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2018

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Mpofu, Ngqabutho Nceku (2018) Surviving marginality?: stateless persons' spatial navigation and rights claiming during the Zimbabwean denationalisation project (2001-2013) : a Southern Zimbabwe case study, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/27124>

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University of the Witwatersrand

School of Social Sciences

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Surviving marginality? Stateless persons' spatial navigation and rights claiming during the Zimbabwean denationalisation project (2001 – 2013) - A Southern Zimbabwe case study

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26 March 2018

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Abstract

In this paper, I argue that the denationalization project which occurred in Zimbabwe between 2001 to 2013 brought with it new forms of citizenship, with the stateless persons engaging in network-building in order to navigate space and claim rights. Through a 'mini-ethnographic study' involving six participants who stayed in Zimbabwe despite being rendered stateless, this paper argues that spatial navigation and rights claiming is done through the assertion of agency akin to Ranciere's 'dissensus', with stateless individuals fulfilling their revolutionary potential. This paper goes further to rebut current international and state centric strategies when dealing with statelessness. I suggest that a more community-based approach will assist in ensuring that statelessness and its inimical effects are addressed at the appropriate level.

Declaration

I, Ngqabutho Nceku Mpofu, hereby declare that this thesis is my own unaided original work. Where the work of others has been used or quoted, it has been acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that this research report has not been previously in its entirety, or in part, been submitted to any other University in order to obtain any other academic qualification.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the love of my life, my granny, isalukazi sami, the late Zile Thokozile Dintoe and her progeny Sithabiso Nozibusiso Dintoe, the late Nokuthula Sibonginkosi Dintoe and Nhlanhla Mkhwananzi. Without your inspiration and self-sacrifice, I am sure I would not have been able to dream as much as I have. Ngiyabonga. Lingadinwa lakusasa.

To Mzingaye Mkhwananzi, Luba Nyathi, Mongiwethu Mkhwananzi, Lwandile Nyathi, Mphokuhle Mpofu and Unathi Jayden Madzorera let's pick up the mantle and aspire for much, much more. To my life partner, Liezemarie Johannes, I love you and love the life we continue building for ourselves. Long may it continue.

Thank you to Prof Loren B. Landau for your guidance and the amazing patience you have shown with me, even when I was MIA as a result of the Life Esidimeni arbitration.

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe has been ranked in the top 25 in the Peoples Under Threat Index for nearly a decade (Minority Rights Group Index International 2017). Despite this, Qobolwakhe* (not his real name) had reason to feel hopeful in 2006. Even faced with some of the country's most political and economically turbulent times, he had a stable job, a burgeoning family, and the privilege of being able to travel to nearby Botswana – a mere 100 kilometres away – to do his shopping for increasingly scarce commodities. However, this came to a crashing halt in 2007 when the Zimbabwean government deemed he could not renew his passport because he was deemed an 'alien.' He had become stateless. The term 'alien' in this context connotes a person deemed a 'non-native' of Zimbabwe as a result of not being the progeny of Zimbabweans. Qobolwakhe's heritage extends to Malawi, as both of his parents were born and raised there before they relocated in 1962 to work in the Southern Rhodesian railway sector. After further research, he found out that he had no claim to Malawian citizenship as a result of amended legislation on the Citizenship Act in the post-2000 era which had denationalized him, despite never having visited the country and knowing one sibling he was only vaguely acquainted with. As a result of the country's economic downturn, rather than his newly acquired status, Qobolwakhe's prospects decidedly took a turn for the worse as he was retrenched a year later from a major commercial company. In a state of desperation, he engaged in an existential journey, involving key questions such as 'how do I make ends meet?', 'who am I?'.

In 2008, Qobolwakhe travelled to Zambia in order to make a living. Despite not having a passport, he was able to cross the border into Zambia and then into South Africa in 2009 by way of Beit-Bridge, illustrating the porous nature of Southern Africa's borders. This was,

however, done at great expense to him as an undocumented migrant. While the economic downturn had worsened, upon his return to Zimbabwe, however, he was fortunate enough to be able to get a job in a Small-to-Medium Scale Enterprise (SMME), access healthcare services, take his son to school, afford decent housing and importantly stay in his community despite many people knowing his citizenship status. Unfortunately for him, however, he was not allowed to vote in the national 2013 elections and despite having reclaimed his Zimbabwean citizenship in 2013, Qobolwakhe is still worried he may not be able to register his votes in the upcoming 2018 elections because the bureaucratic hurdles he has had to encounter since finding out his citizenship status.

Critically, through linkages in the community, some dating back to infancy, Qobolwakhe was able to support his family even when he could not access money and scarce commodities. Residents of Sizinda became adept at engaging in barter exchange, sharing or providing informal loaning mechanisms to counter the collapse of the banking system and the majority of the rest of the formal sector.

Qobolwakhe's story is a microcosm of issues highlighted in this paper. Through an evidence-based approach, expanding on research into the life histories of Qobolwakhe and others like him, this paper argues that rights claiming among stateless people in Southern Zimbabwe, between 2001 and 2013 not only occurred through vertical citizenship, that is, in relationship with the state, but also through horizontal citizenship at local level. This occurred through network building, with little regard to formal conceptions of citizenship, thus creating other forms of citizenship.

This paper will be divided into nine sections. Section one interrogates what statelessness is, highlighting the varying machinations that constitute it. It also highlights the aims and objectives of the study. Section two involves the study and case study rationales. The theoretical framework, which is based on grounded theory and indigenous theory constitutes section three, while section four looks into the research methodology. This includes data gathering, limitations and ethical considerations. Section five, which focuses on the literature review involves an extensive review of statelessness scholarship, including on the work of critical theoreticians such as Arendt, Ranciere and Balibar. Important historical contextualisation of the Zimbabwean political moment will then be delved into. Section six will entail an analysis of primary data, a discussion and findings, while section 7 will involve a theoretical reflection. Section eight is a conclusion, followed by a bibliography.

Through engaging broader literature and strategies employed to eradicate statelessness in general and denationalization in particular, this research paper illustrates that programmes set in place such as the United Nations' (UN) #IBelong campaign are not realistic, as they incorrectly operate at a national level and as such do not adequately deal with drivers and consequences at a local level. Through the lessons provided by the Sizinda case study, which illustrates how communities can work to ameliorate the lot of all, including the stateless, emphasis will be placed on advocating for more robust grassroots community engagement.

1.1 What is Statelessness?

Statelessness occurs in a myriad of ways. In order to fully understand denationalization, it is important to delve into statelessness theory and understand this phenomenon.

Varying estimates have been postulated about the number of stateless persons worldwide. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR 2017), at least ten million people worldwide are stateless. Blitz and Lynch (2011) argue that an estimated twelve million people worldwide are stateless. Manby (2011) also argues that a conservative estimate of at least twelve million people are stateless. While this may be taken at face value to signify a reduction of stateless people from 2011 to 2017, another, more plausible explanation may lie in the fact that very few states have adequate infrastructure and the political will to ensure more accurate baseline measures necessary for the identification, documentation and provision of assistance to stateless individuals[1] (UNHCR 2017; Manby 2011). Further impediments include flawed methodology and the reluctance to self-identify as statelessness on the part of stateless persons (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion 2014). This has led to the reduction of states covered, with figures from Zimbabwe and the Dominican Republic, - two states with large stateless persons - being left out of the most recent estimates as well as inaccurate statistics about the Rohingya (NGO Protection Statement 2017). Secondly, even when the aforementioned factor is fulfilled, statelessness is often accompanied by precarity, with stateless individuals often remaining in the margins, making it harder to identify them (UNHCR 2017).

Statelessness occurs when an individual is not deemed a national of any United Nations recognized country across the world (UNHCR 1954). “Statelessness is a man-made phenomenon”, which can affect people regardless of wealth or past circumstances, though

[1] UNHCR data only covers 3,5 million people from a data set of less than 50% of the world’s states (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusivity 2014).

minorities are more susceptible (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusiveness 2014; 5). Arendt (1958; 277) argues that stateless people live "beyond the pale of the law", with many other scholars agreeing that this excludes them from freely and fully participating in public life. As stateless individuals are not a monolithic whole, with some being asylum seekers and refugees, internally displaced persons and children, among other categories, Kattago (2016; 1) asserts that this leaves stateless people prone to an "administration of the excluded" by state agencies, in particular corrupt officials and nefarious characters such as cross-border smugglers and 'helpful' non-governmental organisations, among others.

As will be shown later, this study argues in line with Ranciere (2007) and many others that being statelessness is not inherently negative. While being stateless is likely inimical to subjects in such a predicament, the circumstances of stateless people depend not only on the actions of the state but those of the stateless themselves. In this paper, I add a third variable, that is the communities that they live in.

Stateless persons are either born that way or become stateless. This may manifest itself in two ways, namely through *de jure* and *de facto* means.

1.1.2 De facto statelessness

De facto statelessness occurs primarily as a result of a state's in/advertent inability to provide proof of citizenship to some of those who fit the legal prescripts of being its citizens (Arendt 1958). This includes provision of essential documentation such as birth certificates, passports and other identification documents to individuals within its borders. *De facto* statelessness can be inter-generational. Interestingly, future specific arguments about the potential

consequences of climate change on statehood have also been posited, with McAdam (2010) arguing that potentially 'disappearing states' would lead to a marked increase in *de facto* statelessness.

1.1.3 De jure statelessness

De jure statelessness refers to statelessness through legal means. This may occur through the dissolution of states, for example the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the resultant stateless *Heimatlosen* population as well as the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Arendt 1958 and Minority Rights Group 2017). Importantly for this research study, *de jure* statelessness also occurs through *denationalization*. Arendt (1958; 256) argued that denationalization is a 'weapon' employed by states to legally exclude those who are deemed external to the elite's conception of those who belong in order to promote their own interests or those of their supporters. This may be on the basis of racial, ethnic, gender[2], religion and/or one of numerous other signifiers (Manby 2011). As a result, a large portion of victims of forced displacements are stateless.

