‘Imfuno neeMbawelo’:

Ambition, Desire and Aspiration in South African Post-Apartheid Migration

By

Litha Buhle Zukile Sokutu. Student Number: SKTLIT001

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Faculty of Humanities

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Compulsory Declaration:

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract:

Based on fieldwork done in the city centre of Cape Town over two months, coupled with multiple conversations that stem as far back as 2011, this dissertation explores the spirit of ambition and desire, known in Xhosa as '*imfuno'.* Articulated as a unit of study, I explore the concept of *imfuno* and how it manifests itself in the social lives of a group of migrant labourers in Cape Town, particularly in a post-apartheid South Africa loaded with personal expectations, wants and needs. Drawing on theoretical models of covert strategy, politics of suffering and dynamics of social change, this thesis postulates that people's notions of themselves, their aspirations and life-goals are not only interconnected, but also can become driving forces that allow them to withstand and negotiate denigrating socio-economic conditions. Using Cape Town as a site of study, existing as a microcosm for the legacy of apartheid and the history of separation at large in South Africa, the thesis elaborated on notions of space, and how through examining the construction of space, claims of belonging and alterity are created. The way in which my informants were aware of this spatial planning in the city, and were able to strategize around for the purpose of finding meaning and self-actualization, forms a thematic filament in this monograph. Throughout the discussion is the idea of existing in a social system that informants clearly acknowledge as oppressive in light of recent political shifts. Each of the four chapters elaborates of the multi-contextual

presence of *imfuno*, and how it expands and contracts as social actors' expectations mutate as larger macro structures play a role. Like many other post-colonial monographs by anthropologists such as Bank(2011), this dissertation takes a observes and analyses 'classic' works in migration studies and argues for a fluid, constantly changing discourse around the migration and mobility field in anthropology.

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The Spirit

"*Uzobona bra.* You'll see bra. They believe in *uHappy*, I won't disappoint them. I can make it." These were the enduring words uttered to me on my first fieldwork encounter with one of my informants, Daluthando 'Happy' Mavakali. Uttered with a fearful confidence, these were sentiments that reflected a man's desire to deliver on faith instilled in him by others, faith he has internalised and still carries to this day. To ‘make’ is to materialise and bring to fruition. To “make it” became a mantra-like dictum that Happy and my other informants would use to speak into a plethora of longings. The “it” in “make it” is by no means singular and conclusive, but is fluid, ever-changing and can take advantage of its own opacity when the speaker themselves is unsure of what they mean. This emotional and deep yearning expressed by Happy in our first encounter reveals a covertly powerful force that guides the discussion of this ethnography.

Xhosa speakers will often utter the phrases "*ndiyayifuna*" or *"ndiyayibawela"* when referring to objects of personal desire and want. When directly translated, they can mean “want”, “search” or “need”, but these phrases cannot be fully appreciated in direct interpretation. These words reflect more than saying that you merely want something, but when analysed and excavated, there is deeper significance and association in their use, politicized by the speaker themselves. To have *imfuno* or *imbawelo* in certain contexts is to not to sit idly and desire an object or an outcome, but entangled within the understanding of these terms is an active pursuit for what one desires, a lively yearning brimming with vitality. *Imfuno* particularly, also speaks to a deep need, an extrinsic satisfaction found within the object or situation of conquest. *Imfuno* and *imbawelo* are often contrasted with the word "*ndiyayicela*"; the polite, tame version which means "I ask for this please". This more timid phrasing does not possess the more aggressive and upfront nature of *imfuno*, which adds more urgent undertones to its contextual understanding.

The spirit of *imfuno* permeates and infuses itself within coming-of-age rituals such as *imigidi*, to pre-marriage assemblies such as *amabaso.* With each participation in ritual, it shifts in form and impetus whilst maintaining

Introduction to Political Economy of Desire and Ambition Context

South Africa is a country of movers. Writings on the precolonial Khoisan hunter-gathers and Nguni cohorts display the nomadic, trans-migratory nature of these groups seeking food and security. The gold rush at the end of the 20th century typifies this attitude; go to where the opportunities are and find success there.

Over the course of the 20th century, influential works have been published articulating mobility in South Africa with a multi-vocality of approaches. The conversation on migration and movement phenomena from economic to sociological lenses provides a rich array of ideas of how and why migration manifests itself. In analysing the various novels, ethnographies, publications on this topic, I noticed in each article a theme of human endurance, passion and a will for the greater. The theme was not overtly expressed but was a common ingredient in each work that buoyed me to undertake this ethnography. I ventured into the fieldwork and it was then that this ingredient became tangible.

the essence of being a distinctive entity that acts as a social SI unit for the deep desire of self-actualization. Luminaries and griots in the Xhosa community may draw upon its spirit, and act as aspirational conduits to would-be "men" and pre-consummate couples. "*Ndikufunela"* is a phrase often employed to desire for someone else, to aspire on behalf of, in the hopes that certain fruit is borne. Burdensome as it is well-wishing, this "yearning" on the behalf of others speaks not only to the social capital, and interconnected hopes, that someone may have to possess to speak for others, but simultaneously raises questions about agency and the power to co-opt the deeply personal, intrinsic process of *imfuno*.

