privilege. As a consequence, we have seen consistent reference to indigeneity and a rising nationalist discourse which espouses the exclusion of 'outsiders' from accessing national economic and political resources, including the accessing and using of space in South Africa. It is within this context that migrants attempt to claim rights and position themselves within South African society.

The South African constitution has consistently been praised for its liberal and progressive commitments. These include the commitment to provide for "all who live in the country, regardless of citizenship, nationality or country of birth" (Landau, Ramjathan-Koegh and Singh, 2005: 4). The ability to 'self-settle', rather than be confined to refugee camps, makes South Africa a particularly attractive asylum destination (Rugunanan et al., 2011). However,

despite these commitments, it has been found that the rights afforded by the constitution are not consistently applied, and are regularly denied to refugee and asylum seekers (Landau et al., 2010).

2.3 Temporal Orientations

Preoccupation with time and the ways in which humans engage with, and place value on, time has been the subject of much sociological research (Hall, 1959; Durkheim, 1965; Geertz, 1973). Auyero (2011) argues that the particular temporal experiences of 'waiting', and the sociocultural implications of what waiting means for those who wait, and for those who impose periods of waiting upon others, requires greater 'scholarly attention'. When considering this concept in the context of a nation state, it can reveal important insight into the power dynamics between the state and subordinated groups in society.

Schwartz (1974: 841), as one of the forerunners in the debate around waiting, introduces a distinctly economic perspective. He suggests that waiting results in social and economic costs due to the "productive activities" that are forgone during the waiting period. The assumption is that delay – or waiting – is perceived in terms of supply and demand. It results when the supply of a service is outweighed by the demand by clients wanting access to that particular service. However, Swartz argues further that this basic supply – demand analysis does not account for "socially patterned variation in waiting time" and, in agreement with Auyero (2011), suggests that these variations can be explained by exploring the existing power relations in society (Schwartz, 1974).

The literature on waiting reveals a host of ethnographic stories about how these power dynamics play out, with a general focus on the particular dynamics between the state and subordinated groups in society. Auyero's 2011 study analyses this relationship in the context of a state welfare office in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He argues that a 'patient model' best explains this relationship, where those who are 'waiting' for state welfare find themselves in a constant state of dependence, powerless to affect the conditions of their waiting. Ultimately, these welfare receivers "have to (silently) endure; they have to act not as citizens with rightful claims but as patients of the state" (Auyero, 2001: 23). This reference to citizenship, linked with rights claiming is particularly pertinent when considering the case of migrant groups. Migrant groups, who by their very nature, as non-citizens, could thus accordingly be classified as 'patients of the (host) state' when encountering bureaucratic procedures. Other studies have produced similar ethnographic data on the experiences of waiting in institutional

spaces such as public hospitals and clinics, welfare rooms and state prisons (Hays, 2003; Comfort, 2008). Thus, waiting exists in multiple spaces and has varying implications. These implications may have a significant impact on the lives of those involved, and how these experiences are interpreted, will form an important part of the analysis of this research project.

Linked very closely to conceptions of waiting is the notion of uncertainty. Periods of waiting condemn those who wait to a state of limbo when there is no specified time period for how long the wait will be. Jeffrey (2010), in his paper exploring 'timepass' amongst unemployed young men in India, refers to the feelings of temporal rupture created by uncertainty. Uncertainty associated with the waiting period unhinges, or at the very least puts on indefinite hold, an imagined life course, and thus creates insecurity and frustration about the future (Brekke, 2010; Gonzales and Chavez, 2012). Jeffrey (2010: 477) refers to "the disappointment of being unable to acquire secure salaried work despite having spent a long time in formal education, (and) the frustration of being unable to travel and start a family in the manner of a 'successful man,'". This reflects what Bourdieu (1984) refers to as the 'broken trajectory effect'. Similarly, in another study entitled `Disrupted Futures' Ramakrishnan (2014) echoes this sentiment of a broken trajectory in her analysis of urban migrants. The study reveals how aspirations for urban settlement are ruptured when state engineered evictions result in their displacement to the urban margin. Here, these urban migrants' "futures in the city remain stalled and fixed in uncertainty" (Ramakrishnan, 2014: 756) as they await decisions about their settlement. The state therefore, plays a crucial role in creating and maintaining these conditions of uncertainty and impermanence – which are engineered through periods of waiting. Thus, emphasizing again the power dynamics at play between state structures and subordinated groups. In this way, uncertainty ultimately has an effect on an individual's sense of belonging to a given place, their conception of the role of the state and its governance over their life. Uncertainty also raises questions about a person's rights and access to state resources as citizens of a place (Ramakrishnan, 2014). In addition, uncertainty raises the question as to what happens when power dynamics are further complicated in the relationship between the state and a subordinated population that is formed of non-citizens (migrants).

2.4 Temporal Orientations and Migration

The question should be asked of how temporal orientations affect migrants who, as non-citizens, engage with the state at various levels. This (often) involves the need to navigate periods of extended waiting while also holding precarious status in the host country. Villegas (2014) argues that the question of illegality and with it, the ever-present threat of deportation, has a particular effect on the way migrants "perceive, understand and negotiate time" (Villegas, 2014: 288). Villegas suggests that living without full, secure immigration status has an impact on a migrant's economic capacity by exposing individuals to poverty, unemployment and precarious work environments. Furthermore, she argues that this insecurity also impacts on their physical and emotional well-being. Accessing accommodation and other basic social services such as healthcare and education becomes problematic and the temporariness – or impermanence - of their position inhibits processes of belonging (Villegas, 2014).

Similarly, the literature on the 'Dreamers' that has emerged from the United States speaks to this concept of uncertainty and the associated psychological, social and political effects that result from temporal ambiguity. 'Dreamers' is a term derived from the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act – which is a failed piece of legislation that sought to allow the group of undocumented youth who arrived in the United States as children (and who have appropriated the title 'Dreamers') to obtain legal status in the country. In response to this failure, DACA (the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program) was introduced under the Obama administration in 2012 (Fathali, 2013). Recipients of this program are able to register for Social Security numbers, enrol in universities and legally work in the country with the threat of deportation at bay. However, DACA recipients are only granted this security for a period of two years, after which they have to re-apply. With the change of administration, in 2017 President Trump announced plans to rescind this program, a decision which has been met with legal action but ultimately submits recipients to further uncertainty about their futures in the United States, subject to the host state's policies and according to a certain timeline Gonzales, 2017).

Important to this debate is the introduction of the notion of 'mixed-status' families or households. Here, the conditions of uncertainty are amplified when the various members of a household may be subject to different legal status and consideration must be taken of the different levels and timelines of deportation risk (Gonzales, 2017).

Villegas argues that migration research and discourse has produced the temporal binaries of 'temporary' versus 'permanent' migration trajectories, where in fact, a multitude of factors can work to alter these trajectories despite the migrant's intitial intentions (Villegas, 2014: 278). Therefore, immigration status plays an important role in aiding or preventing certain trajectories from taking form and consequently affects individuals' ability to plan for their futures, producing an "enforced orientation to the present" (Villegas, 2014: 280). As such, Villegas urges us to challenge temporal assumptions about migration and reconceptualise understandings of what these uncertain and often impermanent trajectories mean for migrants. Consideration must be made of how it affects their "ability to feel they are part of their surroundings" (Villegas, 2014: 279). It is this 'challenge' that I respond to in my study.

Literature on temporal orientations specific to the South African migration context similarly explores notions of waiting and the 'liminal spaces' that these periods of waiting create. Sutton et al., (2011) consider the specific power relations at play between the state bureaucracy and foreign migrants in South Africa during the process of applying for immigration status. The authors argue that the process generates conditions of liminality, where migrants' waiting is "fuelled by a mixture of despair and hope" while stuck in a position of limbo until an outcome is revealed (Sutton et al., 2011: 30). An interesting observation in their analysis relates the space of the refugee reception office to that of a state border. Due to the paucity of South Africa's borders, it has become relatively easy for migrants to enter the country irregularly (Amit et al., 2014). Thus, in order for irregular migrants to regularize their stay, they need to present themselves at a refugee reception office which in many cases, marks their first interaction with the South African state bureaucracy. This discussion relating to the specific power dynamics at play in the waiting for immigration status forms an integral part of my analysis around impermanence in Johannesburg.

2.5 Transience and Transnationalism

As with Villegas' attempt to challenge the inappropriate binaries associated with migration, Landau (2006b) opens the debate to thinking about reconceptualising migrants' stay in the city of Johannesburg, and the country at large. He suggests that the ways in which exclusion and being positioned as outsiders affects migrants and similarly, their reactions to these spatial politics, have not been properly explored. Furthermore, on closer inspection, these reactions may not conform to our normative assumptions of 'transplantation' and 'rooting'. Instead, Landau suggests that many migrants living in the city adopt "idioms of transience"

where they overtly resist transplantation and permanent settlement (Landau, 2006b: 127). In expressing their future-looking desires to return home, they position themselves as part of a 'mobile class', either forcibly displaced or temporarily attempting to extract certain economic resources before circulating their profits elsewhere. These narratives of transience and extraction – and ultimately the impermanence they imply – challenge conceptions of integration which tend to underpin research in migration studies.

Similarly, the literature on transnationalism has sought to redefine the scales of politics and conceptions of space in a context where "more and more people choose or are forced to live as full or reduced members of multiple groups" (Levitt and de la Dhesa, 2017) and thus experience conditions of impermanence. Given that migration is occurring in new and varied forms, much of the literature tries to understand and describe what these new modes of movement and the variety of cross-border activities undertaken by migrants mean for questions of social interaction, representation and protection. Understanding what they mean for the role and conception of the nation state is also important (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999; Levitt et al., 2017).

Both the concepts of transience and transnationalism therefore, form a literary base from which part of my analysis of impermanence has been developed. I argue in Chapter Four that the narratives expressed by participants in my study reflect these sentiments in their continuous connections to an 'elsewhere' and their desires to return home.

2.6 Negotiating Claims to Rights

In theorising notions of rights claiming and the ways in which migrants negotiate space, inclusion and belonging, Loren Landau has done much to further our understanding in the context of Southern Africa. He suggests that this 'negotiation' takes on varied forms as migrants respond to a multitude of exclusionary tactics and attempt to justify and legitimise their presence in a host state (Landau, et al., 2010). These exclusionary practices come in the form of state immigration policy as well as anti-foreigner sentiment from local populations which manifests in various ways.