1.2 Question and sub questions

[2] According to the Women's Refugee Commission's report, prepared by the Statelessness Programme, Tilburg University, 29 countries discriminated when awarding citizenship status on the basis of gender discrimination, up to 2013. 14 of them were in the Middle East and North Africa. https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/resources/document//942-our-motherland-our-country-gender-discrimination-and-statelessness-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa. This number has since reduced to 27, according to the UNHCR (2017), http://www.unhcr.org/stateless-people.html.

This study focuses on finding out how denationalized people navigated space and accessed rights in Zimbabwe between 2001 and 2013. Navigation of space in this context is defined as the level of freedom of movement the stateless individuals in question enjoyed to 'multiple elsewheres' through travelling within the state or at times across borders, into neighbouring countries. Unlike the traditional use of the term 'multiple elsewheres', as employed by Mbembe (2008) and Landau and Freemantle (2016), among others, to connote multiple locales of belongings and/or semi-permanent 'homes' for mainly migratory populations, the term is invoked here to mean much more short-term stays at places of 'otherness' outside the confines of Bulawayo, where applicable. It focuses on this specific period because this was when the State politically engineered the nation in order to further the interests of the ruling and at times co-ruling ZANU PF elite, at the expense of scores of people who became 'aliens', many without access to a real alternative choice of citizenship.

This paper differs from the previous scholarship in this context because of the specific area of interest. While Zimbabweans of all walks of life were affected by this radical political project, this paper deliberately focuses only on poor, black and at times linguistic and/or cultural minorities of foreign descent who continued living in Zimbabwe's borders, eking out an existence in whichever way they can. In this sense, it follows other works, such as Kihato's (2013) seminal work on migrant women in Johannesburg and Rutherford's (2017) work on farm labour struggles in Eastern Zimbabwe that do not place emphasis on those Sassen terms the 'deterritorialized elites' (Kihato 2013; 16). Instead, it places emphasis on those who would ordinarily not be expected to possess the material means to emigrate or easily navigate space, claim rights and/or use legal mechanisms to challenge power, as is the case with the aforementioned litigators and current emigres.

Of particular interest here is how the excluded themselves make sense of their circumstances. This is critical as they will be co-constructors of this study. The research study prizes their life histories in enacting a crisper understanding of the denationalization project in Zimbabwe and how they navigated their set of conditions. What is clear from the story above is that denationalized peoples were adversely affected politically during this period in Zimbabwe's history. This study also looks into how being excluded affected them beyond access to the political. Lastly, this study asks if denationalized people have found alternative ways to access 'basic' rights, answering in the affirmative. Through the plethora of evidence in the case study, one surmises that they reconceptualise what citizenship entails, moving beyond state sanction.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The study's aims and objectives are the following:

i). To assess the consequences of Zimbabwe's denationalisation project on stateless persons in the Matabeleland province.

ii). To determine ways in which citizenship claiming occurs in failed or failing states among the excluded.

This paper argues that denationalized Zimbabweans who stayed in the country for some or all of the time despite their precarious circumstances also possess agency and revolutionary potential, where revolutionary entails changing the status quo through their affirmation of their own agency. This has not always been apparent in recent scholarship. The perspective of

the marginalized in particular and how they make sense of their position and survive such a legal coup is one that has not been given enough critical attention in recent scholarship on post-colonial Zimbabwe and needs more attention.

2. Rationale

This research project potentially addresses an important gap. It arguably goes beyond some recent scholarship on denationalization and statelessness generally and in Zimbabwe in particular in a number of ways, as will be shown in the literature review below. Firstly, it is important to note that there is a dearth of academic works that deal with this particular issue on Zimbabwe. Secondly, it investigates the assumption that rights claiming in the country essentially occurs solely through the state and finds it wanting, as alluded to above.

Preliminary engagement with family members, friends and acquaintances who suffered this fate had suggested that a complex, context specific set of relations between the denationalized, other community members and the state and how the former access rights. Consequently, it helps answer the questions of whether citizenship actually matters in failed or failing states or if it is merely theoretical - 'a nice to have', as argued by Landau and Freemantle (2016). This is especially the case where states cannot offer citizens the necessary protections that are associated with citizenship. In the specific context of Zimbabwe between 2001 to 2013, people – citizens or not – largely had no access to state sponsored social grants, where access to quality (non-primary) health care is very limited and the unemployment rate in the formal sector is over 80% (Worstall 2017).

2.1. Case study rationale

Participants came from a peri-urban area where participants were known to have suffered the fate of being denationalized. This was done to draw specifically localized conclusions. This study was conducted in Matabeleland Central province, in the south of Zimbabwe. This province was chosen because it has historically been the site of political opposition sentiment against the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), finding voice in the postcolonial phase through various parties such as the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and later with the emergence of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000).

Participants were drawn particularly from Bulawayo, the country's second largest city for a number of reasons. Many of its townships were historically built to house those deemed an 'alien' population. While a large number of 'native' Zimbabweans have moved into the community, Sizinda, the chosen site of research, housed and still houses a large population of Malawian and Zambian migrants and their descendants, most of whom were born in Zimbabwe and know no other 'home' (Ndhlovu 2009). Other Malawian and Zambian families were also located in neighbouring Tshabalala and other townships, including Makokoba, Matshobana, Luveve and Njube (Ndhlovu 2009). It is important to note that the initial external migrants settled in this area were recruited to work for the State's railway company. This will be of particular interest in the discussion and empirical findings section.

Tsholotsho, a rural area located in the South West of Zimbabwe had also been initially chosen specifically because it has been a site of violence since the formation of the Colonial State of

Rhodesia and through the postcolonial violence of the Gukurahundi massacres in the post-colonial era (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000). As a consequence of sustained violence and marginalisation, Tsholotsho has historically had large stateless population that continues to plague the area to-date (Alexander, McGregor and Ranger 2000). This site was subsequently rejected, as it did not fulfil the criteria. This will be elaborated on below.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper will use grounded theory (GT) as a theoretical framework, with a particular focus on what nationality and citizenship actually entail on the ground. Grounded theory does not describe a monolithic theory, but encapsulates numerous conceptions, including 'classic' or 'glaserian' grounded theory (Christiansen 2017). Many other conceptions of GT intersect with other theories, as will be highlighted below.

Grounded theory may be defined as "flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves" (Charmaz 2006; 2). It is inductive in nature. In other words, grounded theory differs from many other theoretical frameworks because theory is generated from research, as it starts from a position devoid of any assumptions of theoretical supremacy. Its power lies in its destabilizing nature (Denzin 2010). It extends its decolonizing potential to novel methods of inquiry and knowledge production. One may argue that this is essential because it brings voices from the margin to the fore (Lee 2015). In line with Smith (2005), one may go further and argue that grounded theory is complex, nuanced and context specific. "It is two things at the same time, a verb, a method of inquiry and a noun, a product of inquiry" Denzin (2010; 296).

Glaserian theory, however, does not fit the criterion for becoming a theoretical framework in this instance. Some of its core characteristics, such as a lack of a literature review, a lack of a specific research problem and a general theme as opposed to a specific topic run counter to the university pre-requisites for this paper (Christiansen 2017).

3.1 Grounded theory meets indigenous theory

I locate my version of grounded theory partly in line with that of Denzin (2010), who argues that grounded theory is most useful when linked to a politic of indigeneity. This conception prizes embeddedness within the community in question. While the term employed – indigeneity – is admittedly extremely problematic given that this particular research study attempts to look into the lives of participants stripped of their nationality on the very basis of allegedly not being *indigenes*, the power of this approach lies in the substantive content. In this conception, the researcher is stripped of some level of power, as proponents of GT co-construct theory with the participants as equals, not as observer and participant(s). This grounded theory further propounds an emancipatory politic that emphasizes social justice, redress, restoration and healing. While one had to be careful of exposing the dangers of potentially vulnerable populations, part of instituting a process leading up to the aforementioned involved engaging in the possibility of knowledge sharing mainly via the researcher.

As such, I propose to rename it to grounded theory meets resident theory. This allows for the theory to overcome this seeming bias based on nomenclature.

It must be further noted that as an insider-outsider who is not firmly located within this firmament - an 'ally' of sorts - it was also critical how I engaged the subject matter, instead of automatically assuming that self-identification would suffice in decolonizing knowledge systems and engaging in this radical approach. The privileging of communal conceptions of research was put forward.

Finally, opting for residential grounded theory as the theoretical framework and methodological approach is somewhat consciously contradictory. Ethnographic research is premised on the notion of *disrupting* common conceptions and assumptions of theoretical orderliness through highlighting nuances and in some instances, abnormalities. Residential grounded theory, however, is premised on the assumption that the world the researcher inhabits and/or researches can be ordered (Denzin 2010). This seeming contradiction will be dealt with in the theoretical reflection section below.

4. Research methodology

This study was premised on a constructivist paradigm. This is because it is based on the understanding and analysing the world is underpinned by subjectivity (Appleton 1997).

After transcription of the interviews and diary notes, analysis was conducted through vigorous content analysis. This is in line with Graneheim and Lundman's (2003) recommendations. Analysis involved several readings of the transcripts and diarized notes. Explicit content and the ascription of latent meaning was then categorized. A more robust theoretical framework

will be formulated in the discussion section at the end in line with my grounded theory approach.

4.1 Data gathering

As a student studying towards a Masters degree by research and coursework, one must firstly note that conducting my research in naturally significantly hindered by limited time. This study involves primary research. It engages in qualitative research, specifically through what I describe as a 'mini-ethnography of the excluded'. This has been divided into two phases and methodologies.

Firstly, initial engagement occurred between 10 to 24 July 2017. I travelled to Zimbabwe to meet and engage gatekeepers. This fortnight long trip served to build a rapport with the gatekeepers and potential interviewees. No initial data was acquired with participants in compliance with ethics procedures and due process. Two gate keepers were subsequently secured from the areas where the research is being conducted, namely Sizinda and Tsholotsho. To avoid breaching trust and endangering the potential participants, the gate keepers were extensively vetted, with the one in Sizinda being a formerly denationalized person himself who helped others in a similarly precarious position normalize their stay in Zimbabwe, while the gatekeeper in Tsholotsho was a legal practitioner working to ensure that 'aliens' could also be afforded the right to vote.