To capsule and limit notions around *imfuno* just to Xhosa spaces is to have a narrow understanding of how ideas such as these can be seen in differing contexts. Yearning, deep desire, the need to change one's circumstances are human emotions and mechanism that often transcend language and cultural enclaves. The spirit of *imfuno* can be the motivating force that lead a young Tererai Trent in Zimbabwe to strategize against what she deemed a patriarchal community, and work towards attaining a PhD, a level of education unimagined even amongst her detractors (Tererai Trent International, 2016). This is the same spirit that possessed Sudanese expatriate Abdul Rahoun to walk eleven hours through the English Channel Tunnel to seek asylum in England, risking his life and imprisonment in the process (Erlanger, 2016). These are examples of extremity, but they serve to illuminate the literal moving power of *imfuno. Imfuno* can be political as it is idealistic; drawing actors to desire and strive for that which their immediate context readily denies them. Although focused within the context of Africa, the spirit is not limited there, but can be called other names such as *hau;* a force that moves actors and underscores their behaviours (Leacock, 1954). Rituals and rites of passage, transforming actors' social status also require the possession of a certain spirit, be it ancestral or otherwise, the spirit is embodied (Turner, 1975). A force of power, romanticism and hope, *imfuno* manifesting itself in multiple ways, is a unit of analysis for the ambitions and desires of people, and the ways that they strive to actualize under an excess of limiting circumstances.

This thesis aims to examine and intimately articulate this spirit in the social lives of informants and how it allows them to strategize in the precarious and taxing system of migration and mobility.

Motivation

Prior to starting to any work on this ethnography, I had been interacting and sharing experiences with people that had deep desires and ambitions to change their social realities, without realising the social phenomena that they were communicating. During my Undergraduate studies, I would find myself speaking to a number of UCT Jammie Bus Drivers to and from campus. Starting off as brief, congenial encounters between myself and these employees, these conversations became longer and increased in frequency. I found that I could relate to these men; they spoke Xhosa, had travelled from far away to come to Cape Town, and as we spoke more, I found that they had unique perspectives on UCT , Cape Town and South African social structure .

I had entered the bus one afternoon to find myself being the first person on the bus. I sat quietly, until the driver, Tata Lunga, commented on a student who was parking a large SUV at the residence. “I cannot believe that boy is driving *that* car, I don’t know anyone from *my* area who could afford something like that with their life-savings,” he said in Xhosa (Tata Lunga, August 2011). I nodded silently, hesitantly agreeing with him. I became curious where he came from, and when he told me that he came from a small village near my grandfather’s homestead; this struck a chord with me. As we spoke of the differences between living in the city and the homestead, he responded by saying that he enjoyed certain freedoms at home which he did not feel in Cape Town. He did not elaborate on this, but witnessing his limited interaction with fellow Xhosa speakers, strict time constraints and isolated work schedule, this gave me a glimpse into why he gave this answer. The next time we spoke, a few weeks later, he told me that he had not been home in a while, and that he was trying to send money back home in the coming days. I then asked if sending money back home helped make up for the distance of being so far away. He nodded, and then said in Xhosa “It’s how I remind them why I’m here,”

It was his story and these encounters that made me wonder how *his* story of migration and mobility differed from mine, someone a decade or so younger than him, or how it differed from my grandfather's generation of migrants, who were rooted in a different social and political setting and time. It can feel that the further people travel to seek education, employment or such opportunities, the more meaning is placed upon their pursuit and the degree of *imfuno* which informs this very pursuit. To go far is to "make" what cannot be made in your immediate context, a quest which is given social capital by virtue of the fact that what happens there is unclear, but the results brought back are of worth and significance. The mobility of my grandfather, the bus driver and mine are all similar in that we all left spaces of cultural, spatial association and travelled to metropolitan, more culturally interconnected spaces with different social, political and financial infrastructures. The justification for this diaspora, in my case, is that by going far away, I will attain far away accomplishments, far away not only in distance but also in terms of the capabilities of my home space. As a Xhosa male leaving to attend the University of Cape Town in the 'born-free era', elders in my family from rural Eastern Cape practised the act of having *imfuno* on my behalf, upfront in their desires for me to become a certain person, deliver on certain promises and join social networks unlike those the Eastern Cape.