In their paper on 'Tactical Cosmopolitanism', Landau and Freemantle (2010) suggest that migrants living in Johannesburg adopt a form of cosmopolitanism 'from below' which allows them to claim benefits from the South African host state while not becoming bounded by it. This involves a mixture of tactics including: the adoption of a rhetoric of self-exclusion and

transient superiority; references to pan-Africanist and liberation philosophies; and the avoidance of obligations (to their home communities, host communities and other migrant groups) (Landau et al., 2010: 381). Amisi and Ballard (2005) speak to some of these tactics in their research that recognises the narratives of superiority that exist within Congolese populations in South Africa. Scott (2013) also notes how migrants in a Cape Town township undertake strategies to avoid assimilation and the obligations associated with being integrated into a community.

Elsewhere, Landau has argued that migrants aim to obtain 'usufruct rights' (Landau, 2014). He proposes that instead of attempting to claim recognition as political or social beings, migrants work towards extracting the resources needed to sustain their temporary livelihoods while remaining invisible in the spaces they inhabit. In this way, migrants can avoid exposure to the formerly mentioned set of exclusionary policies and tactics faced in the host state. By employing this strategy, migrants maintain an unrooted status while still drawing on the state for resources. These are particularly useful tactics in spaces that are characterized by flux and impermanence (Landau, 2014). The concepts in this discussion thus play an informative role in the development of my own theory of impermanence, although I suggest that the tactic used by migrants to claim rights involves the reference to a distinct Africanist claim.

2.7 African Renaissance

A final body of literature – which Landau and Freemantle (2010) touch on as part of their theory of tactical cosmopolitanism – is the reference to Africanist idioms and liberation philosophies. The basis of these idioms is a language of reciprocity which relies on the existence of an African community which contains entities (countries) that are accountable to each other (Landau et al. 2010).

At the heart of this literature is a discussion about Thabo Mbeki's concept of an 'African renaissance'. First appearing in Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech following the end of apartheid in 1996, this narrative of an African renaissance espoused emotional claims to re-unify South Africa with the African community (Vale and Maseko, 1998). The literature considers questions around South Africa's role (and responsibility) in the political renewal and economic regeneration of the continent. It also analyses the events that have taken place since the end of apartheid regarding South Africa's diplomatic engagement with the rest of the continent (Ajulu, 2001).

The concept of African renaissance thus made promises to re-situate the African continent within the global economy through a commitment to sustainable economic development and the alleviation of a huge burden of international debt (Ajulu, 2001). Mbeki, as South Africa's representative of this cause, thus became the figurehead for an African community and firmly situated the country in the continent's 'Big brother' role (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2012).

Furthermore, the language of African renaissance speaks to the close continental ties that were created between South Africa and the rest of the continent during the struggle to end apartheid (Kayuni, 2012). During this time, South African political activists (freedom fighters) as well as military units were provided safe spaces throughout the continent to organize and manage cross-border attacks against the apartheid government (Ramalepe and Shai, 2016). The language of reciprocity or a 'historical debt' thus runs alongside the concept of African renaissance. In my analysis, I argue that many of the narratives I came across draw on aspects of this concept of African renaissance in order to justify their claims to rights in South Africa.

This review of the relevant literature provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks which have informed the development of my own theories of impermanence and rights claiming in South Africa. In reviewing this set of literary fields, I have identified gaps which my research intends to fill. These gaps include: the development of a theory of impermanence, which I argue is two-fold and contradictory, creating a paradox; and the development of a theory around rights claiming which I argue is specifically related to a discourse of 'African brotherhood'. These theories thus add to the greater debates around understanding the temporal aspects of migration and reconceptualisng our understandings of migrants' experiences more generally.

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to describe and theorise the conditions of impermanence experienced by migrant people living in Johannesburg and to understand the basis upon which migrants claim rights in the city despite these experiences. The direction of this question took form through the implementation of a grounded theory approach. The use of this approach was guided by the belief that through speaking to people and gathering, analysing and constructing their narratives, we can develop new theories about how people engage with and experience the world (Glaser et al., 1967). The particular forms of impermanence described in this research project have thus been theorised based on data gathered and analysed according to this approach. The following section will explain the grounded theory approach and why it was appropriate for this particular research project. I then describe the methods employed to collect and analyse the data. Finally, this chapter addresses a number of ethical considerations relevant to my study, followed by a reflection on the role of the researcher when carrying out research and some methodological limitations faced while conducting this study.

3.2 Research Approach

Grounded theory is a research approach which bases the development of theory on the systematic gathering and analysing of data (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). In its essence, this approach is interpretive and brings attention to the researcher's position in the process of developing theory through the engagement with data. Glaser and Strauss (1967), the sociologists that developed this methodological approach, recognise that theory has a number of interrelated roles to fulfil. These include (among others) the prediction and explanation of behaviour that can be used in practical applications that provide the practitioner with some level of understanding and control over situations. These can subsequently be used to guide future research on a particular area of behaivour. Glaser et al., (1967: 3) maintain that "theory in sociology is a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualisation for describing and explaining". Grounded theory therefore emphasises the discovery of concepts and hypotheses that emerge from data as opposed to focusing on verifying pre-existing theories. The use of data to build a theory from the ground up, and the recognition

of the researcher's interpretive role in theory production, thus sets this research approach apart from other qualitative methods.

The type of study that I conducted in my research project thus lent itself easily to the grounded theory approach. I began with a set of 'hunches' around a topic of concern and ultimately allowed what was relevant to the area of study to emerge from the data that I collected (Babbie and Mouton, 2011). However, during the analysis phase of the project, my initial research question changed direction as I realised that the data was revealing a narrative that held different understandings and meaning. The freedom that is offered by the grounded theory approach thus allowed me to develop theory that has been built from the data collected without the restriction of a preconceived, rigid hypothesis. In the following discussion the specific methods of investigation are explained, followed by an explanation of the directional changes that took place during the study.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Data Collection

The interview process has been described as among the most fundamental methods for social research as it "brings us arguably closer than many other methods to an intimate understanding of people and their social worlds" (Hermanowicz, 2002: 480). As a qualitative project using a grounded theory approach and seeking to gain an 'intimate understanding' of a particular aspect of the social world, the use of in-depth interviews was identified as the most appropriate research method for collecting the relevant data. Using a relatively small data set, I therefore sought to establish commonalities and differences in collected narratives from which to build a theory (Ragin, 1994). According to Babbie et al. (2011), interviews allow for the collection of a set of rich narratives from participants. The level of detail obtained through using this methodological technique is what was needed to implement a grounded theory approach and develop the conceptual groundwork for my analysis.

3.3.1.1 Case and Participant Selection

The data collection process involved conducting nineteen in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews. Each interview ran for approximately one hour. Participants came from nine different African countries and at the time of the interviews, all were residents in Johannesburg. All participants spoke English. The immigration status of the participants involved included predominantly asylum seeker permit holders but also included work permit

holders and refugees. Three of the participants declined to disclose their immigration status. The interviews took place over a period of one month in two primary Johannesburg locations – Yeoville and Mayfair. Interviews were conducted at multiple sites within these locations, at places that were convenient for the participants. Interview participants were initially identified through a number of 'gatekeeper' sources, after which a process of snowballing was employed whereby participants referred me on to other relevant research candidates.

Originally, the research question for this project sought to understand factors that contributed to the organisational activity of migrants. As such, participants were selected according to a number of criteria. Firstly, ten participants were selected who were active members of migrant organisations working in Johannesburg – specifically, the African Diaspora Forum (ADF) and the Somali Association of South Africa (SASA). The other nine participants were selected based on their non-affiliation to any organisation. All participants were cross-border migrants from other parts of Africa and all resided in Johannesburg city centre at the time of the interviews. In addition to these criteria, a number of different nationalities were selected in the study in order to ensure as much variety as possible and to increase the randomness of the data obtained.

3.3.1.2 Data Gathering

In line with the grounded theory approach, this project aimed to follow an open approach to data collection and theory development. The semi-structured interviews rendered a set of narratives that, upon analysis, it became clear were telling a story about new concepts not related to the direction of my original question. Consequently, the originally proposed question took a backseat as I re-assessed what the data was revealing and considered how to interpret the narratives into a conceptual framework. At this point, I identified that the concept of 'impermanence' was dominant throughout the narratives and I began developing this concept and the various associated themes and sub-themes that could help to explain this concept. The other dominant theme which emerged in this project, 'African brotherhood', and which I relate to practices of rights claiming, was identified in much the same way - through the systematic analysis of the data collected. The fact that the participants were selected according to a different original research design does not, however, impact significantly on the type of data collected and the concepts that have been developed from this data. Given that all participants were cross-border adult migrants living in Johannesburg, their being active or non-active in an organisation ultimately has no particular relevance to

the findings of this paper. While a person's organisational activity may reflect something about their political imagination, this variation between participants only adds to the richness of the narratives and the conceptual findings are not skewed by this original selection choice in any significant way.

The actual interviews were in-depth and semi-structured, allowing for a conversation-like informality. The basic structure of the interview covered questions about the migrants' experiences living in South Africa. It also included the following: their organisational activity; their thoughts on migrants' rights; the role of the state; the relevance of national borders and the concept of free movement; and the distinction between citizens and non-citizens. The interviews thus yielded some very interesting conversations and a set of findings that could be analysed. These are discussed in depth in Chapter Four.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

The analysis phase of this research project followed the grounded theory approach, whereby I sought to uncover patterns and irregularities in the data and then categorise these elements of the narratives. This allowed for an exploration of existing connections and the establishment of relevant themes. This process involved constant reflection upon how my presence as the researcher may have affected what data was collected, as well as how my own interpretation of the data affected the development of concepts (Babbie et al., 2011).

The first step in the analysis process was to reduce the volume of data that had been collected during interviews. Having conducted nineteen, approximately one-hour long interviews, the typed transcriptions produced a significant quantity of raw, analysable data to work from. The constant comparison method, which forms the basis of the analysis practice in grounded theory, informed my own analysis process. This involved a system of coding (finding data points that are relevant to a particular concept or hypothesis) which was combined with theory development, and thereby systematically allowed for the discovery of hypotheses (Glaser, 1965).