It is imperative to admit from the onset that I erred in picking Tsholotsho as one of the initial sites of study. While Tsholotsho arguably has the highest stateless rate in comparison to any

other place in Zimbabwe, these are made up of almost exclusively *de facto* stateless individuals. This may be as a result of a lack of integration in the country's rural areas, leaving only Sizinda as a viable case study.

Secondly, through the mini-ethnographic study, which took place between January and February 2018, I aimed to conduct research into the lives of six participants. This limited number of participants is a deliberate ploy in order to tease out more from engagements with each of them. This also took into account feasibility (such as distance and the need for more data) once the research process was underway.

In line with arguments made by Silverman (2013) and Brown and Danaher (2017), rapport building was prized with both gate keepers and participants, with the employment of other mechanisms when necessary, including harnessing technology through Facebook messenger and WhatsApp messages to engage them and build trust as co-constructors of this research project.

Further in line with Seidman's (2013) argument that interviews hold a central role in present-day research as a data gathering method, this study involved multiple intensive one-on-one interviews with participants (Seidman 2013).

As is the case with ethnographic study, this project also involved participant observation. This is based particularly on an acknowledgement of the shortcomings of once-off interviews, particularly in the context of Zimbabwe, where some people may feel inclined to give inaccurate answers in fear of the state security apparatus or alternatively to 'perform

victimhood' (Jacobsen and Landau 2003). Participant observation largely helped substantiate their answers whilst being as unobtrusive as possible. Furthermore, this dealt with the important strands of scholarship on memory, which raised important hurdles that needed to be overcome in this instance. Through the Deese-Roediger-McDermott (DRM) Paradigm, for instance, Roediger and McDermott (1995) highlight how subjects at times have false, associative memories when confronted with the critical issue of recall. Their findings on recollection showed that subjects remembered 75% but also had a high level of false recognition (Elmes 2010).

This study employs life-story interviews as a technique, focusing on the importance of recollected memories as essential to participants (Bjerg and Rasumssen 2008). This constructivist conception of memory involves observation and multiple interviews and helps counter the DRM paradigm critique.

The second period of research was initially envisaged to be a three-month long period of embeddedness geared towards engendering some level of trust between the researcher and participants. This was however shortened to a month as a result of a multiplicity of reasons involving a conflict in scheduling, the untimely demise of the Tsholotsho gatekeeper and the late receipt of the university ethics clearance certificate.

All participants in Sizinda traced their roots to Malawi and Zambia.

At this juncture, it bears mention that sites of observation in the township setting included personal spaces such as participants' homes and social spaces such as beer halls (in Sizinda and

surrounding areas), a municipal clinic, community meetings at the Sizinda or Tshabalala Halls, 'stokvels', burial societies and loose co-operatives, work settings and street corners.

The interviews were semi-structured so as to allow me to get interviewees to delve into the specificities of their circumstances while keeping to the broad theme of the research (Brown and Danaher 2017). (The interview guide for the initial interview is marked Appendix A). They all took less than an hour at a time. I relied more on participant observation and follow up interviews most of the time to further interrogate participants' perceptions, particularly in cases where participants were still stateless as a result of denationalisation. In order to partially make up for some of the time impediments, I also took advantage of the other formats that semi-structured interviews take, through harnessing technology. In a similar vein to Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury (2013), telephonic interviews and social media were also engaged in. This also served the double purpose of being a cost saving measure.

4.2 Limitations

The benefits of engaging in this mini-ethnography of the excluded may be said to centre on the possibly rich textual data one may collect from the participants, which will serve to add nuance to their experiences (Jacobsen and Landau 2003). Pursuant to the limitations already stated above, however, one must acknowledge that opting for an ethnographic study inevitably has the negative effect of creating a narrow sample size, meaning that the results of the study cannot be generalized. This, however, is in line with the theoretical framework adopted, which prizes localized idiosyncrasies and answers, instead of broader, less accurate generalisations.

Furthermore, it is important to note that given the short turn around period of the degree programme as alluded to above, this study is exploratory in nature and as such isn't geared towards making broader claims. I hope to build on it in future.

4.3 Language and the participant pool

Initially, I expected most of the interviewees to answer in the local Ndebele language. As someone very proficient in both Ndebele and English (first language speaker of both) I felt that a translator would not be needed. This assumption was based on initial preliminary engagements with second generation migrants, who were acquainted with the local language from birth. However, conducting the actual fieldwork proved cumbersome in Sizinda, as first generation migrants in their old age mainly spoke Chewa or other languages the researcher was not familiar with. As a result, only second generation migrants with a good grasp of English and/or Ndebele were interviewed. This further limits the scope of the study.

4.4 Ethical considerations

Conducting research with and on marginalized and vulnerable participants is fraught with many pitfalls. In line with Colvin (2014), the primary concern of the study centred on doing '*no unnecessary harm*' to participants and/or the broader community as a bare minimum. Furthermore, it may be argued that the study may still be of benefit to the community by highlighting the problems faced by denationalized Zimbabweans.

This research study was done in accordance to the ethical parameters set out by University of the Witwatersrand. Ethics clearance was granted by the non-medical human research ethics committee (H17/09/22, 23 January 2018).

4.4.1. Informed consent and anonymity

It is critical to note upfront that a distinction is made in this paper between *primary* and *secondary* participants. The former denotes those participants who were actively sought out to be part of the research by the researcher, whilst the latter represents participants who were observed in interaction with primary participants such as community members.

Some scholars have argued that anonymity is hard to guarantee when engaging in ethnographic research. However, I endeavoured to do this in a number of ways. This was done firstly in the way I announced myself in the broader community. Aside from the ethical considerations (highlighted below), in Ndebele culture, as is the case in other settings, it is important that people know who they are engaging with. This is of extreme importance in Zimbabwe, where mystery is quickly followed by suspicion and marginalisation. This would not serve my interests of extracting the most amount of information whilst being as unobtrusive as possible.

As a Bulawayo local, I announced myself as a friend, visiting, without disclosing that I was doing research. The reason for not declaring the full scope of this research was as a result of the potentially detrimental consequences to respondents should people in the community know about the true intention of my research work.

Furthermore, given the context of potential vulnerability, informal, rather formal written informed consent was sought from *primary participants* (de Vries and Henley 2014). This is in line with my ethics clearance process with the university as the assumption was that written consent in such a situation may serve to place the lives and/or livelihoods of participants at risk. Furthermore, its efficacy in areas where there is a strong possibility of encountering illiterate respondents also added impetus to this proposition. Verbal, informal consent also poses problems. However unlikely, participants may deny having given a researcher consent, placing the researcher in a precarious position.

Informal consent was therefore secured from primary participants via phone recordings. This has the benefits of being secure through password protect and may be deleted remotely in the instance of the researcher being robbed or relieved of it in any another way. It would also be beneficial because recordings can be safely stored on a Cloud should any of the aforementioned scenarios occur, to be retrieved for verification processes by my supervisor and I.

Primary participants were told about what the research entailed and how it would be used. They were afforded the option of anonymity, given the sensitive information being divulged by the interviewees. Participants were all given pseudonyms, and in some instances their sex was changed for the purposes of their safety. These were chosen arbitrarily. Where necessary, locations changed where necessary. The latter, in particular, is important in the context of peri-urban areas, where community members are very familiar with each other, raising potential, albeit highly unlikely risks. Separate, precise, coded records were kept, with only the

researcher and his supervisor having full access to them and the exact information of these participants. This was done so as to ensure verification of data if need be.

Furthermore, as some of the research was conducted in a traditional setting, where informed consent may be based on engagement rather than being individual in nature, participants were given the opportunity to confer with other family members so that their opinions and possible objections were taken into account (de Vries and Henley 2014). For instance, *Nandi* strongly felt that her sister be present for the first interview. The latter, who had not bothered attempting to renew her Zimbabwean citizenship, in favour of acquiring Zambian citizenship after the denationalization project still stayed in Bulawayo. It was agreed to because of the obviously close bond between the sisters and the fact that the participant would feel comfortable with her sibling present. While some may argue that this poses an ethical problem of potentially reproducing inequality, based on gender or age, for example, it is important that agency and the traditions of participants are respected, bar extreme circumstances.

Lastly, as consent is not a once off event, but an ongoing process, the fact that participants can withdraw at any time was emphasized from the onset. As is common practice in the journalistic sphere, I also engaged participants on specific issues such as double-checking direct quotations in the local Ndebele or English via telephone, WhatsApp, SMS or in person so that they could be afforded opportunities to respond or rethink their positions around confidentiality once I had reflected and written the work.

Primary participants were told that the primary data will be destroyed after five years in keeping with ethics requirements.

Secondary participants' anonymity will be guaranteed through also affording them all pseudonyms where they appear. To reiterate, as a result of feasibility and the need to protect primary participants, they will not, however, be told about the primary aim of the research in full as already alluded to.

4.4.2 Remuneration

Participants in the study were not remunerated for a number of reasons, both practical and academic. Firstly, as a student, the researcher does not have the requisite funds to do so. Secondly, despite obvious material need given the failing economy and recent floods in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, to do so may have invalidated the data as respondents may have felt the need to perform victimhood.

While this seems obvious on a theoretical level, the practical experiences provide one with harder choices. Witnessing poverty, whilst wielding a branded laptop and other technological equipment and having a wad of cash in one's pocket (because cash is king in Zimbabwe) presents a real dilemma for a social justice minded individual. This is particularly the case when children are starving and one has the means to ensure that they do not go to bed hungry. I did not acquiesce to the urge to provide assistance in this instance but there is scope for offering part time employment on property in Bulawayo in future, in a bid to ameliorate their lot whilst ensuring that the data is not contaminated. The key question in this instance centres around the following: how does one confidently argue that he is co-constructing with participants in a project that seeks active redress, healing and social justice as highlighted in the theoretical

framework if there is a power differential so patently obvious? How does one attempt to negate it without influencing the research one way or another?

4.4.3 Reflexivity: The insider-outside conundrum

The complex positionality of the researcher as an insider/outsider bears special mention. As a native of Matabeleland, it is important to note that the researcher ran the risk of falling into perceived or real bias. While no researcher is 'objective', I reflected and engaged informal mentors, school and work colleagues and my supervisor where necessary in order to hear possible alternative viewpoints to consider more strongly.