The grasp about *imfuno* from personal engagement is that it possesses a dualistic function; acting a multifaceted spiritual force that can motivate people to see beyond the 'now' and aspire to discredit the status quo's limitations on their capacity to create, *make more.* Simultaneously though, this force can have taxing consequences, when the desires, aspirations and ambitions become burdensome, weighty, and co-opted by others. A multifarious terrain that I personally navigate, it was with this understanding that I underwent exploring this research topic, aware of the complexities and not trying to give solutions, but rather attempting to see in this socio-political space, how the spirit of *imfuno* and *imbawelo* motivates and manifests in the lives of post-apartheid migrants.

Ambition and History

Ambition specifically, aspiration and the strategies of social mobility are interrelated topics found in studies of sociology, development studies and social anthropology. Scholars in these fields use different theoretical lenses to analyse the ways in which these three topics reveal themselves in people's everyday lives. This discussion seeks to understand how ambition manifests itself, the way that it is historically influenced and its particularized relevance in my ethnography.

Arjun Appadurai provides a study on the poor of Mumbai, and attempts to interrogate concepts of aspiration with relation to socio-economic status. He stipulates that "ideas of the future, as much as of those about the past, are embedded and nurtured. Thus, in strengthening the capacity to aspire, conceived as a cultural capacity, especially among the poor, the future-oriented logic of development could find a natural ally, and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty."(Appadurai, 2004; 01) This argument takes into account the debates in social anthropology of how to speak of cultural behaviour. Scholars have at times seen culture as a still and immovable entity, so as to analyse it as it sits rigidly. Appadurai's essay requires us to view cultural activity as fluid, shapeshifting as it enters different contexts, and interacts with new information. This lens then poses a discussion on how social actors adjust their ideas of development as cultural behaviour changes. In his monograph, Patrick Chabal, substantiating Appadurai argument, critiques the lineage of Northern theory and politics in infringing on the way which we view upward mobility and development in Africa (Chabal, 2009). He postulates that "development, dependency... neo-patrimonial and democratic theories all share an ethnocentric bias and a view of causality that is 'singularly dismissive of actual historical and cultural processes on the ground'(Hagmann, 2009; 78)." Ambition is historical, laying a claim on the past and what those events wrought on the present. Simultaneously, ambition is forward-looking; reflected in the way that my fieldwork informants express with both confidence and insecurity that the future will bring results of a certain kind. That past has a cultural activity and will that future as well.

The analysis of socio-economic inequity provides grounds for scholars to interrogate ideas around aspiration and upward mobility. Mamphele Ramphele's monograph, *A Bed Called Home* looks at the lives of hostel-dwelling migrant labourers in Langa, Cape Town. Within an oppressive regime where families are torn apart, Black labour existing as the conquest of a White hegemonic political economy, subjects try to make meaning of life and strive for better. It becomes tempting to view the lives of subjects as merely miserable and assume a glib, paternalistic attitude towards their circumstances. However, Ramphele's ethnography argues for a different perspective, one that takes the aspirations of the hostel dwellers earnestly. "It is however important to not lose sight of the fact that the majority of migrant-labour hostel dwellers are peace-loving people who [have] developed creative strategies to cope with the limitations of their social reality"(Ramphele, 1993; 01). Appadurai's theorising supports Ramphele, as he contends that "the poor are neither simple dupes nor secret revolutionaries. They are survivors. And what they often seek strategically (even without a theory to dress it up) is to optimize the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution in their immediate, local lives."(Appadurai, 2004; 07). One of the pertinent considerations in this discussion as the above scholars display is the necessity to redefine the way in which the historically disenfranchised are viewed and are written about. This includes the theoretical models that cause us to produce and reproduce ideas which inhibit people's progress and prospects; theory can limit, and by reproducing those limitations, we miss the crevices and cracks where people's agency allows them to strive and work for more despite their history and present circumstance. Ambition and aspiration, in many ways can be seen as a wish; a psychological hypothesis of one's volition. Ambition is an interrogation of how one wishes to change their circumstances, as well the perceived picture of what those outcomes will look like. A look at how those who came before faired in the quest for upward mobility, and an assessment of one's circumstances to see how one can make *it*.