This process involved working through each interview transcript very carefully, pulling out potentially relevant quotations and getting a sense of the themes and codes that may be developed from the raw data. In this way, I produced summarised versions of the interview transcripts – each of which had reference to a set of potential themes and codes and the relevant quotations that could support those concepts. Thus, I was able to work more

effectively with this summarised set of data as the bulk of the interviews could be discarded, leaving the most interesting and relevant information with which to work.

The use of this method produced a set of concise themes and sub-themes which could then be analysed and formulated into a workable theory. The relevant pieces of evidence, in the form of participant quotations, were similarly organised according to themes. The specific themes discovered during this process will be discussed in Chapter Four.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical codes for research involving human participants provide guidelines for ensuring that a basic standard of behaviour is adhered to by researchers - both in the collection and presentation of data. Consequently, before conducting the research an application for ethical clearance was submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand. This application identified issues of consent and confidentiality as the two most important elements for ethical consideration to my particular study.

Once clearance was received and the data collection process had begun, a number of measures ensured that consent was obtained and confidentiality maintained. All the research subjects were adult migrants and none were identified as vulnerable candidates. They were thus able to provide their own verbal and written consent. Each interview began with a verbal explanation to participants of what the research intentions were and what their expected role in the research would be. Participants were then asked to read and sign an informed consent form which confirmed that they understood what they were participating in, as well as confirming that they were aware that there was no direct financial benefit associated with their participation. The form also asked for their consent to have the interview audio-recorded (two of whom declined to consent on this matter) as well as consent to use direct quotations from interviews in the final report (all consented). With respect to consent, a particular ethical concern arises when considering the potential harm that may occur if a participant reveals more during the interview than what they had agreed to when signing the consent form (Josselson, 2007). This potential concern was addressed in my study by including a clause in the consent form which acknowledged the voluntary nature of participation. This clause explicitly stated that the participant may withdraw from the study at any point – during or after the completion of the interview – at which point any data received from that participant would be destroyed. Participants were given an information sheet with all of the above

information, as well as my personal contact details and my supervisor's email address in case they had any further questions or concerns.

In terms of confidentiality, participants were assured that their identities would be closely protected, with all audio evidence securely stored in my personal computer. Furthermore, pseudonyms have been used to protect their identities in the written analysis. As the interviews form part of a master's research report, the information obtained from participants will necessarily be available to members of the academic community – a fact of which participants were made aware. Thus, ensuring anonymity has been key to protecting the identities of the participants involved.

3.5 Reflexivity and Methodological Limitations

The grounded theory approach emphasises that "researcher and participants co-construct the research" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008: 31). Thus, reflexivity, or the process of reflecting on one's role as a researcher, is an extremely important aspect of generating qualitative research. It ensures that a researcher is aware of and constantly questioning their positionality in relation to the subjects that they are researching. As social beings, any engagement comes with social imbalances which may affect how the various parties interact. During research, these imbalances may be even more exaggerated and so a researcher should always be concerned with how this may affect the data that is collected and the findings that are produced based on this data.

My particular study raised many difficulties regarding the question of positionality. As a white, middle class and educated young woman conducting interviews with black, working class, migrants with a range of educational backgrounds and ages, a constant identity and power struggle was at play within my own conscience. I was ever-aware of how my position as a researcher, as well as the racial and class aspects of my identity, would influence the way individuals may respond and interact with me. I was also concerned about the effect these factors would have on the information that was shared with me. In order to address these concerns I attempted, where possible, to arrange interviews with plenty of time to have preliminary conversations with participants so as to create a more familiar environment. The nature of the interviews – being semi-structured and somewhat informal – also helped to create a more relaxed, conversation-like sharing of information. Furthermore, participants were reminded that if there were any questions that came up which made them feel uncomfortable, or which they wished not to answer, then they were free to decline to answer.

The nature of my research and the direction of the questioning however, did not address any particularly sensitive topics and so I found that most participants were eager to engage and share their stories and opinions.

Another concern that arose when deciding to interview migrant people was the issue of language. While many of the participants that I interviewed spoke multiple languages, none of them spoke English as a first language. This raises important concerns around the interpretation and meaning created through the interview process. The question of employing interpreters was discarded when I decided that an interpreter could present additional ethical concerns regarding confidentiality. As such, I went ahead with one-on-one interviews, with the requirement that participants spoke English. Again, the length of the interviews allowed for enough time to discuss certain topics until I felt that the meaning of the question had been understood and that I understood the participant's response. Of course, there was still some crossing of meaning and I was very aware of this concern during both the analysis and write-up phase of this project. In order to address this, there were several instances where I contacted the participant concerned after their interview by telephone to ask for clarification or expansion on what they had said during the interview.

Throughout the field-work phase, I kept a notebook to record any specific observations or feelings I had about the research process and my position within it. These notes reflected a strong discomfort with what I often felt were highly extractive interactions. In hindsight therefore, a more immersed method of research, perhaps combining periods of participant observation and 'hanging out' (Geertz, 1998) during the interview phase may have helped to address these concerns of positionality. However, this type of project would have involved a much greater degree of planning and time and that was beyond the scope of this master's research report. I believe that the methods which were employed yielded a strong set of analysable data from which some interesting and novel findings have been drawn and developed. The following chapter will now address these analytical findings in detail.

4.1 A Paradox of Impermanence

4.1.1 Introduction

The data collection process yielded a rich set of narratives that spoke to many interesting themes relating to both the general migratory experiences of individuals in Johannesburg, as well as more specifically to the political imaginations of these individuals. During the analysis phase, it became apparent that the concept of impermanence resonated throughout these narratives and underlined the daily experiences of all of the research participants in some way. The analysis, being one based on grounded theory, brought to light two distinct and contradicting themes that spoke to this broader concept of impermanence. The first theme I label 'persistent asylum' and it relates to the specific experiences of state-imposed impermanence that migrants in the city endure. This type of impermanence I argue, forces an individual's temporal orientation to the present, and I explore the effect this has on the construction of political imaginations. In their narratives, participants in my study expressed extreme frustration at being subjected to this type of impermanence. They make assertions that the immigration system should be adjusted so as to better accommodate their claims to access regularisation processes (through documentation), and thereby obtain a greater degree of permanence. The second theme however, labelled 'return home', speaks to the migrants' self-imposed impermanence that results from persistent, future oriented narratives. These reflect a desire to ultimately leave South Africa and, in most cases, return to their home country. The following section will unpack and discuss these two principal themes according to a set of sub-themes identified in the respondent's interviews during the data analysis phase. I will argue that the two themes ultimately reflect a paradox, where the migrants' own rhetoric of impermanence expressed in their desires to return home, conflicts with the frustration that is expressed about the state-imposed mechanisms of impermanence experienced in the condition of persistent asylum.

4.1.2 Persistent Asylum

'Persistent asylum' refers to the condition described throughout the interview process, whereby individuals are persistently denied access to documentation that would formalise and regularise their stay in South Africa on a permanent basis. While not all participants were using asylum seeker permits, this theme is labelled as such as it encompasses the sentiment

of impermanence and suspension associated with holding an asylum document. This was seen in all the narratives, even where participants had refugee status or temporary work permits. All nineteen participants made reference to issues around documentation which included: acquisition and renewal problems they faced at the offices of the Department of Home Affairs (DHA); and experiences of having documents refused or not recognised with the consequence of their rights in the country being denied. Issues around documentation therefore result in a set of concerns which have a lasting and far-reaching impact on the lives of migrant people living in Johannesburg.

This theme, which explores the specific state-imposed mechanisms of impermanence experienced by migrants, introduces several important sub-themes relevant to questions about the relationship between subordinated groups and the state. The first sub-theme, 'inefficiency and inconvenience' speaks to the broader literature on the temporal connotations of 'waiting'. It raises the question of what constantly waiting for adequate documentation implies about the power relationship between the state and migrant individuals. The effects of waiting, and the associated conditions of uncertainty, are also apparent in the narratives relayed by participants. The second sub-theme, 'rights and dignity' highlights how these periods of waiting are interpreted by those affected. This sub-theme also discusses the knock-on effects of not having adequate documentation, specifically regarding the question of accessing decent work. Lastly, the narratives around the effects of 'impermanence and uncertainty' are discussed. These three sub-themes together reveal how this state-imposed impermanence manifests and is experienced by migrants living in Johannesburg, and how ultimately this type of impermanence forces a temporal orientation to the present.

4.1.2.1 Inefficiency and Inconvenience

The process of obtaining documentation that allows one to legally reside in the country has been consistently described as a tedious, time-consuming and often risky ordeal. The department responsible for carrying out these procedures, the DHA, has been labelled as inefficient and corrupt, with criticism of the department's effectiveness hailing from civil society, the media and migrant communities alike (Amit et al., 2014).

In the data collected, participants made reference to a host of minor inconveniences, severe frustration and major risks in their attempt to acquire and renew the relevant documentation needed to stay legal within the country. My findings are consistent with the literature that

maintains that many migrants entering South Africa are using the asylum system as a means to secure immediate but temporary legal status.

What was abundantly apparent in the narratives of all the participants was the extended periods of waiting that had to be endured in order to apply for, process, and renew asylum and other immigration documents. With the closure of refugee reception offices in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town in 2011 and 2012, individuals are faced with fewer venues and long queues every time a document needs to be applied for or renewed. Some have reported being asked for (and paying) bribes in order to get ahead in the queue or have their documents processed more quickly (Amit et al., 2014). Nuha reflects on the time-intensive process of renewing an asylum document and the mistreatment that occurs in the queues:

> "To get to Pretoria is a big problem. You need to wake up at 3 o'clock to go there, and the queue! You need to make the queue, maybe from 4 o'clock to 8 o'clock you must be in the queue. The officers, they open the door. You've already been in the queue, but you know how many people there are there. They eject people, they are taking people's phones. Whatever they will see, they are taking from them."

Furthermore, individuals are obliged to return to the office where they originally obtained their document every time it needs to be renewed. This creates further challenges such as how trips will be financed and the frequent need to take time off work. This is exacerbated should an individual have moved cities since their first application (Peberdy, 2009). Others report being vulnerable to petty crime and violent outbreaks when tensions escalate in the queues. One participant even mentioned being chased out of the queue by officers with dogs. Most seriously, Paul reported having friends deported when going to renew their documents:

> "They deported maybe like ten of my friends. When they go to renew their papers. They don't come back. I've spoken to them. Most of them they say they just put them in a car at the back and take them to jail. That's it. They don't even give them a chance."