This insider status also further complicated the research as participants may have expected me to 'represent' them in the research process, without rigorous intellectual engagement with the issues. Matebeni (2014) and Kihato (2013) highlight the dangers of this when writing about their own research. The researcher therefore endeavoured to guard against the danger of the potential rapport his position offered him from becoming a millstone, while respecting the participants as co-constructors.

On the other hand, the outsider conundrum was well taken care of by engaging second generation participants, making them more receptive to the researcher.

I was also an outsider as a result of the power differential alluded to above. As someone with access to some funds in the form of cash in a cash strapped country, for instance, it must be

acknowledged that to some extent the researcher has a disproportionate amount of power to the researched, which created some ethical quandaries.

5. Literature Review

Existing arguments about citizenship, belonging, rights claiming and statelessness operate on three different scales: international, state, and local levels. This will be shown in the literature below. This will be done by firstly engaging with international legal statutory frameworks. This will focus on international conventions and touch on regional agreements on or related to statelessness. Secondly, academic literature will then be elaborated on, with a major focus on statelessness literature, citizenship theory and conceptions of belonging, with an emphasis on Africa.

The categories below represent a conversation, both historical and theoretical, between different conceptions and take the form they do for a number of reasons. Firstly, I highlight international legal statutory frameworks because they by and large are either utopian in nature and inapplicable on the ground in Zimbabwe and as will be shown through critiques of them, generally (the #IBelong campaign and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights), are easily bypassed without adequately dealing with statelessness or advancing the rights of minorities and politically 'superfluous' people (the *1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*) or are largely ignored by some states, including Zimbabwe through not being a signatory, highlighting the weaknesses of the international legal system (the *1961 International Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness)*.

Primary theoretical positions on statelessness are highlighted because the literature in Africa and Zimbabwe specifically are embedded in these positions. As such, it will be shown how Arendt, Ranciere, Balibar, Eyoh and Sassen inform the positions taken by those who have written on statelessness in Zimbabwe, sometimes doing a disservice to the complexity and richness of the experiences of stateless people in Zimbabwe. Lastly, background information about literature on Africa and Zimbabwe will be highlighted to give a holistic picture of existing engagements. Importantly, these theories also feed into the discussion and findings section.

5.1 International legal instruments and human rights discourse

The United Nations, through its mediating organization, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) has prioritized ending statelessness by 2024, through its #IBelong campaign (UNHCR 2017). This campaign is aimed at mobilizing all stakeholders, including civil society and importantly governments to end statelessness in a decade (Institute of Statelessness and Inclusivity 2014). It focuses on primarily convincing states to sign on to international conventions and hold themselves legally accountable. This is done through a number of ways, including signing a petition (as of March 2018 over 92,000 people had signed it), an insider approach that involves closed room engagement and the provision of research data as a way influencing leaders[3] (UNHCR 2017). The campaign also includes workshops on good practices in relation to statelessness.

[3] For more, click on http://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/.

Statelessness is explicitly condemned under United Nations international instruments, as it is deemed anathema to the interests of every individual (Blitz and Lynch 2011). Article 15 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948; 1), states that "no one will be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality." When read with the other twenty-nine Articles, in particular Article 6, which states that "*everyone* has the right to recognition *everywhere* (my italics) as a person before the law" (UDHR 1948; 1), what is clear is the universality applicability of these right as the underlying premise.

Other primary international frameworks governing how states deal with statelessness are the *1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* and the *1961 International Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness*.

The *1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* is deemed the initial roadmap for the eradication of statelessness. It sought that contracting states protect stateless persons lawfully within their confines. It is important to note that this entails the protection of only *de jure* stateless persons, who receive a minimum standard of human rights equal to citizens in terms of the right to education and freedom of religion under the Convention. It also stipulates that stateless persons should at least enjoy minimum rights in terms of housing, employment, administrative assistance, identification documents at least similar to non-nationals in a contracting state (UNHCR 2014).

Blitz and Lynch (2011) rightly note that while great strides were made as a result of the convention in terms of *de jure* stateless persons, little provisions were made for *de facto* statelessness. This is highlighted through Article 1 iii). of the Convention, which asserts that

individuals who are purported to have committed crimes against humanity, war crimes, serious non-political crimes are not deemed stateless and thereby precluded them from the protections afforded to stateless people (UNHCR 2017). Critically, this means that subjects in discord with the state are not afforded the necessary protections when made *de facto* stateless individuals, thus disenfranchising a large number of stateless individuals deemed *persona non-grata* by the very states under whose protection it is assumed they are under.

While Zimbabwe is a not a signatory to the *Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, the state did accede to the Convention (UN Conclusion No 87 (L); 1999). This refers to the willingness of a state to be bound legally to the prescripts of a Convention (UN Treaty Reference Guide 1999), thus meaning that Zimbabwe should afford full protections to *de jure* stateless persons within its territory.

As a result of the acknowledgement of the plague of denationalization and other forms of *de facto* statelessness, the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness seeks to "balance the rights of individuals with the interests of States" (UN 1961; i) through setting parameters for how contracting states can bestow or withdraw citizenship. For instance, the 1961 Convention lays out protections against statelessness at birth in contracting states through allowing for the conferment of citizenship to babies who would become stateless. The Convention also makes provisions for the avoidance of statelessness in a number of circumstances. For the purposes of this study, we will highlight the avoidance of statelessness during the transfer of territory and crucially, protection against loss of citizenship. One may argue that the *1961* this Convention errs in placing too much onus on states and not directly and explicitly dealing with the thorny issue of state-backed denationalization once and for all

by emphasizing the primacy of state sovereignty and adherence to their laws (Blitz and Lynch 2011).

Sadly, as of December 2017, out of the 193 states recognized by the United Nations, there are only 83 and 61 states that are party to the conventions respectively, with Zimbabwe conveniently not being party to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (UNCHR 2017). This illustrates the lack of guiding principles and a lack of concerted efforts in dealing with statelessness.

Other relevant international legal instruments when dealing with statelessness include international conventions such as UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Protection of the Rights of the Migrant (Manby 2011a). Regional conventions include the 1969 American Convention on Human Rights, the 1997 European Convention on Nationality, the 1999 African Charter on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR 2004 and Manby 2011b). Focusing on the aforementioned ones will have to suffice given the special considerations of this research study.

5.1.2. Critique of universal human rights and international frameworks

One of the greatest ironies of the aforementioned international legal instruments is the fact that the United Nations Conventions posed the first real critique of the idea of fundamental human rights. This is illustrated through the exclusionary clauses found in both.

Furthermore, many rights groups and scholars have critiqued this concept, as well as the internationalist nature of the conventions. Refugees International (2010), for example, have highlighted how stateless people face insurmountable challenges to secure the aforementioned rights in actuality, even in contracting states which ought to afford the requisite protections. For them, stateless persons are denied the fundamental rights to "establish a residence, travel, work in the formal economy, send children to school, access basic health services, purchase or own property, vote, hold elected office and enjoy the protection and security of a country" (in Blitz and Lynch 2011; 2). This is a line of argument that they share with Hannah Arendt, whose oeuvre arguably forms the bedrock of statelessness scholarship.

5.2 Arendt and the formulation of statelessness scholarship

Arendt's oeuvre in general and her seminal work on totalitarianism and statelessness, namely '*The Origins of Totalitarianism*' in particular is based on a critique of the current system, which is predicated on state sovereignty (Arendt 1958). Her theoretical scholarship starts with a critique of the concept of universal human rights being underpinned by the assumption of an autonomous individual as the having inalienable rights, however minimum. This, for her, represents a sham concept because it works on the fallacy that human rights have been Omni-present. For her, the concept of rights - like totalitarianism – emanated after the 'death' of empires. It is a by-product of the 'birth' of the modern nation state during the Enlightenment era, with the French and American Revolutions (Arendt 2007), and did not precede it. This was amplified with overt hatred as the leitmotif in public affairs during the post-World War 1 phase (Arendt 1958).

Interestingly, for Arendt, a nationalist sentiment meant that the state's supreme function was to protect the rights of those deemed part of the nation, at the expense of 'the Other'. This will be shown to be the case in Zimbabwe with the amendment of the Citizenship Act. The paradox presented by the citizen and citizenship stems from the fact that with this new-found state sovereignty, states, are not the sum total of their citizenry but act in a capacity that can deprive individuals of some of the very rights that pro-universal rights scholars assume they have. This is because the social is premised on the assumption that the state is the arbiter through which an individual or individuals attain rights or formal inclusion into a community as there is no effective enforcement mechanism at international level.

Given the non-consubstantial nature of the nation and the state (or the citizen and citizenship, a crude watering down), that is, the various heterogeneous states that were a result of peace treaties, for her, therefore, the creation of stateless people who are in essence "rightless, the scum of the earth" is not an aberration, but the logical consequence of the modern state (Arendt 1958; 284). These stateless individuals, for her, are deprived of the "right to have rights", that is the right to *claim* socio-political and legal recognition (Arendt 1958; 296). This can be rectified through enabling individuals, including the stateless, to acquire citizenship. This argument is arguably flawed and is what Ranciere refers to as the 'ontological dilemma' in Arendt's statelessness scholarship (Ranciere 2008). The paucity of Arendt's statelessness scholarship in terms of not attributing agency to stateless individuals seems particularly odd, given that she argued in 'This Means You', a regular column in the German-Jewish New York Newspaper, *Afbau,* urging Jews, in their personal capacity to mobilise and form alternative structures to those of totalitarian states, an attribution of agency (Arendt 2007). For Ranciere,

it is worth emphasizing that she locates her register as "*an ideal type"* between 'civil disobedience' and what Ranciere terms 'voluntary servitude' as evinced by Eichmann, concluding that 'law is law', crudely speaking (Ranciere 2008; 737). This will be emphasized in the section on Ranciere below.