Ambition and Desire

The historical, colonially mediated considerations of ambition and development in Africa have been seen through a specific lens, at times casting local cultural behaviour as a mere inhibitor. African development looked a certain way as theorists argued, and by looking that way, power imbalances became embroiled in the academic discussions on social actors' quest for change and development. There are tensions between traditional and modern ways of seeing development, and this tension is seen in “the lived dilemmas of individuals” as Piot and Jackson argue (Jackson, 2011; 181). The work of James Ferguson discusses and scrutinizes these historic power imbalances. Writing an article on mimicry, Ferguson recalls the story of two children from Guinea in desperate need of help, writing to the "Officials of Europe", imploring said Europeans to “help us become like you”(Ferguson, 2002; 551). The two boys, fourteen and fifteen in age respectively, were found dead in the "landing gear" of an aircraft destined for Belgium (Ferguson, 2002; 551). Their headstrong desire and the harrowing letter that accompanied their corpses, revealed as Ferguson pointed out, the intricate links that exist between ambition and colonial powers that were, or still be. A discussion on the strategies of upward mobility cannot be ahistorical, but rather must aim to dig deeper beneath the politics of ambition and how it is instituted and produced.

Liz Estey gives a persuasive appraisal of Ferguson's work on African political economy, finding that "Ferguson acknowledges and empowers the complexity of modern life. The range of reactions and strategies adopted by Africans, and their continual shifts over time, give Ferguson the proof he needs to show that reality on the Copper belt cannot sustain a simple linear narration. In strengthening the idea that Africans have, and continue to develop highly organized ‘survival strategies’ to cope with modern issues, the complexity of their life is reflected. His conception of the ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘localist’ African are prime examples of how Ferguson produces a new framework, based on a local perspectives "(Estey, 1999; 66). Connected to ideas around ambition and aspirations are the lob sided power dynamics of what someone should aspire *to.* Globalization, cross cultural interactions and the like all inform this notion of desire. Desire in many ways is socially

instituted, advertised, marketed, and promoted within the tapestry of everyday life. This conception of desire corroborates with Ferguson's theory of the "modernist metanarrative" that exists around ambition and upward mobility in a globalized context (Ferguson, 2002). In later chapters I discuss how a Congolese informant of mine, Pascal, came to South Africa in an attempt to create opportunities for himself, opportunities that he felt could solely be fulfilled in South Africa and nowhere else. Through counsel given to him by a network of expatriates working in the country, Pascal assessed Cape Town to be the best place to achieve his ambition of being an engineer. Pascal becomes representative of this modernist metanarrative participating in a global economy and attaching a specific social capital to what is possible in South Africa.

Chabal proclaims that "[p]resent day Africa is in the foreground, but its past looms large."(Chabal, 2009) The same is true of my research enquiry, trying to assess how the spirit of *imfuno* is a motivator in the present-day lives of my informants. This assessment takes place in collaboration with an analysis of the large-looming history of South Africa that has affected the possibilities and the (fluid) structure of these ambitions and future desires. The future of these ambitions requires consideration as well. Ferguson argues that to "speak of the political and economic borders of a postcolonial world that is often characterized by its cultural free-flows is to reintroduce the question of institutionalized forms of social and economic membership into our discussions of contemporary global modernity."(Ferguson, 2002). In a post-Apartheid environment where people are granted freedoms previously denied, is this the only prerequisite to fulfilling one's ambitions? Or, are there more, deeply entrenched social processes that stifle people's ability to fulfil, processes and behaviours that reflect power imbalances that move beyond the right to vote or to enter any restaurants that they wish to? South African political discourse is at a point in history where this shift may occur that people stop merely hoping for democratic promises, but adopt new, more aggressive strategies to change their lives. This thesis serves as a debate on the political economy of ambition; taking stock of the reasons that got the country here and how these dynamics manifest themselves in my informants daily lives, in their multiple attempt to fulfil *imfuno*.

Outlining of the Chapters in this Dissertation

The dissertation discusses notions of ambition in three contexts of migration and mobility. In the first chapter, I outline how one can write about ambition, desire and *imfuno* within the umbrella of migration. A review of the literature provides a theoretical and historical foundation of how I find my voice within such a complex and rich topic in anthropology. I also discuss methodology and approaches of fieldwork engagement. The three chapters that follow trace the social life of *imfuno* at first through the lens of a 'traditional' migration trajectory – 'rural' to 'urban', drawing a lens of comparability between older works of migration and a contemporary, post-apartheid engagement with an informant whose rhythms mirror those of 1950 labourers. After this, I discuss trans-national mobility and ambition, focusing on the out-of-place dynamics that are wrought in the daily lives of foreign nationals. I discuss how *Imfuno* manifests itself here and expatriate solidarity helps foster this. The final chapter deals with the lineage of structural mobility, assessing how mobility and aspiration can be inherited, and that faith, both religious and otherwise plays a vital role in shaping the social lives and personhoods of a 'next generation' of those seeking to self-actualise.

Conclusion

The Spirit of *imfuno* forms the unit of study in this ethnography, following a line of other research enquires by scholars which attempted to elaborate on abstract, yet visceral phenomena that formed part of people's social lives. The discussions in this thesis draw inspiration and similarity with Marcel Maus and his research on the *hau*, the intangible force that he realised was a determining factor in social actors' behaviours (Leacock, 1954).