This allegation suggests that practices are occurring which conflict with constitutional commitments and raise concerns around the protection of basic human rights (Amit and Zaleda-Aprili, 2012).

Having submitted applications for asylum or for renewal, migrant individuals are then subject to further periods of waiting and uncertainty until an outright decision is made about their case.

> "So people said, you know your case is pending. That means they will arrest you. So I was living in fear because I didn't understand the meaning of case pending."

This comment from Tina reflects the twin concerns of there being a lack of knowledge around the documentation process and migrant rights, as well as the fear of illegality and the position of deportability in which migrants find themselves (Villegas, 2014).

In these ways, state structures, and actors that determine the practices of documenting foreign migrants, are complicit in perpetuating conditions of waiting and the uncertainty that prevails. This reflects a specific power dynamic where the subordinated group (migrant people) are compelled into submission and forced to live according to a timeline dictated by the state (Ramakrishnan, 2014). As suggested by Sutton et al. (2015), the specific practices of the refugee reception offices in South Africa may reflect the will of the government to institute a form of 'border post'. This could be perceived as being necessary because of the paucity of the country's actual territorial boundaries which have enabled the irregular movement of people into the country. Similarly, the DHA uses various strategies to complicate the documentation process, such as the closure of the three offices, limited daily processing and extended periods of appeal. This suggests an outright and "official reluctance to bestow… rights through documentation", thereby aiding in the ultimate objective of removing an unwanted subordinate group (Amit, 2014:269). The argument here is that keeping people impermanent by not giving them access to adequate documentation may be a political strategy employed by the state that makes it easier to remove migrants in response to the public call for it.

Whatever the cause of these periods of waiting – whether it be political motives or inefficiency caused by a large number of cases - migrants are subject to a state-imposed condition of impermanence while they wait indefinitely for documents which they believe can give them access to rights in the country. Auyero (2011) suggests that it is important to understand how these experiences are interpreted by those who have been subjected to them. The following sub-theme, entitled 'rights and dignity', addresses this issue, and unpacks the effects that these conditions of waiting, and the associated uncertainty, have on the physical, economic and emotional well-being of individual migrants (Villegas, 2014).

4.1.2.2 Rights and Dignity

The experiences of what I call 'inconvenience' in the previous discussion, in fact have a more profound meaning than the mere discomfort this word implies. Upon closer inspection, these inconveniences reveal important insight into the power relationship at play between the state and migrant people. The waiting experienced when attempting to access documentation, reflects the demeaning implication that an individual's time is not considered valuable. The inference is that the state (represented by the DHA) has the power to dictate certain waiting periods for any given migrant individual, seemingly at random (Shwartz, 1975; Comfort, 2008). This disregard for the value of an individual's time may have an impact on their psyche, but it is the more tangible effects of the problems associated with waiting for valid documentation that are addressed in this section.

Decent work is commonly understood to be a basic human right and social good, and is officially recognised as such by its inclusion in the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals programme (Sustainable Development Goals, 2017). The obvious economic benefits which accompany a secure work environment are complimented by the emotional and physical well-being that arises from the ability to provide for oneself and one's dependents when financially secure. Villegas (2014, 280) argues further, that decent work "increases one's access to citizenship" through bolstering economic participation in society. Likewise, a secure job affects other forms of belonging due to the decreased threat of removal from the country.

The inability to find decent work was consistently highlighted as a major concern by participants, and this difficulty was often directly associated with their immigration status and the type of documentation they possessed. Participants noted that they generally have trouble securing work with any document that is not the green South African identity document - despite the fact that refugee and asylum documents provide individuals with the right to work in the country. This refusal by employers to recognise the working rights of migrants on asylum and refugee permits, puts individuals in a position where they are vulnerable to exploitation. They are regularly forced to become "victim(s) of low-skilled labour" or are seen as "cheap labour", despite often having more qualifications than their South African counterparts. Tina notes:

> "When they see that your document is foreign, they put it aside like you are nobody. I don't think there is a future here."

This comment reflects the degrading treatment that migrant people are exposed to in the work place - where they are often treated as 'nobody'. The persistence of this treatment, and the hopelessness that things may change, engender a bleak view of future prospects in the country. Indeed, Moses reflects that "institutional xenophobia is part of our life", where obstacles and refusals in the work place are taken as a given for migrant individuals. Perhaps most frustratingly, Nuha reflects:

> "It is their (South Africans') own government who is giving this card (refugee I.D) but the people they are not accepting it."

This point further emphasises the hopeless sentiment as, despite going through legal channels, and the challenges associated with obtaining official documentation, migrant individuals face further problems when there is a refusal to recognise the rights associated with these documents on the ground. These narratives, where a system of law and regulation is created through official measures but is not respected and similarly, does not have measures in place to ensure compliance, reflect a tension within the state. The role of the state and its legal institutions is thus called into question, but further to this, these narratives raise questions about the particular relationship between the state and migrant groups (Auyero, 2011). Ultimately, the inability to access decent work affects an individual's capacity to settle and establish a sense of belonging by integrating into the host society. This is perpetuated by the condition of impermanence associated with persistent asylum or precarious status (Villegas, 2014).

The question of rights recognition and related to this, rights knowledge and education, is another key topic that came up during the data collection process. Abdullahi remarks that there is a "big leakage in the country" in terms of understanding migrants' rights. This applies to both local South Africans as well as migrants themselves. While addressing this topic, a number of participants spoke to the need for rights education and formal processes of 'introducing' migrants (and the South African population) to the rights of migrants. The first step is educating migrants about how to formalise their stay in the country.

> "They (migrants) need to be told how they can formalise their stay in South Africa because that's the first thing that takes away their dignity…then be told again, even if you are not yet legal here, these are your rights, doesn't mean that you are no longer a human being."

In this quote, Bongani highlights the link between having an understanding of one's rights and maintaining one's dignity as a human being. Being unaware of their rights puts migrants in a particularly vulnerable position; however, this vulnerability is further impacted by the ignorance of local South Africans who often do not respect the rights of migrants. Abdullahi insists that the South African government therefore, has a responsibility to "introduce local people to who refugees (and migrants) are", and develop systems of orientation that familiarise South Africans with migrant and refugee documentation. In addition, the government needs to promote education on where migrants may be coming from and the variety of reasons for which they may have left their own countries to come to South Africa.

The South African government therefore, has an important role to play in creating and maintaining the discourses around migrants' stay in the country. Participants however, made distressing comments about how they perceived the South African government to be portraying migrant communities. Moses states that:

> "The problem in South Africa is the way they define migrants. They define us as if we are aliens or maybe we are a certain kind of species that are from a certain planet. They must cater for migrants in terms of international law. Simple, not more not less."

Moses draws on the language of migrants as 'aliens', reflecting how he perceives migrants to be categorised as outside of the citizenry and thereby external to processes of claiming rights. His appeal that South Africa simply adheres to its international obligations (as a signatory to the UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention) situates his ideas around rights claiming to some external force outside of the domains of the South African nation state. Included in international legal obligations is the commitment to provide every individual access to a process which can regularise their stay in the country (Amit et al., 2014).

A number of participants refer to South Africa's advanced constitution during their interviews. However, recognition of its value is consistently followed by a disclaimer which suggests that its progressive commitments are not being met on the ground. Sydney suggests a reason for why this may be:

> "…a system that is working for migrants is our (the government's) last thought because migrants are not voting us into power. So what they do is that anything concerning migrants is their last thought."

Similarly, it could be argued that not only are migrants' concerns the government's 'last thought' but in fact, measures to reduce the numbers of migrants in the country – which can take the form of random deportations – is one of the government's key campaign strategies for gaining support of those who do vote – South African citizens (Landau, 2006).

It is clear from the above discussion that there is a common narrative around migrants' experiencing their rights being overlooked, and their dignity reduced because of their migrant status and the documentation that they carry. This is particularly prevalent in their experiences of trying to access decent work. While migrants experience difficulties accessing relevant documentation, they face further challenges in having this documentation recognised with little recourse to contest these practices. I have argued that this situation reflects the power imbalance that occurs between the state and migrant groups, and reveals a system which by design, works to maintain the impermanence of migrants in the country. These experiences have the effect of lessening an individual's chances of establishing themselves in the host state, preventing settlement, and necessarily engendering forms of impermanence. The last sub-theme addresses how this condition of persistent asylum has a very real impact on the political imaginations of individuals as they negotiate uncertainty about their futures and how they construct their lives from positions of impermanence.

4.1.2.3 Impermanence and Uncertainty

The theme 'persistent asylum' is worded as such so as to draw attention to the enduring nature of this condition in which many migrants find themselves. The participants interviewed in my study had been in the country for different periods of time - ranging from one to fifteen years. However, during the interview process, I consistently heard reference to the narrative that some migrants in the country have been on asylum seeker permits for over fifteen years. Sydney regards the effects of this situation:

> "You are on an asylum seekers (permit) for fifteen years, twenty years. This means that you are destroying the life of this person. And government knows that if they give you a permit, the correct documentation, you can use it to find your way."

The idea that the correct documentation will solve many of the problems that migrants face was prominent throughout, yet appears to contradict some participants' references to their documents not being recognised on the ground.

Persistent impermanence can thus 'destroy' the life of a person by creating a sense of continuous uncertainty, which ultimately can prevent someone from laying down roots and investing in their future in their present space. Cynthia comments that, "next month you come back they will give you (a renewed asylum permit). If you go the next month, you may not get it" and since, as Sydney reflects, the asylum document is "expiring every month, every six months, every three months", individuals find that they "cannot use a document like this". As a result, migrant individuals in Johannesburg attempt to structure their lives around their temporary permits, by finding ways to get by within the time period that they have been granted. Osman reflects on the consequences that this temporariness can have for integration into the South African society:

> "When someone gets a temporary permit, six months or three months, they will work within that period and make a chance out of it. Maybe once they are in a position where they can move to another place they will definitely leave. But if these people, the genuine recognised refugees in South Africa, have a proper documentation, then I can think maybe the community, they can integrate within the South African community and feel themselves accepted in South Africa and they can settle."