At this juncture, it is critical to recall that Arendt wrote in a context of two world wars and a world where the (European) state had previously been by and large consubstantial to its people and territory, but morphed into modern states. Hers is crucially a philosophy of praxis, as she lived as a stateless person from 1933, the year she fled from Germany on account of her 'Jewishness' until 1951, when she became a naturalized citizen of the United States (Arendt 2007). The question of statelessness encapsulates her experiences and those of others as a result of '*The Jewish Question*'. In fact, one may go as far as to argue that for her, Jewish experiences from the Prussian empire and Napoleon victories and subsequent occupation and the Emancipation Edict of 1812 offer a blueprint for broader totalitarianism and statelessness (Arendt 2007). This sets her apart from theoretical scholars and researchers of statelessness, who viewed it from the perspectives of outsiders. Comparisons with the philosophy of praxis that emanates from the contribution of participants in this study are not too misplaced.

As a precursor to the section below, it is critical to note that Arendt makes a distinction, echoed by Chipkin (2007) in discerning between people and a nation-state. For her, the two are not consubstantial, as a people refers to a linguistic, ethnic, cultural, racial, religious or other homogenous group, whilst a nation refers to an internationally recognized territorial entity, which houses individuals and administers justice. As will be shown, in the Zimbabwean context, peoples not deemed as part of 'the people' are discarded from the nation, which attempts to

forge itself into a nation-state. For her, there are no rights outside of the state. Echoing Arendt, Turner (2010; 366) asserts that "without a secure identity as a citizen, an individual becomes a non-person and hence is exposed to arbitrary rule."

Thus, for her, the creation of 'imagined' nations such as Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Ukraine, Croatia and Poland with large religious, cultural and/or linguistic minorities fostered conditions suitable for the use of denationalization as a "powerful weapon" when newly formed and minorities forced to live in a seemingly permanent state of otherness in newly formed states with the 'protection' of the law of exception of the Minority Treaties[4] could not assimilate as a result of the permanent protections afforded to them, which placed them outside the conception of the nation (Arendt 1958; 269). The similarities of these states in Southern and Eastern Europe and post-colonial African states, including Zimbabwe is uncanny. Interestingly, for Arendt (1958), widespread resentment from majorities also arose from have special protections for minorities, as they thought that they received special treatment. Furthermore, the fact that other 'old' states, were not bound by the treaties because their Constitutions were supposedly underpinned by the fundamental Rights of Man (a fallacy) accentuated resentment amongst majorities in newly formed states (Arendt 1958). It may thus be argued that the creation of the Minority Treaties was both a driver of discrimination and an effect. This precarity in relation to minorities will be also shown when analysing postcolonial African states (including Zimbabwe) and statelessness below.

[4] Czechoslovakia is the only state which refused to sign the Minority Treaties (Arendt 1958; 269).

As a result of the exclusionary nature of totalitarianism and statelessness, a large portion of stateless people have historically been forced migrants, as many had to flee states (without documentation) where they were discriminated against as a result of their minority status. For Arendt (2007; 265), the reluctance of newly formed states as well as other states that newly stateless people sought refuge in to grant them citizenship meant that the excluded were generally deemed as surplus and "put in concentration camps by their foes and in internment camps by their friends."

5.2.1. Pro-Arendt statelessness scholarship

This state-centric perspective is shared by numerous other statelessness scholars (for example, Walker 1981; Hayden 2008; Blitz and Lynch 2009 and 2011; Wright 2009; Turner 2010; Manby 2011 and Draper 2016). For them, rights are substantive in nature. In other words, rights are meaningless unless they are underpinned by the power of enforcing, *state* institutions, which are primarily state-based in nature.

In arguing about the effects of statelessness in general, Draper (2016) goes further in articulating this by arguing that statelessness has a dual harm, which manifests itself through their alienation from the political community in question and through the aforementioned lack of human rights protection. For him, Arendt is right in arguing that the "right to have rights" is the panacea for statelessness and the discrimination faced by people in this situation. He extends this argument by arguing that this ought not be seen in the narrow sense as involving access to rights, but should, for him, extend to "the right to have standing in the political community as an agent *worthy* of bearing such rights" (Draper 2016; i. *My italics*). Hayden

(2008) extends Arendt's line of argument by asserting that enjoyment of rights is not only based on one's status as a citizen or stateless person, but on the state one is affiliated to. Powerful states particularly actively exclude stateless persons through a containment policy akin to "global apartheid" (Hayden 2008; 3).

5.3. Ranciere's conception of statelessness

Many counter-arguments to Arendt's central thesis have been posited. Ranciere, a French philosopher and critical theorist, argues that Arendt's conception of statelessness errs in a number of ways. Firstly, Ranciere (1999) is in full agreement with Arendt about the Rights of Man, labelling it a sham-concept. As a precursor in his counter-argument, however, Ranciere (2007) and many of his theoretical acolytes (see Balibar 2003; Motimele 2015) agree with Arendt that many stateless individuals live in precarious conditions, to some extent or other, a point I agree to as well.

As an opening salvo, the paradox presented by Arendt's radical critique of fundamental human rights, whilst locating her very politics within a human rights framework is not lost on Ranciere (2007). For him this paradox is not resolved by Arendt.

More importantly, Ranciere (2007) argues that Arendt, as well as many who subscribe to her school of thought err by depoliticizing stateless individuals through essentialising the foundation of statelessness. This ontological impediment in her work results in the assumption of a *complete* lack of agency on the part of the stateless. According to him, stateless individuals are not by necessity 'rightless scum of the earth', as argued by Arendt. Ranciere (2007) opts

for a political grounding that is contingent in nature, arguing that through widespread dissent – what he terms a 'Dissensus', stateless people can affirm their rights. Through offering examples, Ranciere argues that the marginalized are still able to affirm their involvement in a community of political actors.

In simple terms, one can locate the central disagreement between Ranciere and Arendt in their respective units of analysis. For Arendt, this seems to be the community, whereas Ranciere locates it with the individual. For him, *everything* is political, not just that located within the public realm.

The answer, it seems, lies not in a project of assimilation as Arendt suggests. For Ranciere, it lies in a radical project to deconstruct existing modes of thinking and concepts around statelessness, placing politics at the centre of both the public and private sphere. Hammar, McGregor and Landau (2008) would counter-argue that such a deconstruction of citizenship would open up space for corporates to fill.

Similarly, for Balibar (1994; 224), contestation of the status quo by stateless individuals in an exercise in "inventing rights". Critically, Balibar disagrees with Ranciere on the need to deconstruct concepts such as citizenship. For him, the creation of non-ethnic, linguistic, religious, and/or racial imaginary communities through mythologized shared histories is the panacea. This, however, speaks to a homogenization of the body politic through a systematized educational endeavour that smirks of re-education. Another slight, but important distinction with Ranciere is Balibar's willingness for the excluded to suffer the indignity of lesser status as

long as they gain progressively realizable rights similar to that afforded to citizens. The intricacies of this may be reached through many ways, including violent mechanisms.

For Motimele (2015), while it is clear that stateless people live a precarious livelihood, she echoes the arguments made by Ranciere and Balibar in arguing that they still exercise agency, and a liberatory politic. She quite rightly points out that that a major stumbling block for Ranciere and many of those that follow his school of thought are the actual individuals who are stateless. For her, many do not want to be seen as the frontline of revolutionary advocates of a new politics, preferring intervention from state actors and other stakeholders. This position runs counter to that of Nyers (2006), however, who highlights a multiplicity of examples of stateless peoples asserting their rights.

5.4. Belonging and statelessness

Emerging scholarship on African migration and politics has focused increasingly on modes of belonging and investigating where rights claiming occurs. Rutherford (2017; 16) argues that belonging "refer(s) to the politics over citizenship, autochthony, foreignness, and claims-making more broadly."

In this regard, Ong (2006) differs from Arendt, arguing 'up' when she asserts that globalization in particular has created a dichotomization of citizenship, with entitlements and rights being divorced from each other at a national level and becoming international in nature. For her, creating a binary logic of citizenship or statelessness does not adequately reflect the reality on the ground, which is primarily based on a utilitarian basis, as people move around and claim

rights based on what they can offer. While Turner (2010) agrees that a more flexible and post national notion of citizenships apply primarily in the Global North, being a member of a state for him is of paramount importance to survival in Africa in particular and the Global South more broadly. This is also highlighted in the Minority Rights Group (2017) Report, as they argue that statelessness is primarily endemic in Africa and Asia.

In Asia, the continued denationalization and suffering of Myanmar's Rohingya population illustrates how discriminatory laws targeting a self-identifying group of people impedes their lot in life (Minority Rights Group 2017). Many fled to Bangladesh, as a result of state sponsored violence being meted against them. This is illustrative of how anathema being stateless can be for groups who are targeted. This example offers an important comparative basis to Zimbabwe's denationalized in the discussion section, with, I argue, many critical distinctions between the fates of members of the two groupings.

In keeping with a state centred conception of belonging, Eyoh (2008) argues that modes of belonging and identity in Africa, while based on arbitrariness as a result of inheriting colonial borders, are centered around nation building in much the same way as the arbitrarily constructed Eastern European states Arendt (1958) analyses. Eyoh illustrates this point in African context through the example of the construction of identities such as 'Ivorinness' and 'Kinyarwanda' as political constructs that attempted to create a nation-state. For him, this sense of belonging interestingly led to the Othering of those who do not fit into the constructed conception of the nation. The reluctance to naturalise long-term migrants and their offspring, the use of the 'weapon' of denationalization, as well as subsequent mass deportations by numerous African states in their attempts to create a unified national identity in the

postcolonial era led to the creation of an 'Other' that was rendered stateless. African examples abound, including the denationalisation of the Banyamulenge from Zaire in 1985 (one hundred years after they arrived) and the Sahel and Burkinabe from Ivory Coast (Eyoh 2008; Minority Report 2017). In the case of the later, this active exclusion of the spawn of migrant workers who were brought into the country by the French in the pre-independence era (Minority Rights Group 2017).

5.5. Historical background

5.5.1. Statelessness and belonging in Southern Africa

Statelessness in Southern Africa is primarily a result of the failure of states to ensure integration between locals and migrant groupings and/or their descendants as well as deliberate discrimination of groupings of people (Manby 2011). Statelessness continues to be a blight on people living in the region, with numerous causes.