Chapter One: Writing *Imfuno*: Literature and Theoretical Framework

1.0 Abstract

This chapter looks at the global, multi-chronological conversation around mobility, aspiration, migration and spatial studies. The discussion is then narrowed to way in which South African knowledge of migration has been historically produced. The closer analyses of these discussions forms the gap of where this thesis can orientate itself within the larger conversation on migrancy.

1.1 Introduction

The history of publications around migration and mobility is complex and arrayed. The argument brought forward by Sherry Ortner that theory "is a product of its times" reflects that ideas around the topic tend to mutate and are re-established through time and place (Ortner, 1984; 160). If the ethnographer is a mobile being that transcends settings for the benefit of their research, the conversation must be had as to whether the same applies for that framework in their notebook. Discussion on the plurality of

theory shows just how varied scholars' frameworks are within one disciplinarian umbrella. This chapter serves as such an enquiry on the discussions and arguments relevant to the topic of post-apartheid migrancy. The monographs span from debates on place-making theory, discourses on urbanism and tribalisation, to the notions of social navigation and spatial politics. This discussion helps not only to illuminate the state of the art of mobility anthropology, but also serves as a platform to highlight where my research enquiry falls within the larger debate.

1.2 Writing Space

Spatial studies have sought to greatly politicise environments and analyse the social tapestry intrinsic in space. Place and space, both loaded and connected terms, are scrutinized in regards to how different people orientate themselves in changing social worlds. The following are debates prevalent and contested within spatial discourse. In her study of embodied space, Setha Low describes how the social actor's body reacts to a space relative to their "state of mind, social and cultural predispositions" (Low, 2003; 10). Low debates how proximity with familiarity frames the way in which a person interacts and makes meaning in their immediate environment (Low, 2003). The "human body becomes a template for social and spatial relations" (Low, 2003; 12). Fred Myers' ethnography on Aboriginal social life gives rise to the notion of 'place-making' (Myers, 2000). Myers describes place-making as a "dialectical engagement of socially and historically constituted schemas" between the individual and the space (Myers, 2000; 104). Myers' study found that Aboriginal notions of space and boundary construction conflicted with Australian authorities' understanding of space. Myers uses the constant misunderstanding between Aboriginals and Australian authorities as a case study to show that processes of place-making are "socially and politically organized" (Myers, 2000; 104). Verran refers to these instances of contested knowledge as 'epistemic disconcertment' (Verran, 2013). In this age so often called a "postcolonial critical discourse" era, Verran and Myers explore in their various studies that space can be perceived differently by subjects, and this ideological discomfort can lead to fresh understandings of how the people orientate themselves in spaces both familiar and strange

(Verran, 2013, Myers, 2000). There is vitality in contrasting the organisation of space with how it is perceived by people that live in it.

Culture and space are pertinent points of discussion, particularly in African ethnographies on migration. '*Out-of-placeness*' can transcend just geographical considerations, but disrupt ritual and cultural associations, as studies suggest. Hylton White's ethnography on Zulu migrant labourers focuses on the concept of "dwelling". He describes "dwelling", a concept drawn from Heidegger (1971) not only as where you live and find comfort, but also where the ancestors want to live and feel comfortable (White, 2010). White uses symbolic analysis of the physical structures that social actors build for their ancestors as his focal point. He follows a 'titular' character, 'Nkululeko', who becomes the archetypical social actor in this context. (Murray, 1979; 341) The city as a "multi-centre", as Chambers theorises it, comes with conditions of existence for the migrant labourer (Chambers, 1994, Murray, 1979). White's study is useful as it allows one to see the notion of space not only through a lens of people feeling familiar and comfortable in an environment, but that there are various instances where people may have *obligations* to an environment which require a certain type of loyalty. Murray and Chambers' works help frame my study in showing how various political demarcations from the past still have contemporary impact on how people experience environments. My study requires me to look not only at the social processes, but frame them within larger historical patterns and find out how informants intend to build lives in both environments whilst attempting to self-actualise. The social processes are vital but their manifestations in the imaginations of informants are also of great relevance to my research.