This comment suggests that the temporary nature of the documents that migrants receive, in some way inhibits the processes of integration into the South African host society. This implies that if a migrant is uncertain about the time-frame of their legality then they may direct their activity towards short-term occupations which don't require permanence or stability. This type of narrative reflects de Genova's (2002, 427) theory on an 'enforced orientation to the present' where, if an individual has no sense of what their future may hold, it results in their temporal focus being concentrated on sustaining themselves in the present. Additionally, these conditions of impermanence and uncertainty may trigger transient behaviour, where migrants continue moving around cities or throughout the country, instead of attempting to settle within one space and one community. A further concern arises when considering how an individual imagines constructing their future from this position of impermanence. As Osman goes on to say:

> "Now like I'm heading to my tenth year where I was supposed to gain my full (South African) citizenship…But still I don't have the (permanent residency) which I was supposed to get in five years. So where does that put me. Like, do you think I have a future? Do you think if I get married here the kids will have a future?"

These questions about realising a future in the country reveal important findings about how a migrant imagines him or herself, and about how these imaginations are constructed according to the conditions constricting one's possibilities. Indeed, this reference to future families and how an individual envisions their children growing up, is another prominent narrative that ran through the interviews. Moses reflects on the psychological effects that consistently being positioned as an outsider or 'foreigner' can have on a person and his family. He asks:

> "Can you imagine one day in life when you have kids and then they are always telling your kids, oh, you are not from here. There's no stability, psychologically it can disturb you."

The above discussion implies that there is a general desire to obtain documents that will allow for a more permanent and consistent existence in South Africa. Participants that were interviewed for this study expressed frustration at the immigration system which subjects them to this form of impermanence. Furthermore, participants assert that the South African government ought to provide migrants with documents which formalise their stay in the country, thus providing them with tangible and recognised rights. The government, according to some of the participants, is also responsible for creating awareness around migrant rights and 'introducing' migrant people into local communities.

However, these narratives appear to conflict with another recurring theme that is expressed by the majority of participants – that is, the desire to return home. The contradiction that these two themes present offers an interesting perspective into the political imaginations of migrant individuals living in Johannesburg. On the one hand, there is a need to harness tools (in the form of documents) which will allow individuals to establish themselves through finding work and income as well as gaining access to other resources of the state. These serve to assist individuals in securing a sense of permanence for their lives in South Africa. This narrative reflects an important commitment to developing ties and regularising their time spent in the country through respecting the rules set out by immigration authorities and recognising the role the state plays. On the other hand, the forward-looking narrative of one day returning home, suggests that individuals don't in fact see themselves as permanently settling in South Africa. Thus, their relationship with the South African state and its people necessarily takes on very different political and social imaginations. The following section

will explore the theme of 'returning home' and what implications this concept has for the political narratives and imaginations of migrant individuals living in Johannesburg.

4.1.3 Returning Home

The second key theme relating to the overarching concept of impermanence that ran consistently through the interviews was the reference to a future elsewhere and specifically, the narrative around 'returning home'. The fact that eighteen of the nineteen participants distinctly expressed a desire to return to their home countries - either at some point in the future according to their (economic) successes in South Africa or, as many individuals expressed, as soon as was safely possible - requires a closer analysis of what this narrative reveals about the political imaginations of these migrants. The following section therefore argues that these expressions of a continued connection to elsewhere, and the desire to 'return home', reflect a self-imposed impermanence on the temporal orientations of migrants living in Johannesburg. This contradicts the narratives which express disdain for the state-imposed forms of impermanence experienced under conditions of 'persistent asylum'. The implication is that the relationship to a territorial home creates temporal ruptures in the migrants' present state, creating feelings of being in limbo and necessarily affecting processes of belonging.

This section has been divided into three sub-themes which address the ways in which this narrative manifests. The first deals with migrants' experiences of an 'unwelcome reception' in South Africa and how, in many cases, outright aversion to their presence in the country has led to a desire to return home. The second looks at 'ties to the homeland', and includes familial, cultural and political links that play a role in orientating migrants' imaginations to the future when they will return home. Lastly, I consider the rhetoric of 'global players', where certain individuals expressed a desire for adventure and travel before ultimately returning home to settle. The combination of these three sub-themes works to develop an understanding of how this 'return home' narrative contributes to people's political imaginations, their perceptions of their own temporality within the city of Johannesburg, and the ways in which this impermanence is expressed. Ultimately, I argue that this self-imposed form of impermanence is at odds with the challenges described in the previous discussion about the state-imposed impermanence that results from documentation processes and the conditions of persistent asylum. This paradox of impermanence leads to further questions about migrant political imaginations, and how migrants justify their claims to rights in South Africa, given their conflicting experiences of impermanence. This question will form the

basis of the final part of the analysis and I argue that an 'African brotherhood' rhetoric permeated the collected narratives and was used as a means to justify rights claiming in the South African host state.

4.1.3.1 Unwelcome Reception

As the previous theme explored, documentation issues have a far-reaching and persistent impact on the everyday lives of migrant individuals living in Johannesburg. A major portion of the participants interviewed explicitly referred to the difficulties they face trying to obtain papers which allow them permanence in South Africa, and the resulting problems they encounter for not having such documents. Apart from the day-to-day inconvenience and more serious challenges, the documentation problem affects the ability of migrants to establish a sense of belonging within their surroundings. Difficulties finding work and uncertainty about the near future work to inhibit the construction of imaginaries of what is to come (Villegas, 2014). As such, it can be argued that migrants immediately encounter an unwelcoming host environment upon entering the country and attempting to access the state immigration system.

The focus of this sub-theme however, is on the particular experiences of migrants not feeling welcomed by the local population and facing explicit expressions of aversion to their presence in South African spaces. What can be described as a 'go home' narrative, featured prominently in the discussions I had during the interview process, with many participants claiming to experience these sentiments on a daily basis. The feelings of frustration that arise, and the constant rejection that comes from parts of South African society appear to have an effect on migrants' willingness to 'stick it out'. For some of the participants this narrative gave the impression of fuelling the desire to return home. Paul expresses disappointment that his expectations of being accepted into South African society have not been met:

> "Because what can I do here? People, who we thought we could work together as family, they don't care. They don't care my activity, they don't care my knowledge. What they care is if I can go and leave them alone."

This comment speaks to a certain cosmopolitan ideal that has not been realised and instead results in the realisation of the specialised nature of humanity. In other words, Paul undertook his journey to South Africa with a certain imagination of entering a country where, despite – or perhaps because of - great diversity, he envisioned being able to "work together" with the

local and other migrant populations. Instead, he has been met with attitudes that reveal a strong claim to spatial territory and clearly link rights to being from this territory (Geschiere and Jackson, 2006). Paul expresses further frustration that despite the fact that migrants are providing much needed services, they are being 'chased' from local communities. This 'bite the hand that feeds you' narrative addresses this point:

> "Kill him or chase him, but if you know you can do it. But you know you can't do it. But you are chasing a person that will bring you something next week. That does not make sense."

Here, Paul again reflects an expectation that a basis of recognition should apply on a human level among strangers, but this is overridden by the spatial politics at play. A distinct politics of exclusion plays out in these narratives and while this exclusion is linked to a complex set of historical and contextual factors, it suggests that there is little empathy for the position of migrants in the country (Landau, 2014). There is also little understanding of where or from what conditions a migrant may have fled. Instead, popular discourses express contempt about migrants supposedly undercutting the job market as well as being associated with a variety of other social ills (Rugunanan and Smit, 2011). Bongani reflects on the paradox of migrants that have suffered at home and then face further mistreatment in South Africa where they have sought a better life:

> "At the end of the day, the people (who) get to the receiving end of the subsequent hate for migrants, are the very people who have been suffering in their own countries. So, they leave that side, coming to maybe SA for a better life not only economically but politically and then they are met with xenophobic tendencies. To them, it further reduces their dignity."

The question of xenophobia is one wrought with inconsistencies and complex boundaries of definition. However, it is undisputed that there have been expressions of hate directed towards migrant individuals and groups living in South Africa, notably seen in the mass outbreaks of violence against foreign migrants in 2008 and then again in 2015. These episodes are not isolated and a multitude of literature has explored this question of xenophobia and the expressive (often violent) forms that it takes on (Landau, 2011). For the purposes of this paper, a recognition of these expressions of xenophobic sentiment, serve to underline the general unwelcoming atmosphere that exists in the country towards migrant

people, and which, when experienced first-hand, may influence a person's decision to return to where they came from.

A number of participants connect the political rhetoric around migration, which is expressed by the South African government, to the negative perceptions that local people have of migrants. The suggestion, made by Abdullahi, is that the rhetoric expressed by leadership creates "a bigger negative image than there is a positive image of refugees and migrants". Bongani reflects on this negative image that is portrayed by government of migrants in the country:

> "Whenever the South African government speaks about migrants, there is this sort of hidden meaning that a migrant is someone who is poor, who is supposed to be black, who is here because he believes that South Africa is the African Mecca. They are here to get jobs, they are here because they've got nowhere else to go and this is the best country in Africa and therefore they don't have a choice so they have to come here so we should therefore treat them any way we like."

Similarly, Nuha remarks that the government is a 'mirror to the people':

> "It's starting with the government. Because the government it's the mirror to the people. The way the government they do, the other people will do. If they are coming here and they say we want to know your culture, or other people's culture, it's going to be easy for us to interact."

She questions further: "If the government don't respect us, how can their people respect us?" This sentiment clearly situates the role of government as either preventing, or perpetuating stereotypes about migrants which can lead to hateful discourses. The violence of 2008 and 2015 has been linked by some authors, as well as the media, to inflammatory statements made by leaders that worked to induce fear and hate towards foreign migrants present in the country (Misago, 2016).

Experiences of feeling unwelcome in South Africa are thus commonplace in the lives of migrants in the country. From the initial hostile immigration system, to the verbal and physical abuse expressed by local South African people, migrants appear to consistently face expressions of aversion to their presence in South African spaces. The above discussion has shown that this narrative of not being welcome has an effect on individuals' sense of

belonging and ultimately influences their temporal orientation by forming a future-looking desire to return home.

4.1.3.2 Ties to the Homeland

The previous sub-theme suggests that experiences within South Africa engender a desire to return home. The following discussion however, will address the set of familial, cultural and political ties that a migrant carries with them from their homeland and that I argue reflect an ever-present intention of returning home. This intention therefore, situates a migrant's temporal orientation firmly toward the future. From the interviews conducted, there appeared to be an underlying story which emphasised the importance of maintaining ties with the people and culture back home which ensured that those connections were still intact when it came time to return home.