Arguably in line with Zimbabwe's denationalization project, an autochthonous nation-state is favoured under the law of Swaziland, with preference afforded to people of Swati heritage, resulting in the potential precarious status of non-Swati people of African heritage as well as mixed race individuals (Manby 2011a). Malawi also provides evidence of statelessness in the region, as citizenship from birth is conferred only on those with at least one Malawian parent. This is important for this study as people who were denationalized from Zimbabwe and still had at least one parent could theoretically avoid being stateless. Manby (2011a) also highlights

the continued gendered nature of conferral of citizenship in Africa broadly and Southern Africa as well.

5.5.2. Statelessness in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, like other nations is a product of its past. In the pre-independence era, the nation, formerly known as (Southern) Rhodesia was a part of the Central African Federation, which also included latter day Zambia and Malawi. This federation allowed for free movement (Elphick and George 2011; Manby 2011). As a result, many people of Zambian and Malawian descent settled in Zimbabwe. Labour needs and liberation wars also saw movement of people between Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. Furthermore, people of Indian, Chinese and British descent moved to then Southern Rhodesia in an attempt to improve their lives.

Zimbabwe's immediate post-independence (post 1980) era was characterized by two important issues that led to statelessness. Firstly, gender discriminatory legislation invalidated citizenship claims by children of Zimbabwean women married to foreign nationals (Manby 2011). While this discriminatory law was repealed in 1996, sixteen years later, following a successful Supreme Court challenge in *Rattigan and Others vs the Chief Immigration Officer, Zimbabwe and Others*, this did not apply to those deemed aliens between 1980 and 1996 until the 2009 Constitutional amendments, rendering many stateless (Manby 2011).

Secondly, an internecine 'war' between the two main political parties, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in the form of the *Gukurahundi* atrocities saw as many as 20, 000 mainly minority (mainly non-military) Ndebeles

slaughtered (CCJP 2007). Numerous children in Matopos and Tsholotsho in particular lost their parents, grandparents and were unable to claim citizenship through registration, thus creating a cadre of *de facto* stateless people in these historically anti-Mugabe and ZANU PF areas. It is as a result of these vast numbers that I initially opted for Tsholotsho as a second site.

5.5.3. The denationalization project

For the Minority Rights Group (2017; 2), "one of the main direct outcomes of statelessness is also often one of its main drivers – the exclusion of particular groups from voting." I argue that during the critical period between 2001 until the adoption of Zimbabwe's new Constitution of 2013 under the Government of National Unity, the ruling (and at times, co-ruling) party, the Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front), also known as ZANU (PF) subtlely socially engineered Zimbabwe's population to their political benefit through systematically culling Zimbabwe's citizenry by embarking on a radical denationalization project. This led to a reconceptualization of the nation and notions of citizenship and belonging (Manby 2011). This project, geared towards autochthony, targeted supposed 'aliens[5]', who were deemed to be of 'no specific abode', that is, people who were not citizens through *jus sanguinis* (through ancestral blood ties). This was done in various guises through primarily legal means, with multiple amendments to the Zimbabwean Citizenship Act, namely amendments 12 of 2001, 22 of 2001, 23 of 2001, 1 of 2002 and 12 of 2003 (Citizenship of Zimbabwe Act).

[5] That is, those who had obtained their citizenship through the laws of *jus soli* (by birth).

These legal manoeuvres arguably constituted a legal coup. They occurred in a background of mounting pressure and contestation of ZANU (PF)'s political hegemony from multiple quarters, including long established (former) allies. Firstly, consistent pressure from War Veterans who had fought in the 'Second Chimurenga' compelled the party to embark on what was dubbed the 'Third *Chimurenga*', or third war of liberation, which saw large scale farm invasions and radical land redistribution with below market value or no compensation from mainly white commercial farmers to previously disadvantaged 'ordinary' black citizens (and politicians) (Laurenco 2012; Human Rights Library 2017, Moorcraft 2012, Rutherford 2017). Furthermore, this realignment of citizenship occurred when ZANU (PF) was facing its stiffest electoral test since independence, with the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 (Chan 2011). The latter's base cut across the perceived narrow ethnic interests of previous key opposition parties such as the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) and the Zimbabwe African National Union - Ndonga to capture the imagination of the nation, and resulted in ZANU PF's subsequent first political defeat in the post-independence era in the 2000 Constitutional referendum (Moorcraft, 2012).

However, it is crucial to note that none of these variations of the Citizenship Act *explicitly* denationalised locally-based Zimbabwean citizens of foreign descent (Elphick and George 2011). The State initially focused instead on those with dual citizenship, perceived as constituting the core of the MDC's support base such as farmers, farm workers who were deemed to do farmers' bidding and Zimbabweans living in the diaspora, who were portrayed in the national media and by ruling party leaders as furthering the agendas of foreign governments. While citizens of foreign descent were given the option of renouncing their citizenship within a stipulated time period of six months, a combination of lack of public

awareness of the amendment, increased paranoia on the part of the State and the overzealous application of the legislation in its widest possible interpretation by the Registrar-General, Tobaiwa Mudede, led to a bureaucratic nightmare and mass revocations of citizenship (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights 2005). In numerous instances, citizens such as Qobolwakhe did not know of their denationalization until they had to obtain identity documents.

While this was challenged a number of times through the legal process in (largely successful) cases at the High Court level such as *Jackson and 634 Others vs Registrar General HC 2434/02*, *Tsvangirai vs Registrar General & Others HC 29-02*, *Todd vs Registrar General of Citizenship and Another HC 55/2002*[6], the Supreme Court of Appeal overturned the decisions, inimically affecting scores of denationalised people (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights 2005).

Elphick and George (2011) estimate that during this time there were over 12,000 Zimbabweans of Indian descent and over 1.5 million Zimbabweans of Zambian, Malawian and Mozambican descent who were affected at best or had their citizenship revoked. According to the International Observatory on Statelessness (2017), the most affected occupation were farmworkers, as 30% of the over two million farmworkers were of non-Zimbabwean descent. Despite the repeal of the Citizenship Act, according to the 2015 United Nations Global Trends Report, Zimbabwe still had the second highest number of stateless people, with over 300,000 people falling into this category, most of whom are poor and black and do not have the

[6] Miss Todd was the daughter of former Rhodesia Prime Minister, Sir Garfield Todd. Her parents were born in New Zealand.

resources to reclaim their citizenship. As noted above, Zimbabwe's statistics were not included in the 2016 report (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion 2017).

Interestingly, this reconceptualisation of who could be a Zimbabwean citizen also had the counter-productive effect of creating more autochthonous, localized identities, as some politicians took advantage of this when creating patronage networks primarily to supporters of similar ethnic groupings, dialects and/or areas of origin, at the expense of the other (Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights 2005). For example, this is evinced by Hon. Dzinzi's, ZANU (PF) MP of Muzarabani's orders for the evacuation of all Karanga's from his constituency, which was a historically Korekore area as a direct result. Furthermore, the re-election of Hon. Baloyi, ZANU (PF) MP for Chiredzi South who was also implicated in the contestation between Tsangaans and Karangas about who belonged to the area also illustrates this.

5.5.4. 2017: Repeal of denationalisation?

In November 2017, during a 'quasi-coup' which deposed President Robert Mugabe, the world's oldest leader from the seat of power after 37 years at the helm of Zimbabwe, a seemingly comparatively innocuous judgment in the High Court, handed down by Judge Nyaradzo Munangati-Manongwa arguably marked the official end of the denationalization project in Zimbabwe. In reading the order, the Judge stated, among other things that:

> "*it is hereby ordered that 1. Any person born in Zimbabwe who is of or over eighteen (18) years with an identification card endorsed 'Alien' and a birth certificate showing that such a person was born in Zimbabwe, and at least one of the parents of such person was born in Zimbabwe or from the SADC*

> *region, with the proof that he or she was* ordinarily *resident in Zimbabwe on the relevant publication date in 2013, is entitled to be registered by the first respondent to vote without any impediment or additional requirement other than the requirements related to all people.*" (Quoted in All Africa, 30 November 2017)

The Judge went further to assert that "*the right to vote is one of the fundamental freedoms a person can enjoy in their lifetime and can only be enjoyed when one is registered as a voter*." Thus ended 16 years of statelessness for many, but not all Zimbabweans who had been stripped of their citizenship in 2001, rendering them stateless, with their reclamation of their political rights, the last of their rights as citizens. Many Zimbabweans stripped of their citizenship, however, still do not enjoy full formal citizenship.

Bearing in mind Chipkin's (2007; 2) observation that it is critical to make the distinction "between the people as datum and the people as political subject" when trying to understand vertical citizenship and belonging, Gatsheni-Ndlovu (2009) argues that identity formation in Zimbabwe before and during the denationalisation project was (and arguably, for him continues to be) by and large homogenized and ethnocratic in nature. This nation building, for him, destroyed other ethnic particularisms, such as that of the Ndebele and Kalanga, assimilating these identities into a Shona identity broadly and 'Mugabeism' more specifically or the alienation of those that did not acquiesce. Mugabeism refers to the identification of the nation with an ideological cocktail comprising of the Leader, the Party and a loose nativism and Afro-radicalism (Mugabe 2001).

Premising her research on statelessness in Zimbabwe on the state-centric perspective much like Arendt's, Laurenco (2012; 1), like the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (2005) argues that the denationalization of some of her respondents has had inimical effects on

> "the enjoyment of other human rights, such as the right to vote, children's access to education and access to birth registration…(and) also produces vulnerability in several spheres of life, and in particular in relation to marriage, property and inheritance."

This is of particular interest given that her work differs from that of others because she investigates how people attempt to claim rights.