1.3 Structural and Political Mobility in South Africa

A macro analysis of the theoretical trends in ethnographies of movement and mobility reveals a bricolage of perspectives. For instance in South Africa, Monica Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest*, her study of East London Xhosa migrants, explores behaviours of the rural 'space' that are 'performed' in the 'city' space, with migrant labourers interacting with one another as though they were back home (Hunter, 1936). With 'expected'

behaviours occurring out of context, Hunter argues that these behaviours are a means for workers to ‘resist’ Western social conventions (Hunter, 1936). The idea of the “human body” as a canvas, as Low stipulated in her spatial theory, is found in Hunter’s work. Hunter finds that amongst workers, “geniality and courtesy are common virtues” and that the “anxious bustle of Western civilisation are nowhere” (Hunter, 1936; 466). Her study consisted of fieldwork, interviews and a process known as “collecting dreams”, which entails participants relaying their dreams and nightmares to Hunter and her assistant and by then tabulating these by themes and prevalent fears amongst labourers. Reviewers of the book do not comment on what framework ‘dream collecting’ is, but appears to be part of the later formulated Geertzian ‘thick description’ model. Hunter uses census information and emphasises that her sample space includes 213 households. The prevalence of statements such as “the figures given for the proportions of permanent and temporary households are probably representative of the population” show that Hunter’s study looks for empirical data that can be true for various contexts (Hunter, 1936). Hunters work, like many monographs of the time period amass rich, valuable data worthy of in-depth discussion regarding the social lives of the informants at the time. However, the lens of analysis often misses certain points of discussion. The theoretical gaze takes a Western-centric scope, with migrant social and religious behaviour being compared and contrasted with Western modes of ‘doing’. A critique amongst many 'classical' and colonial works is the adoption (and reproduction) of a pattern that privileges a linear path to development and modernity. Estey encapsulates this as she argues that "modernization is guided by the assumption that underdevelopment is a primary condition out of which all states must evolve if they are to attain development"(Estey, 2005; 65). Categorizing informants as merely acting 'Western' or 'rural' in urban spaces dismisses the possibility of plurality of personhood for different contexts, which my study is concerned with. Even within the same city, informants may have to adopt creative strategies to "be different people" so to speak, in order to adapt or feel more comfortable. This study, attended on such a macro scale, misses these points and leaves gaps of analysis that my study intends to draw upon.

The incongruity between location and ‘culture’ is one of the foremost discussions in studies of migration. Hunter's work above is at the starting point of a decades long discussion on the socialization of 'outside' labourers, coming 'in' and the ways in which they attempt to 'fit in'. Earlier monographs on migrancy presented in their works a crisis for their subjects; to either choose to change to Western modes of being whilst in the urban milieu, or maintain previous customary ways of ‘being’. This is one of the hallmarks of migration and urban studies. The process of converting labourers to Western socialization became theorised as ‘detribalisation’ (Hellmann, 1948). Hellmann and other ‘Classical’ anthropological migration scholars used the term as a way to differentiate the modernized labourers from their perceived archaic counterparts (Hellmann, 1948, Mayer & Mayer, 1961).

The *Xhosa-in-Town Trilogy* is one of the foremost volumes of worker migration in South Africa. The study, conducted mainly in East London, provides extensive ethnographic data on this topic (Pons, 1964). Speaking on Marxism, Ortner says one “of the virtues of structural Marxism, then, was that there was a place for everything in its scheme” (Ortner, 1984; 141). Following this structure, the volume includes data such as the number of migrants moving the rural to urban over certain time periods, as well the income strata between these spaces. The trilogy was a comprehensive volume that would foreground other work on migrancy and cultural analysis during Apartheid. As with the above studies, this volume uses a framework to ascertain certain binding ‘facts’ about the Xhosa social and political experience in town. Phillip Mayer, author of the first edition of the trilogy, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, used two terms in his study to make this distinction of the ‘tribal’ and ‘detribalised’ subject. His fieldwork findings revealed that the “modernized”, Christian members were known as ‘School’ Xhosa, whilst the members who clung on to homestead rituals and symbolic production were known as ‘Red’ Xhosa (Pons, 1964: 171). ‘School’ people dressed like the missionaries that had converted them whilst the ‘Red’ wore traditional garbs from the homestead. Meyer describes the Xhosa in town as “men of two worlds” (Pons, 1964; 171). Hunter in her ethnography gathers that African labourers began to ‘embody’ these notions of social and ideological binaries (Hunter, 1936). For

example, Hunter found an interviewee attesting that “town life is more suitable for enlightened people” (Hunter, 1936; 435). Ideas of the ‘detribalised’ versus the ‘Red’/’tribal’ native formed a large theoretical basis for Classical works on migration studies in South Africa (Bank, 2011).