The following remark from Sydney serves as a reminder that many individuals undertake migratory movements purely out of necessity and suggests that in general, human beings tend to want to stay where they are, with their own family and culture:

> "There is no single person who would be happy living somewhere else than his own country. No-one. I mean there might be but very few people would be happy to live very far from their families. People came here for a specific reason. And definitely, if back home their dictators are no longer in power, if the situation is back to normal, definitely people want to go back home. But who knows how long this can take."

This comment reflects the often inadvertent naturalising of national borders, where the participant at once reifies the connection between the spatial boundaries of the nation state, and a particular sense of belonging, while at the same time claiming rights to transcend the boundaries of another state (Geschiere et al., 2006). The basis on which migrants living in Johannesburg claim these rights, forms the central question of the final part of this analysis.

The comment from Sydney (above) refers to the uncertainty around how long it will take before stability returns to people's home countries. The implication of this is that essentially many migrants are biding their time in South Africa, waiting out a period of turmoil back home until they can return. This notion re-introduces the question of waiting, although this time under a different context. This type of waiting speaks to the idea of 'timepass', where uncontrollable, external conditions lead to "feelings of temporal rupture" (Jeffrey, 2010). This positions individuals in a state of limbo, where they may struggle to establish a sense of

belonging to their surroundings because of a constant reference to a future elsewhere. We are reminded here of the language of liminality, where individuals may find themselves "betwixt and between" (Turner, 1987: 3), waiting indefinitely for something to happen that will allow their return home. This condition necessarily has a critical effect on an individual's sense of space and time, and how this relates to their territorial belonging and political being.

A particularly interesting narrative that emerged from the data was the direct expression of political ties to the home country. A number of the participants made comments which explicitly referred to their political activity or vision. Bongani mentioned that he was indeed just "biding time" in South Africa, seeking security and waiting until the right moment before returning to take part in the rebuilding of his country. Similarly, Moses commented, "we are monitoring the situation", speaking of the political movements in his home country, Zimbabwe. Moses made his political intentions clear during his interview:

> "Because I'm a young man myself, I cannot afford to get old in a foreign country. I cannot afford that you see. That's one thing I cannot afford. So, I always try by all means to be closer to home. So that's why some of us, we always try to be involved in politics. I'm involved in politics also in Zim (Zimbabwe). So that if the table turns you know, we are not on the…I won't be on the disadvantaged side of the society you know."

Interestingly, a few days after the above interview took place in November 2017, the military in Zimbabwe took control of the capital, Harare. I spoke to Moses again in the days preceding President Robert Mugabe's resignation and he commented that Zimbabweans all over South Africa were currently 'packing their bags', awaiting the announcement that Robert Mugabe had stepped down as president. While this comment was made somewhat casually, it reveals important insight into the political imagination of Moses. Firstly, in his ties to the political happenings in his country and secondly, that those ties distinctly direct his temporal orientation towards the future. Furthermore, his comment suggests that he believes these ties to be shared by many of his Zimbabwean contemporaries living in South Africa. In essence, these narratives reflect a self-expressed impermanence regarding the migrants' stay in South Africa.

This political ties narrative was echoed again in the interview with Cabdi where she makes reference to the need for 'future leaders' in Somalia, her home country:

> "…my country has started growing now. I think I'll go back there. They need some people there. They need the future leaders. They need people to work there. I already get the information."

Both these comments from Moses and Cabdi recognise an importance in their individual roles as political actors in their home countries. Their political imaginations are thus firmly rooted toward a future that is not in South Africa. Maintaining this type of future temporal orientation thus perpetuates a self-imposed form of impermanence, which affects the way that individuals construct their sense of place and belonging in the South African host state.

While many of these narratives express a conviction that the return home will come about, the reality is that often these journeys remain impossible due to a lack of money or persistent insecurity in the home country. Landau argues that this leaves migrant individuals living in Johannesburg "marooned in the city" (Landau, 2006b: 138) where, I suggest, they become trapped between two forms of impermanence.

4.1.3.3 Global Players

The final sub-theme considers a globalist rhetoric which was espoused by a number of the participants during the interviews. Another framework under which this sub-theme can be understood is the theory of Transnationalism. This concept considers that migratory activities are reflecting new patterns of mobility, exchange and transaction across borders, which challenge normative conceptions of transplantation from one site to another (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Portes et al., 1999). I argue that the globalist rhetoric that I encountered during the interviews, suggests that there has been a transformation of the "normative assimilation story" (Portes et al.,: 1999: 229). Cross-border movement is instead undertaken by many with the intention of it being a temporary (or impermanent) move, often involving multiple movements and sometimes between multiple sites.

The following comment from Prince reflects this notion of transnationalism, where he envisions himself as a temporary sojourner, just visiting the South African host state – and presumably extracting something of use – before returning home:

> "Even while we are here, we are not here for good. We come here, and we go back. We go there and we come back. Sometimes, we decide that now is enough, I must stay home. So, we are just visitors here, we are not citizens."

Prince's distinction between 'visitors' and 'citizens' reveals insight into how he imagines himself politically. While he positions himself as a global player, he similarly recognises that since he is not a citizen he therefore lacks some element of belonging – he is merely a visitor. A number of participants were similarly explicit about their global outlook. Osman remarked:

> "I have a lot of friends across the globe. I'm a global person as I told you. I like adventure a lot, I like travelling."

Moses goes as far as to attribute this global, nomadic impulse to being a natural characteristic of people in general:

> "You see people are just nomads naturally. They just want to move…It's unfortunate the South African government is not aware of that but people they just want to move. If I stay here for a year and things are not working I'll lose my mind, I want to move. It's just in our blood, we want to move, we want to go to better cities, try to find better opportunities."

Despite this passionate expression of his globalist rhetoric, later in his interview, Moses made reference to the need to have a 'base':

> "You see you can move even for ten years, move all over the world. But you've got to have a base you see."

This 'base' reference, as well as his earlier proclamations about his political ties to Zimbabwe, suggests that Moses indeed has a narrative for his imagined future which involves returning to a territorial home. It would seem that there is a contradiction in Moses' narrative, but this contradiction could rather be seen as a challenge to our normative conceptions of how time and place are connected. For migrants living in Johannesburg, impermanence forms a part of their everyday life, and this is coupled with an uncertainty about an imagined future. It is not surprising therefore, that their narratives claim a globalist outlook in their attempt to make sense of their relationships to time and space.

For some, travelling provides an enriching experience during which one can learn about the world and other cultures, and gain experiences that can then be used to enhance one's life back home. Paul states:

> "In Africa we have got cultures. When you travel to another culture you experience that you are missing something. There's something which you need to adapt and see, and take it back home and say you know what, I travelled."

Interestingly, the idea that South Africans do not like to travel came through prominently in the narratives, and was often linked to their intolerance of different cultures and people from other countries. Cynthia expresses this sentiment:

> "I believe they (South Africans) don't like to travel, maybe they don't like to travel from their country to another place. They love to stay in their country. So to me, that's the reason why they don't like another person to come to their country."

Paul suggests further that:

> "They (South Africans) feel that they have got everything. They don't care about what other people are or who they are, they are comfortable, which is not good."

This kind of globalist rhetoric, where travel and experience are prized, acts to situate these individuals amongst the "elite 'mobile classes'" (Landau, 2006b: 127). As Landau argues, "allochthony is not a shameful status. Instead, by valorising it, they (migrants) simultaneously claim ownership of their social marginalisation and status as global players" (Landau, 2006b: 127). Furthermore, he argues, that their ability to do so "allows them to assume an identity of difference and superiority" (Landau, 2006b: 127). Amisi et al., (2005) reiterate a similar sentiment when they suggest that "refugees' time in South Africa is therefore constructed as both temporary and undesirable. There is little interest in adopting and practicing the cultural and national identity of their host country". The narratives in this study suggest that transience is distinctly temporary (while at the same time uncertain), because the participants' expressed desires to one day return home anchor their temporal orientations to that home.

This section has therefore argued that three sets of narratives spoke to the broader theme of 'returning home'. The first suggested that experiences of feeling unwelcome within the South African host state may contribute to a migrants' desire to return home. The second sub-theme suggests that preconceived ties to the homeland – including familial, cultural and political ties – anchor migrants' temporal orientation to the future. Lastly, I have argued that a globalist rhetoric reflects migrants' desires to position themselves as global players, where

their movement is varied and changeable but ultimately temporary, before returning to a home base.

Thus, in contrasting the 'persistent asylum' narrative with the 'return home' narrative, a major contradiction is revealed. These two themes reveal that migrants living in Johannesburg express frustration at the state-imposed impermanence that they experience due to inaccessibility to certain types of documents. On the other hand, there is an explicit reference to their own self-imposed impermanence which results from their desires to return home. In this way, they are at once forced to position their temporal orientation to the present, while at the same time, having a fixed eye on their return, their temporal orientation is necessarily future looking.

Having identified this disconnect between the two types of impermanence, the question thus arises as to what this paradox says about the political imaginations of migrants living in Johannesburg. In other words, what can be said about the way this group of migrant people see their place in the world, and how they validate their claims to rights and the type of permanence afforded through documentation, while at the same time, maintaining their own impermanence through a continued temporal orientation to the future in which they intend to return home. The final section of this analysis will therefore explore the theme of 'African brotherhood', where I will argue that the notion of a unified, and therefore mutually responsible African community, provides an explanation for the ways in which migrants in South Africa are drawing 'usufruct rights', while maintaining positions of self-imposed impermanence.