Emerging Africanist scholarship has questioned this state-centric approach, with some arguing that conceptions of identity in Africa have changed since the 1990's, with the emergence of 'fuzzier', more localized identities (Geschiere 2005; 10). This view is shared by Landau and Freemantle (2016). Critically, they argue that African states do not fit the conception of a Weberian state as they do not have hegemony over their territory through control of their borders or through control of internal space. As such, it can be argued that their power to exclude through mass denationalisations only happens at a minimal level, primarily in the political. Their work in postcolonial, primarily burgeoning peri-urban spaces highlights that horizontal rather than vertical citizenship is more important when engaging in rights claiming in some contexts. In other words, space is mainly navigated at a localized level instead of at a national level. Far much more than the state, which neither has the manpower to enforce laws such as this, nor benefits to distinguish between a citizen and a stateless person, they argue that what matters much more is one's social networks in a given community. Through these

networks one can get jobs and access to other necessities that citizens themselves may not have.

Similar to Alexander (2006) and Worby (1994), who highlight localized, particularly ethnicised conceptions of belonging and rights claiming in Zimbabwe, Rutherford (2017: 32) echoes this in his analysis of farm labour struggles in Zimbabwe. This is of particular import because as highlighted above, farm labourers were one of the most affected groups by the denationalization project. For him, while belonging usually occurs on different registers simultaneously, localized belonging manifests itself through the 'domestic government' of farm owners, who exercised control as if sovereign prior to 2000, with very little government interference.

6. Discussion and findings

In creating a 'natural experiment', one may argue that I debunk some critical assumptions made by statelessness scholars in the Southern Zimbabwe context, with a specific look at Sizinda.

Throughout the period of engagement with the participants, what was clear was that none of them felt the need to curb their freedom of movement as a result of their stateless statuses and their position as an 'Other' in the aftermath of their denationalization. Participants freely moved around without the hindrance of fear, navigating varied spaces. These included the sanctity of churches, the perils of beer halls until late at night, political rallies in some instances, downtown Bulawayo and administrative spaces such as the offices dealing with immigration

affairs in the city centre such as the Department of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, other government spaces, places of employment and places where they could attain rights. Critically, participants also spoke about about going to their The power of a mini-ethnographic study in this instance was in not only engaging participants and their family members for substantiation, as was the case with participants *Nandi* and *Qobolwakhe* by accompanying them to the aforementioned places.

This is because of a number of reasons. Firstly, while state centric scholars such as Arendt argue that stateless persons are 'rightless' without the protection of an enforcing power, that is the state, condemned to a lack of fundamental human rights such as access to jobs, access to healthcare services, access to basic education, the right to recourse, welfare and other protections afforded by the state, the evidence highlights a radically different picture.

All participants clearly stated that they were able to access the majority of 'basic' human rights. This occurred both with, or without the acquiescence of the state. One may argue that both are intriguing for different reasons. Access to rights with state assistance begs the question, why go through the trouble of denationalizing such a large number of people, if stateless people are still able to access rights in much the same way as citizens? More importantly, accessing rights outside the state brings important questions about what is necessary for people to access rights at local level.

Importantly, participants were able to access healthcare during their time as stateless persons. For *Qobolwakhe*, this involved going to the clinic as well as a major Provincial public hospital for admission. *Nqobani, Nandi, Camagwini* and *Lindelwe* were also able to go to a clinic during

the time in question, sometimes at no cost to themselves. Furthermore, all participants actively said that they were not charged more than other healthcare users as a result of their status when they had to pay as is the case in countries such as South Africa, which charges all those considered non-nationals much more for use of its public healthcare system.

Importantly, *Qobolwakhe* and *Camagwini* also took medication for chronic conditions. They did not at any stage experience drugs stock outs or any denial of access to medication during their period of denationalization, highlighting the importance placed on the right to access to primary healthcare in Zimbabwe, even for 'aliens'. This was important for them, as it meant they were not altogether 'othered' in the land of their birth, condemned to being (literally) treated differently.

While Zimbabwe's astronomical unemployment rate may be expected to support the side lining of stateless people in favour of citizens, the evidence from the research study further disproves the argument propounded by state centric scholars that stateless individuals are not afforded the right to access employment. Importantly, none of the participants felt hindered by their non-citizenship status. The majority of participants were employed in the formal sector (this constituted 66% of the target group, with an informal occupation rate of 33% as opposed to the national average of 90% unemployed in the formal sector (Worstall 2017)). Importantly, for instance, *Nandi* was employed by a prominent state owned enterprise (SoE) before, during and after she was deemed stateless without encountering any problems from the State. Similarly, *Zibusiso and Camagwini* were employed by the city's municipality during the entire time in question, highlighting the acquiescence of the state. As already highlighted, Qobolwakhe on the other hand worked in the private sector. While he faced a number of

problems, none of these was as a result of his status as a denationalized subject. This ability to work despite being stateless also continued for the participant at a small-to-medium scale enterprise (SMME).

Crucially, it is important to note that participants did not feel that their status as non-citizens also precluded them from accessing the right to housing. *Camagwini* and *Lindelwe* both own houses, with *Camagwini* buying hers during the period when she was deemed an 'alien'. While *Qobolwakhe* lived in their family home, other participants were also able to rent from citizens during this time without much problem or discrimination.

Participants also did not feel at any stage like they did not enjoy the protection of the state through relevant institutions such as the courts and police service, among others when aggrieved as a result of their statelessness. For most, the most important aspect when accessing the right to recourse centred on access to resources, as the police service in particular was seen as corrupt, with bribes used to smooth access to rights by citizens and the denationalized alike. Critically, however, none of the participants actually had to employ the services of the state in this regard.

As such, one may argue that contrary to what Ranciere (2007; 737) refers to 'Arendt's theorem', denationalized and thus stateless people in Southern Zimbabwe are not fully excluded from the triumvirate of people-nation-state, but carve out a space in-between based on their own agency as well as the political agency of the community, who recognize the participants as political actors despite their precarious position as stateless individuals.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that not all fundamental rights were guaranteed for denationalized persons during this particular period. As alluded to in the introduction, all participants only found out about their status when they needed to obtain important documentation such as plastic (as opposed to metal) identity documents (IDs), long (as opposed to abridged) birth certificates and passports. As Zimbabwe did not accept dual nationality, this compelled denationalised persons to reapply for their citizenship and renounce other perceived nationalities, with the effect of having their status changed to 'alien'. Participants spent up to two years in conditions of precarity whilst waiting for their status to be changed back to citizens.

When engaging with this research project, a number of important factors stand out. Firstly, it is bears mention that I am not in any way arguing that denationalization had no effect whatsoever on its subjects by highlighting the arguments above in favour of a more complex relationship between the denationalized, the nation and the nation-state. The participants certainly felt the inimical effects of exclusion from the state, as has been the case with others in similar predicaments prior to them. This argument is in line with Ranciere and Balibar, who acknowledge the potential pitfalls of being rendered stateless. Further, borrowing one and a half of the three premises put forth by Mbembe (2008) in his re-working of Arendt's theorem in relation to displacement, one may argue that statelessness in the Sizinda context also involved a radical loss of the concept of belonging and to some extent human dignity. Furthermore, denationalization in this context also seems to bring a deeper understanding and appreciation of precariousness amongst the participants, with them acquiring 'domicide', that is the loss of security, predictability, the concept of home, some rights and entitlements (Mbembe 2008 and Stepputat 2008).

In this regard, to paraphrase Steve Biko (1978), it is expensive being poor and stateless in Southern Africa. While conversations with participants highlighted the porous nature of Zimbabwe's borders, this was done at considerable expense to individuals already struggling to eke out a living. These journeys were predominantly as a result of the need to understand one's place in the world and survive the potentially precarious conditions mainly resulting from not only denationalization but the economic challenges in Zimbabwe as well. As highlighted above, *Qobolwakhe*, for instance, spoke about crosses into Zambia and South Africa seeking employment and opportunities. *Nandi* also admitted to having crossed the border into Zambia, their country of descent for two months without a passport. *Camagwini*, a civil servant who studied in Zambia also admitted to having crossed the border without the requisite documentation in order to visit Zambia as well. This highlights two important points. For them, this was largely done without much difficulty, as long as one had the requisite financial incentive to give the necessary agents. Firstly, it illustrates the lack of state control in Southern Africa over primary state functions such as state sovereignty. Secondly, it also highlights the importance of centrally disseminated formal documentation, with lack of these documents resulting in exclusion at worst or access at grossly inflated black market rates.

The denationalization project also problematized the issue of belonging for participants. As people who grew up grounded in a discourse of land rights, the concept of home, displacement and yearning for grounding arose frequently when engaging the participants. For instance, *Nandi* highlighted how the process had compromised her sense of being. For her, she was caught in 'nothingness', as juxtaposed to what Landau and Freemantle (2016) call 'multiple elsewheres', which illustrates the condition of peri-urban settlers in Johannesburg, who belong

both to the city and the rural area. Nandi, in contrast saw herself as too Zambian to be Zimbabwean and too Zimbabwean to be Zambian. Whilst her sister, who had renounced Zimbabwean citizenship in favour of Zambian documentation was eligible for free communal land in their village of origin in Zambia where her parents had returned to after retirement, she wasn't. She also wasn't eligible for land in Zimbabwe during the height of the land redistribution project, resulting in her being landless to-date. Furthermore, formerly denationalized nationals are not eligible for communal land, as individuals without villages of origin. By *Nandi's* own admission, as a mother of a burgeoning family, these thoughts preoccupied her more and more. This sentiment was reiterated by *Lindelwe* to a lesser extent. As someone of Malawian whose parents were both deceased, *Lindelwe* never felt an affinity to the 'old country'. However, as someone unable to afford to purchase land, the land redistribution project felt like an opportunity that was sadly unattainable.

Furthermore, while all participants declared their intentions and desire to vote through attempting to register on the voters' roll, it is important to note that the denationalization project had the long-term effect of excluding all participants from exercising this right during the most politically contested times in the history of post-independence Zimbabwe, namely the contentious 2008 and 2013 presidential and parliamentary elections as well as municipal elections.

6.1. Networks over formal recognition?

Contrary to assumptions made by the researcher and by the ethics committee, interestingly, participants were adamant that the community did not ostracize them when finding out about

their status. This was particularly evident in interactions with *Qobolwakhe* and *Nqobani*, who assisted others in similar positions both in the past and currently. As alluded to above, this openness extended beyond the participants, as some residents of Sizinda and Tshabalala of Zambian and Malawian descent in general (introduced by *Nqobani* and the Bulawayo Progressive Residents' Association) formed a loose collective dealing openly with issues affecting their communities, including statelessness and remittances. These manifested themselves through a number of aspects.