Influential works are not only pertinent in the use of their theory, but simultaneously in the scrutiny of that theory to add innovations to the discipline at hand. This is why the binaries created by these ‘Classical’ scholars found criticism from later theorists such as Mefeje (1976), who took issue with the negative inference and portrayal of the homestead and ‘Afrocentric’ rituals (Bank, 2011). Leslie Bank decries the notion of two distinct, separate groups in the urban space, finding in his ethnography that a scholar cannot “reify” another human’s ever-changing and contesting mind-set (Bank, 2011; 36). Banks’ study serves as a comparative analysis to the *Xhosa-in-Town Trilogy*, looking at the same environment that these earlier scholars had studied, albeit without the structural functionalist framework. As Banks conducts his fieldwork, speaking and interacting with Duncan Village inhabitants, he does not ignore the post-apartheid context in which the migrants exist (Bank, 2011). Bank’s framework scrutinises environment and the implications that space has on social actors, stating that “place, not space, frames appropriate behaviour” (Bank, 2011; 15) .He uses statistics and numbers to *frame context* and not infer hard facts from them. His nuanced study illustrates that “urbanisation is not a simple, unitary….process” but rather it depends on “prevailing historic, economic and social conditions” (Bank, 2011; 02). Archie Mafeje adds to this discourse, stating that early scholars were so often “misinterpreting” the data, that they were doing something “other than” misinterpreting what they were seeing and studying (Mafeje, 1976; 308). Mafeje and Bank both draw on John Sharp’s theoretical framework of a “unit of study”, which calls for fieldworkers to consider past events and historical happenings in ethnographies (Sharp, 1985). Bank states in his concluding chapters the social and ideological ‘encapsulation’ of the ‘Reds’ that Mayer speaks of required socio-political context, and that because ‘space’ is so contested in this environment, it is difficult to ascertain who is ‘urbanised’ and who is still ‘rural’ in allegiance (Bank, 2011). It may be to our detriment as scholars,

particularly in the current knowledge production climate, to “live and move in ways that freeze, inhibit, suppress and oppress the creativity of the very places and people that justify our stock in trade as homo academicus”(Nyamnjoh, 2013; 675).

The ‘binary effect’ of ‘Westernisation’ is not only restricted to discourses surrounding South African migration. Thompson’s study of Malay migration between ‘rural’ Sungai Siputeh and ‘urban’ Kuala Lumpur finds two distinct groups as social processes form in the area. The “New Malay” emerge, who speak different strands of language and have different approaches to ritual (Thompson, 2003; 430). The “New Malaya Dilemma” sees individuals trying to negotiate a “shifting sense of ethnicity, dynamically related to the political economy” (Thompson, 2003; 430). Robin Palmer, who is heavily influenced by Philip Mayer, speaks of the “Britallians” in London, who try desperately to maintain a semblance of their Italian heritage in a foreign country through ‘incapsulation’ with other likeminded individuals (Palmer, 1991; 89). Chambers for example, describes migrancy as a “discontinuous state of being, a form of picking a quarrel” between where you are and where you come from (Chambers, 1994; 02). Colin Murray on the other hand in his work on Lesotho refugee workers, finds that “home, geo-politically, is completely different from Work” (Murray, 1979; 339). Leslie Bank referred to earlier on his ethnography based in the Eastern Cape describes migrant identity as an “on-going process of negotiating difference [and] oscillating between fixity and openness” (Bank, 2011; 12). Chambers notes that migrancy forces identity to be “formed on the move”, and that its formation takes place where the stories of subjectivity “meet the narratives of history” (Chambers, 1994; 06). An example of this is Thompson’s ethnography which takes place in Malaysia when the government is attempting to move away from the New Economic Plan of the time to a new socio-economic process (Thompson, 2003). Thompson looks at two “classes” of migrants who hope to attain certain socio-economic “mobility” in the city space (Thompson, 2003). Another is Ellen Hellmann’s study of the *rooiyard* ‘slum’ was published the same year that Apartheid was made an official Law, yet manages to have an chapter entitled “Why the Natives Live in Rooiyard”(Hellmann, 1948; 17).

In “A Bed Called Home”, Mamphele Ramphele’s ethnography looks at the use of space and its negotiation in the overcrowded apartheid era hostels of Langa. One of her key research enquiries is *“how do all these people fit into this limited space?”*(Ramphele, 1993; 23) Written during the ‘CODESA period’ in early 1990’s South Africa, the work hones in on the various political, strategic efforts of migrant workers in the area, and how homes are built and maintained within the confines of the cramped hostels. Ramphele discusses the notion psycho-social space in her work, stating that “it could be argued that one is given cues by one’s environment that encourage one to either to expand or to narrow ones expectations and aspirations in life”(Ramphele, 1993). The ethnography pertinently analyses spatial politics whilst keeping in mind the ubiquitous influence of the Group Areas Act on the psychology of informants. Her discussion of how informants use small ways to negotiate pockets of agency in and amongst the macro oppressive structures informs my study as well. Ramphele does not, however scrutinize specific ambitions that informants wish to fulfil post-apartheid, but starts the conversation towards that a topic that can be articulated more effectively in 2015.