4.2. African Brotherhood

4.2.1 Introduction

This section argues that there is a distinct 'Africanist' idiom that can be detected in the narratives of the participants involved in my study. Furthermore, this narrative appears to be used by these migrants to justify claims to a particular set of rights associated with being members of an African community. This Africanist political imagination is expressed through three particular sub-themes. The first refers to the concept of 'African unity', where expressions of a united continent suggest the expectation that there should be mutual reception, acceptance, and support of people across the African continent. The second sub-theme addresses the notion of 'South Africa as Big Brother' whereby, given South Africa's position as the 'powerhouse' of the continent, there is a certain level of responsibility expected from the country to assist and monitor what happens in the rest of the continent. There are some who believe it has failed in this responsibility and consequently, some of the participants' narratives have suggested that South Africa should assume responsibility for accommodating those who have had to flee their homelands due to political or economic instability. The final sub-theme looks again at South Africa's responsibility to the rest of the continent, but in this instance, the responsibility is seen as an act of reciprocity – a historical debt that ought to be paid. The suggestion is that countries throughout Africa played an important role in assisting in South Africa's struggle for democracy and consequently, the country 'owes' the rest of the continent for this assistance. Together these sub-themes speak to a sense of mutual responsibility existing between African nations. I argue that it is this idiom that informs the political imaginations of migrants in Johannesburg and is used to justify their appeal for more effective documentation and the associated rights. At the same time these ideas allow them to maintain their own ideas of self-impermanence linked to the desire to return home.

4.2.2 African Unity

During the interviews, the narrative of 'African unity' surfaced particularly when questions around the role of borders, ideas about free movement and migrants' rights were addressed. While there was a strong undercurrent of human rights rhetoric present in the narratives, I argue that it is this Africanist claim that pervaded the political imaginations expressed by the participants.

Throughout the interview process, participants made reference to the connection between an African identity and accessing a set of basic rights. The following remark from Moses reflects this idea of African unity and equality of rights:

> "Within an African context we need to reach a level whereby if people come to your country, automatically they become part of you. Which means they qualify to have the same rights."

This notion of a unified Africa similarly extends to the question of how people are received in South Africa. Nella explicitly links the African identity to the concept of a family and suggests that all Africans should be welcomed into South Africa, as one would certainly welcome family:

> "We are all African. We are African. They have to welcome their brother, they'll live like a brother and sister, as a human being. They can't see us like a dog, no value. It's like us, we see people from South Africa see us like you are nothing."

As Nella notes, this level of familial welcoming has not been seen in South Africa and instead, many migrants have expressed distress at the way they have been received in the country – such as Nella's claim that migrants are seen as 'nothing' in South Africa.

Another line of argument that emerged was the linking of 'Africanness' to freedom of movement throughout the continent.

> "We are Africans, why not, we can have just Africa without border. I can travel anywhere in Africa as I'm an African, as long as you are in Africa. Not even I'm a black, but everyone should feel free in Africa. We can travel and go and be free. I'm from there, you are from there, no, we are from Africa."

This remark from Tina is emphatic that the African identity be a qualifier for access anywhere on the continent. Her repetition of the word 'African' shows explicitly that this forms a crucial part of her identity, and thus her political imagination.

These utterances of a unified Africa, present an interesting contrast to discussions of autochthony, citizenship and belonging. Given the "proliferation of disputes over which identities have legitimate access to and rights over specific places and resources" (Gőtz and Simone, 2003: 125) that currently pervade the literature on African political thought, these Africanist claims seem somewhat surprising. The South African context specifically has not

shown itself to be welcoming of outsiders. The history of spatial structuring left over from colonialism and apartheid has produced contemporary public discourses in South Africa, which express the conflation of notions of territory and indigeneity, essentially crowding out spaces for outsiders to claim access and rights (Landau and Misago, 2009). It is this exclusionary atmosphere however, that necessitates the turn to some other claim - something that transcends national, place-bounded identities. Consequently, I argue that migrants in Johannesburg are using an Africanist idiom to perform this narrative role in an attempt to justify their claims to rights in South Africa. The many references to being 'African' and the rights and freedom that this identity ought to elicit, suggests that the notion of African brotherhood forms a strong narrative in the construction of the political imaginations of migrants living in Johannesburg. This reference to an African community with reciprocal responsibilities is further explored in the discussions of the following two sub-themes.

4.2.3 South Africa as 'Big Brother'

The idea that South Africa has a responsibility to monitor, advise and assist other countries throughout the continent came through as a strong theme in the interviews. Some narratives suggest that since it is the 'most powerful' country on the continent, South Africa has a responsibility to host and provide for those people who have had to flee conditions of instability in their home countries. South Africa's contemporary economic position, as well as its history of economic power, provides an explanation for it being positioned as the powerhouse of the continent. Politically, South Africa has been at the helm of integrating Africa into the global realm. Furthermore, historically the country has been a site upon which the citizens of many other countries (particularly in Southern Africa) have been reliant for employment and a host of other goods and services. (Ramalepe et al., 2016). It is within this understanding of South Africa's stronghold in the continent, that the following discussion should be considered.

A first consideration is Sydney's expectations that South Africa should hold other countries in Africa to account and ensure that democracy is being enforced across the continent:

> "We want South Africa to hold other, because South Africa is the most, let's say most powerful country in our continent, we want South Africa to make sure that countries are enforcing democracy in their different countries. South Africa is not playing that role."

This comment was followed by the claim that South Africa, instead of playing this monitoring role, is in fact complicit in the mistreatment of African people and thus, has an obligation to 'share' part of the 'stress' of these people:

> "Because, South Africa is supposed to be the 'Big brother' who guides peoples. South Africa is actually helping other African countries to mistreat their own people. So, part of the stress, part of the frustration on these people, South Africa should share it. And that, I mean you see most of the dictators that are coming here, South Africa is putting the red carpet for them to walk on."

The suggestion from Sydney is clear: if the South African government is unprepared to intervene in the affairs of other African states in order to help address the problems which are causing instability, and thereby stem the flow of migrants, then it should be prepared to support the 'influx' of people who are coming to the country. As Bongani succinctly puts it:

> "At the end of the day it comes back to leadership, telling one another the truth and trying to resolve the issues that push people away from their countries."

Here, Bongani's comment expresses what was found to be an underlying narrative, where participants allude to the fact that there is a sort of "big man's club" which exists amongst Africa's political elite. This 'club' acts to inhibit accountability and thereby obstructs good governance practices in the continent. References to good governance permeated the narratives and this reflects an interesting perspective in its link to post-colonial discourses on development in Africa. Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) suggest that such discourses play an active role in perpetuating a narrative of uniqueness or difference that surrounds Africa. The fact that these expressions are taken up by the migrants in my study reflect how these discourses have infiltrated the construction of African meaning by Africans themselves.

The reference to this family narrative reiterates a relationship of dependence in which migrants are positioned as the younger, dependent siblings making claims to protection from the 'Big brother'. In using this language migrants situate themselves in the sub-altern, occupying a lower status where they at once have claims to, but are outsiders in, South Africa. This contrasts with what other authors have highlighted as a narrative of superiority, where migrants living in South Africa situate themselves in a very different position, as a 'mobile elite' class (Landau, 2016; Amisi et al., 2005). The contradictions in the narratives of this study suggest a pragmatic approach to rights claiming. When appropriate, and useful,

migrants draw on narratives of dependence and an ethics of protection to justify certain claims to access rights and space. These ideas appear to take place alongside narratives of cultural pride and loyal connections to a home. In this way, one is reminded of Landau and Freemantle's (2010) notion of 'tactical cosmopolitanism', who argue that migrants "draw on a variegated language of belonging that makes claims to the city while positioning them in an ephemeral, superior and unrooted condition" (Landau et al., 2010: 380). They maintain that this 'variegated language' draws on multiple and variable rhetorics, including an Africanist claim. It is this Africanist idiom that I argue, forms the central narrative of migrants' claim to rights.

While these narratives are complicated and sometimes contradictory, they do much to reveal parts of the political imaginations of the migrants involved. Most notably, this sub-theme reveals a belief about South Africa's responsibility to host migrants due to its avoidance of its role as guide and 'Big brother' to other African states. The above discussion has teased out some of the contradictions at play in how migrants construct ideas about their claim to rights. The fact that migrants recognise that South Africa has an obligation to guide its neighbours, suggests something about an African community that has reciprocal responsibilities. I argue that this provides an explanation for how migrants understand their rights in South Africa, and why they have expectations for a more efficient documentation system that regularises their presence in the country, despite their own narratives of impermanence.

4.2.4 Africa's Role in the South African Struggle for Democracy

The final sub-theme of this section speaks to the narrative of a reciprocal responsibility that South Africa has to the rest of the continent, given the assistance it received from its African neighbours during the struggle against apartheid. Again, this narrative of a historical debt came up repeatedly during interviews and its relative frequency suggested that these ideas played a formative role in generating a claim to rights in South Africa. This narrative was mainly conveyed by an expression of disquiet about the lack of education and knowledge that exists in South Africa about the supportive role that other African countries played in its liberation struggle.

Firstly, it is suggested that the South African education system does not adequately address content around African history and current affairs, but instead has a distinct focus on Western life. As Kaahin expresses:

> "All those things about Africa needs to be taught in schools. You go to schools, universities here, people are taught about Western life – they don't even know about the African continent."

This sentiment is echoed by Bongani:

> "South Africa itself needs to change a number of things. The government needs to introduce an African curriculum that South Africans will use to get to understand Africa better. They need to understand that there is war in Mozambique, therefore if I see a Mozambican here I shouldn't think that he is here to steal my job, I should know that he is a brother who needs protection and I should protect him. Just like we were taught when South Africa was fighting for its independence – we accommodated them in Zimbabwe"

Here, the reference to 'brother' re-emphasises this notion of African brotherhood and the familial aspect of being part of an African community. Bongani specifically links the historical assistance that was afforded South Africans in Zimbabwe with the obligation to provide protection for other Africans in need.

Emerging from this line of thought was the question about South Africa's responsibility to reciprocate the assistance of people in need – assistance which was shown to South Africa's own people when fighting for democracy. Tina remarks:

> "They (South Africans) are not welcoming because they say that they went through a lot, about apartheid. But they just forget that from far we helped them, from far we are also praying for them. They are just seeing around them, they don't see out. We also helped."

She makes a further comment which draws in the question of African unity:

> "So why not can we be just one Africa? I was telling a South African, sometimes you must ask yourself, the ANC is African National Congress. Why not it's South African National Congress? You must think. This means all Africa fought for the freedom of South Africa."

Kaahin draws all these narratives together in the following comment:

> "I still hold those who fought for liberation in South Africa responsible for all the conflict that we are seeing today in South Africa. They forget to tell their children. They forget to say, "We went out to other countries. We were accommodated. We joined the struggle. We know our fellow brothers, they didn't give us weapons to fight, but in terms of assisting somebody, they did that." So they forget. This government just came into power and said wow there's money. Now they forget."