It is important to reiterate that the case study of Sizinda presented here may not representative of all developing nations. In re-engaging with the work of Landau and Freemantle (2016), they juxtapose two case studies in peri-urban areas in Katlehong, Johannesburg and Rongai, Nairobi. For them, at different levels, the politics of difference is negotiated based on functionality, a *usufruct ethics* or a politic of tolerance (Landau and Freemantle 2016;1). However, some violence and contestation occurs in different areas. While this is not the case in Sizinda, arguably as a direct result of the integration project that has occurred over half a century, and their case studies by and large are indicative of a tolerant politic, it is highly probable that other peri-urban spaces do not exhibit the same ethos of 'live and let live', as highlighted by the high levels of xenophobia across the continent such as those illustrated in the literature review.

What is important in the context of Sizinda, as is the case with Rongai and Kathlehong is that the body politic works largely without hegemonic power – State or private. Regarding the State, this is evinced through their obvious lack of control over their borders as illustrated above. They are also unable to exclude denationalized persons in many real ways. Collapsing

structures in underdeveloped countries and the individual's location within is reminiscent of Guyer's (2002) notion of being 'dislodged'. It is also highlighted through the broader context of the times in the country. For Guyer, this involves capturing "profound changes in *situ* that occurred in the contexts of crisis and grief when people were existentially dislodged from ideas about the future'" (quoted in Hammar, McGregor and Landau 2008; 268). Through the economic and socio-political turmoil that occurred, with an economic meltdown that brought with it the highest inflation rate in the world, a lack of basic resources such as food, fuel, money (even when you had some in the bank), water, electricity and businesses and jobs, amongst other things, many people living in Zimbabwe with or without documentation may be say to have started thinking in novel ways, creating new networks, forms of employment and, I argue, a heightened tolerance for those without similar lineage as them.

Furthermore, while there was at least a pretence of local government structures in many other areas, this was not the case in Sizinda. Local government structures in the township highlighted the non-hegemonic nature of governance, with authorities being a combination of incompetent, corrupt rentiers using the state's resources for personal gain. Lastly, as a result of their lack of hegemonic power, one may argue that parallel patronage networks arose in Sizinda where those with cash, resources and/or services were able to engender themselves to the populace despite their citizenship status.

This is evinced in a number of ways. Firstly, the Sizinda (and Tshabalala) local councillor, Reuben Matenga ,was charged with "underhand dealings and rampant corruption" throughout his tenure and suspended, leaving a power vacuum at that level (The Chronicle 20 September 2016). He also acceded to a degree of incompetence, which had hindered the developmental

aspirations of his constituency (The Chronicle September 2014). Prior to that, the local municipality was also unable to attend to many of the needs of the residents, including the provision of ablution services, creating parallel structures that charged residents for services they ought to have received for free, further accentuating their poverty and placing them at risk of diseases, including Typhoid and Cholera (The Zimbabwean 23 May 2012).

Power in the township resides with those who offer alternative avenues to the acquisition of services, such as business people, who offer the promise of employment; *omalayitsha* (cross-border transporters of goods and people, mostly without documentation); loan sharks; foreign currency traders; church owners; government agents in key positions to mete out favours and to some extent thieves. There is also a lot of scope for further research into the issue of power relations in this community during this period.

Other networks created in Sizinda that directly affect denationalized people include common associations. The Sizinda Residents' Association, the Bulawayo Progressive Residents' Association (which highlighted the 'rampant corruption' within the city council) and political associations that center on the rights of denationalized people have also helped denationalized people in navigating space and claiming rights in a myriad of ways.

Practically, through the work done by the Sizinda Residents' Association and to a lesser extent the Bulawayo Progressive Residents' Association, former Zimbabwean nationals who were stateless as a result of the denationalization project were better informed about their plight and avenues available to them. This crucial work continues to-date. According to *Nqobani*, through this network building, numerous people were not only assisted with their status, but

many linkages were created that ensured that denationalized people were able to survive during the economic meltdown. As an aside, there is scope for academic research into this larger, more organized group of people, who may provide a blueprint on how denationalized people in the underdeveloped world claim rights and ameliorate the lot of an entire group of people.

Through political hopeful Mzaca Ngulube (#TeamMzaca), many pensioners, widows and orphans of railways workers, including *Zibusiso*, *Lindelwe* and *Qobolwakhe* have mobilized in an attempt to contest the grading system of the National Railways of Zimbabwe. While one is skeptical of the motives of this politician (his mother is of Zambian descent and thus he may feel that this group constitutes a captive audience during his bid to run on an Independent ticket for the position of Member of Parliament for Bulawayo South in the upcoming 2018 nations elections), what is clear is that families can hardly live off pensions as low as $17 a month and have used and continue to use this network to ameliorate their lot.

As such, there is a lot of scope for advancing this study further. With time, many important angles that were apparent during the research phase may be explored.

6.2. Motivation: Denationalisation as a weapon?

When pushed to convey their opinions about why they thought that they were denationalized, participants were candid in their assessments. *Nandi* in particular argued that she thought that this was a result of political reasons, aptly tying it to the emergence of MDC as a viable opposition, as also highlighted in the historical background section. In keeping with their roles

as co-constructors of theory and the research more broadly, it must also be noted that *Nandi* interestingly further postulated that the denationalization project may have also been a means of creating an alternative revenue gathering stream, as denationalized individuals who chose to renounce any foreign 'allegiances' they mainly did not have had to pay between US$10 (in Harare, the nation's capital) and US$70 in smaller areas in the post dollarization of the economy in order to standardize their citizenship. This is of interest given the economic meltdown and lack of currency in the country.

7. Theoretical reflection and conclusion

In reflecting on the theoretical underpinnings in understanding the denationalisation project in the context of Southern Zimbabwe, what is clear is that the Arendtian perspective employed by legal theorists, strategic litigation organisations and the internationalists falls short. Ranciere's conception of the stateless individual as revolutionary through a 'dissensus' on the other hand seems enticing. Firstly, like Ranciere, the participants and I fully acknowledge the relative precarity the denationalization project left them in, particularly as a result of a lack of documentation. Secondly, participants – both primary and secondary – were not passive subjects, whose fate is entirely out of their control. Participants clearly exercised their agency in singular and collective terms, outside the ambit of the state, that is, claiming rights, navigating space, renouncing foreign citizenship where need be and reasserting their claim as part of the Zimbabwean nation-state. This occurs in both the public and the private realm (Motimele 2015). Furthermore, this is highlighted through their various network building endeavours that work outside the formal structures established by the state.

Ranciere's theoretical framework is also instructive in other ways. For him, as highlighted in the literature review, the deconstruction and the reformulation of key political notions such as citizenship is necessary. While the participants do not actively seek to reconceptualise notions of citizenship, rather opting for their reincorporation into the body politic as the excluded through having their citizenship re-instated, their actions lead to a radical reconceptualisation, albeit unconsciously through the amplification of horizontal citizenship that breaks down the state's hegemony.

While readily acknowledging the suffering that denationalized and other stateless peoples go through, and the negative impact of not having state protection, based on the evidence, arguments made by state-centric scholars about the centrality of the state as the sole enforcer of rights are shown not to apply in the context of an under-developed state, where everyone is eking out an existence. If anything, it illustrates the non-hegemonic power relations in these societies as well as the importance of network-building to survive over documentation. As a result, it seems that Landau and Freemantle's (2016) assertion, albeit in a different context that documentation in peri-urban settlements, or what they call 'urban estuaries' such as Sizinda are to some extent something 'nice-to-have', an addition instead of a necessity.

While the sample size analysed is admittedly small, based on the methodology, denationalised people in Zimbabwe between 2001 and 2013 were able to navigate space both within the state and travel outside its borders without facing too many difficulties from citizens of Zimbabwe or agents of the state. They were also able to claim pivotal rights such as the right to basic education; the right to access to healthcare services; the right to employment; the right to housing and crucially, the right to recourse.

This begs the question, is the UNHCR's current strategy to end statelessness by 2024 through their #IBelong campaign going to deal with the fundamental issues of social ostracization and the politically inspired creation of 'aliens' when it prizes state actors, engaging civil society and other stakeholders in a bid to buttress this approach. This is a crucial question, given that many other communities may not be as integrated nor share the experience of being 'dislodged' in the way that the population of Sizinda has. A more realistic approach would be a community-based approach. This would focus on engaging communities about what it means to be stateless, how to regularize one's citizenship, teaching about the importance of anti-xenophobia where communities are not as tolerant, thus broadening conceptions of belonging.

In the final analysis, one can characterize Zimbabwe's denationalization project from 2001 to 2013 as statelessness of a special type, akin to the relationship between colonialism and apartheid. This is because it debunks many of the established signifiers assumed by global statelessness scholars. In fact, it is clear that the Zimbabwean state managed to arguably denationalize a large swathe of its population, whilst adhering to the prescripts of the *1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons*, through not dealing with de facto statelessness and further providing identification documentation to newly minted non-citizens, despite their status. This political ingenuity highlights the gaps in international legal frameworks and the need to rethink statelessness theory and assumed solutions to the problems that accompany it such as precarity.

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Appendix 1

Ngqabutho Nceku Mpofu

Student number: 0601598H

Oral interview guide: The denationalization project, statelessness and rights claiming in Southern Zimbabwe – 2001 to 2013

To be completed by the researcher:

Interview code number:

Date:

Location:

Interview:

Duration of interview:

Age:

1. Please may you tell me about your experiences. What led to you becoming a stateless person?

2. When and how did you find out that your citizenship had been revoked?

3. If need be, please elaborate.

4. What steps did you take to remedy it?

5. How did you access rights such as healthcare and schooling for your children (if any) after you became stateless?

6. Did you have a job before that? If so, did you continue being employed after that?

7. Did you move or are you living in the same community? Did they know your citizenship status? Please elaborate.

8. What is your current status?

9. What else would you like to say?

Thank you for your time! Ngiyabonga.