This particular comment powerfully summarises the mixture of expectation on behalf of migrants who recognise that the South African government is responsible for hosting them, because of the history of African assistance that was extended to South Africans during times of need.

Again, the narratives in this sub-theme speak to some form of reciprocity that is particular to the African community. Indeed, South Africa and its political elite have espoused intentions of supporting an African renaissance. These intentions are closely linked with the fight against apartheid that bound the South African struggle to the rest of the continent (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2012). Thabo Mbeki, in his 'I am an African' speech, explicitly recognised this bond and made a commitment to guiding the continent towards political and economic recovery (Bongmba, 2004). However, in practice, South Africa's adherence to its commitment to regional support has not materialised in the ways expected by the rest of the continent. As a result, mixed signals have been sent to the region regarding South Africa's regional policy (Matlosa, 1997). Kayuni et al. (2012: 18) suggest that "to the average South African, however, this passion for the African continent is not fully shared". The huge inequalities within South African society have resulted in a consistent reference to indigeneity and a rising nationalist discourse. This discourse espouses the exclusion of 'outsiders' from accessing national, economic, and political resources, including the access and use of space in South Africa (Landau et al.,2009). So, while African migrants recognise the responsibility that South Africa has to the rest of the continent, they make these claims against an extremely complex internal climate which is beset with its own struggles for inclusion and territorial belonging.

All three of these sub-themes speak to the existence of some community that is outside of the nation-state but still confined by some boundary – the community of the African continent. As with Moses' earlier claim to adherence to international legal obligations, these narratives similarly suggest some external force at play that is not dictated by the

South African state. This African community or 'brotherhood' requires relationships of reciprocity to function. However, while drawing strongly on these Africanist narratives, there is still evidence of a deep connection and loyalty to the migrants' home nation.

The above discussion has provided an analysis of the theme 'African brotherhood' that emerged during the interviews conducted with migrant individuals. The consistent reference to this Africanist narrative reveals that these concepts form an integral part of the political imaginations of migrants living in Johannesburg, specifically concerning how they construct their claims to rights. Furthermore, I argue that this Africanist claim can be used as an explanation for how migrants living in Johannesburg justify their claims to rights through the request for improved access to formal – and more permanent – documentation. At the same time, they maintain their own future-looking orientations, which necessarily institute their own impermanence in the city.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

This project has developed two distinct theories through the systematic analysis of empirical data collected from interviews with African cross-border migrants living in Johannesburg. The first theory developed the concept of impermanence and identified two contradicting ways in which impermanence is experienced by the participants in my study. I argue that these forms of impermanence reflect a paradox. The second theory developed, relates to the concept of migrants' rights claiming. I propose that migrants' political imaginations are informed by an Africanist idiom which they use to justify their claims to rights in South Africa. I argue that this second theory provides a response to the paradox created by the two forms of impermanence that emerged in my findings. In this final chapter I summarise the findings of this study and the development of these theories. This is followed by some suggestions on how these theories address gaps in the literature. Lastly, I propose how these theories contribute to the greater project of reconceptualising migration thought, and particularly how they develop our understandings of migrants' experiences.

In the analysis chapter of this study, I argue that impermanence is experienced by migrants living in Johannesburg in two, divergent ways. The first relates to their experiences of 'persistent asylum'. Here, my findings reveal that migrants experience a form of impermanence directly related to their inability to access adequate documentation that formalises their stay in the country. In this way, the state immigration system maintains a condition of persistent asylum in the lives of many migrant individuals. This has a knock-on effect in their ability to access work and ultimately lay down roots in South Africa. Impermanence in this form results in a forced orientation to the present, where migrants live within allotted time periods of legality, limiting their ability to construct goals for their near future. In theorising this form of impermanence, I draw on literature that explores the temporal aspects of migration and look particularly at the research on the effects of waiting and the concept of timepass. I argue that this state-imposed form of impermanence is thus an expression of a particular power-relation that is at play between the state and the subordinated migrant population.

The second form of impermanence that I identify in this study, relates to the self-expressed desire of migrants to 'return home'. I argue that a combination of preconceived attachments to the home and experiences of feeling unwelcome in the South African host state result in this desire. Thus, a continued connection to the home results in a temporal orientation to the

future and necessarily creates uncertainty in the present. The effects of this can be to leave individuals feeling as though they are in a state of limbo, a situation of being 'in-between' places and never fully 'of' a place. This analysis draws on literature that speaks to forms of transience and liminality, and also touches on the concept of transnationalism. I argue that these expressions of wanting to return home therefore reflect a self-imposed form of impermanence on migrant individuals.

From these analyses, the question thus arose as to how migrants respond to these conflicting experiences of impermanence. In the second part of my analysis I therefore answer the question: on what basis do migrants living in Johannesburg make claims to the right to be granted formal permission to settle permanently in South Africa, when they explicitly express their (future-looking) intentions not to settle permanently in the country (i.e. to return home)?

The second theory that I develop looks at the question of rights claiming. I argue that the expression of Africanist idioms and a narrative around 'African brotherhood' provides an answer to the question above. Migrants in my study draw heavily on narratives of an African community, and I suggest that it is this narrative that informs the construction of their political imaginations. The African brotherhood theme speaks to the following ideas: the question of African unity; the narrative of South Africa as the 'Big brother' of the continent; and the reciprocal responsibility of South Africa to repay a historical debt to the rest of Africa. As such, this notion of an African brotherhood and the reciprocal responsibility that such a community engenders, is used by migrants to justify their claims to rights in South Africa. At the same time, migrants are able to maintain their own self-imposed forms of impermanence that result from their desire to return home.

In addressing the experiences of impermanence of migrants living in Johannesburg, this paper has further developed an understanding of migration as a temporal phenomenon. Furthermore, I have identified a paradox which exists between two experiences of impermanence and suggest that this paradox results in the contradicting temporal orientations of the migrant participants in my study. In the face of this paradox, I argue further that an Africanist idiom informs the construction of migrants' political imaginations. This allows them to make claims to rights in South Africa despite the paradox that they experience. In theorising about African brotherhood, I add to the body of research which explores new ways of understanding rights claiming perceptions and practices amongst migrants. These two

theories and the way that they interact, thus contribute to the greater challenge of reconceptualising our understanding around migration and migrants' experiences.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 McDonald

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H17/08/19**
PROJECT TITLE	Political imagination and social mobilization: How do the political imaginations of individual migrants inform their decisions to join formal migrant organisations in Johannesburg, South Africa?
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Miss C McDonald
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Social Sciences/
DATE CONSIDERED	18 August 2017
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Permission letter required before data collection can commence
EXPIRY DATE	21 November 2020

DATE 22 Novemberv 2017 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor L Landau

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature _____ Date _____/_____/_____

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Researcher:
Ms Claire McDonald
Tel: 072 444 9491
E-mail: clairelindsaymc@gmail.com

African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS)
University of Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050
Tel: 011 7174437

Participant Information Sheet

Good day,

My name is Claire McDonald and I am a Master's Student studying Migration and Displacement at the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand. I would like to invite you to participate in my research project and this information sheet serves to provide you with some more information about what is involved should you choose to participate.

The title of my project is: **Political Imagination and Social Mobilisation: How do the political imaginations of individual cross-border migrants inform their decisions to join formal migrant organisations in Johannesburg, South Africa**?

You have been selected as a participant as you are a cross-border migrant individual currently living in Johannesburg. My project is going to look at how cross-border migrant individuals, such as yourself, engage socially and politically in Johannesburg, South Africa and what factors may have influenced your involvement or non-involvement with a formal migrant organisation. The information that you provide will be highly valuable for this study. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences. If you withdraw from the study any information I have already obtained from you will be destroyed.

Should you agree to participate in my study, I will ask you to commit to an interview of approximately 90 minutes in length during which I will ask you questions which cover themes around why and when you left your country, your stay and experiences in South Africa, your social and political participation both in your home country, as well as in South Africa as well as your future plans and expectations. You only have to share information that you feel comfortable providing and you can be assured that any information provided will only be accessible to me and my supervisor. With permission, the interview will be tape recorded and later transcribed and all of this information will be securely stored and protected.

There will be no material or financial benefit for your participation in my study but the information that you provide will contribute to a body of research that seeks to broaden the knowledge around migrant political imagination and social mobilisation.

From the information obtained from participants I will analyse and write-up my findings in a research report which will be read by my supervisor, outside examiners and will be made available to students in the library of Wits University. The final report may also be submitted for publication and as such you should be aware that the findings may be publicly available. I can guarantee that your identity will be kept strictly confidential throughout the entire process should you not wish to be identified.

If you have any question about this research project prior to, during or after your participation in the study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,

Claire McDonald

clairelindsaymc@gmail.com

0724449491

Supervisor Contact Details:

Loren Landau

loren@migration.org.za

011 717 4038

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Researcher:
Ms Claire McDonald
Tel: 072 444 9491
E-mail: clairelindsaymc@gmail.com

African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS)
University of Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits 2050
Tel: 011 7174437

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I……give consent to be interviewed for the study titled: **Political Imagination and Social Mobilisation: How do the political imaginations of individual cross-border migrants inform their decisions to join formal migrant organisations in Johannesburg, South Africa?**

I understand that the purpose of this study is for the completion of a Master's degree at the University of Witwatersrand, in which the researcher will explore the reasons for individuals joining or not joining formal migrant organisations in Johannesburg.

I understand that there are no known risks and discomfort that I may be exposed to in participating in this study. I understand that there is no direct financial benefit to me in participating in this study and that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study with no consequences.

I understand that this interview will be tape recorded and that the tapes will only be listened to by the researcher and that the researcher may use direct quotes from the information that I provide. The information received from me will be treated confidentially and my identity will only be revealed with my consent, otherwise anonymity will be kept. Should I withdraw from the study, my data will be destroyed. The results of this study will be a part of a Master's research report and may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences, but any identifying details will not be revealed unless consented to. I understand that the data that is collected through this study will be securely stored by the researcher.

Consent to Interview (please tick):

Yes ☐ No ☐

Consent to use of direct quotes:

Yes ☐ No ☐

Consent to audio recording:

Yes ☐ No ☐

_____	_____	_____
Date	Place	Participant's signature
_____	_____	_____
Date	Place	Researcher's signature