1.4 Gender and Mobility

On a large analytical scale, ethnographies have focused on the male experiences of mobility and migrancy. This could be in large part due to the fact that mostly males were the subject of labour conquest. Leslie Bank reveals that the movement of males presented fascinating developments in the homestead, with matriarchs taking over the homestead, changing nuclear family dynamics (Bank, 2011). Ramphele does not shy away from the gender politics that are often skirted over. Her perspective changes to women that join husbands and brothers in the city. As the hostels are masculine-mediated environments, the role of women poses critical questions around intersectional negotiations in the lives of migrants. Her ethnography found that a hegemonic structure existed as women were victims of sexual assault and in turn blamed themselves for these acts (Ramphele, 1993). “A poor environment encourages a self-depreciation attitude” and such an attitude was informed and reinforced by the macro

structures of (White) patriarchy during apartheid. The vestiges of these gender relations in the post-apartheid space are crucial to my research enquiry, with these ethnographers laying the ground work of a widely unspoken theme of migrancy. Literature on apartheid gender dynamics from scholars such as Kuper argue for that even within uneven gender dynamics, it is women who take leadership roles in times of unrest and uncertainty as men are occupied with work or away from the homestead(McCord, 1965, Bank, 2011).

The literature shows the complexities of migration studies, across varying theoretical frameworks, environments and historical settings. These past studies provide texture on the topic, contributing perspectives and illuminating partial truths on the social experience of being out of space. Key debates range on the separation of the urban and tribal environments, and how the multiple ways that social actors were shown to adapt to these shifts. Modernization is incumbent in migration studies, with postcolonial monographs arguing that more nuanced perspectives need to be theorised with regards to the tensions between culture and a changing world. Whether clearly acknowledged or not, .The literature, however, does not articulate point of analysis that this thesis wishes to add to the discourse. In 2015 South Africa, the ambitions and the self-producing mechanisms of migrants in a specific political arena is a pertinent point of discussion. The urban/tribal titles need to be surrendered for a more nuanced look at how in different parts of the same city, at different times of the day, informants adopt different strategies to survive in an environment, that, by form and design was not built for their comfort. An analysis of the way informants see themselves within the larger structures, and how that self-view influences their aspirations of self-actualisation, is what this study is concerned with.

1.5 Theoretical Discussion: Political Economy of Ambition and Desire

The National Development Plan (NDP), an initiative lead by former Economics Minister Trevor Manuel, looks to create major sea changes to South Africa by the year 2030. The 70-page manifesto that accompanied

the announcement of the plan in 2012 states that the Plan aims to "eliminate poverty and reduce inequality" as well as address the "spatial divide that continues dominate the [South African] landscape" (National Planning Commission, 2012; 14). Assembled by chapters that are pertinent to the progress of South Africa, the document focuses on areas such as creating an "Inclusive rural economy" to "nation building and social cohesion" (National Planning Commission, 2012; 53).

The National Development Plan reflects a large scale bureaucratic, institutional version of the desires of informants that I spoke with during my fieldwork; to change their future and attempt to work to their fullest perceived potential. Self-actualisation requires an assessment of the status quo and working within one's resources and capabilities to change it. Intrinsic in the NDP manifesto is the idea that development cannot be fully realised without economic growth and contextual upward mobility. The rights afforded to citizens of a (free) country are connected to the right *have* and *attain*. In a system where Black citizens where marginalized to the role of labour to White capitalism, attainment of wealth in a post-apartheid are part of people's desires and yearnings. Deborah Posel substantiates this point by arguing that in South Africa "there are dense historical reasons why the performance of racial identity in the present could be so closely connected to practices of acquisition" (Posel, 2010; 173).

To adequately discuss these topics, I needed a guiding framework that that not only shows the lived experience of this assessment, but also discusses the factors that influence the feasibility of that ambition. Malkki thinks of theory in practice as "repertory" (Malkki, 2007). "The intelligent use of that repertory depends on critical, always already theoretical and contextual improvisational practices that, by definition, cannot and should not be a closed set" (Malkki, 2007; 180).

As a theoretical concept that emphasises the "development of class or identity group, in the context of political/economic struggles of one kind or another", the political economic framework allows for an engagement with field notes that takes an historical, contextual perspective on migrancy and how said history feeds into the present social process and tantamount to this, how future aspirations may be affected (Ortner, 1984; 142). Earlier

works that froze ideas around culture and identity posed a unique problem for future ethnographers: how do we reconcile enlightenments found in field work that reflect nuance, shifts in mentality, and globalized identities with the older theoretical concepts that dictate the opposite? The theory cannot be insular to change and fixated with the past, but rather needs to be contextual and perpetually self-examining. During the proposal phase of this thesis and getting ready to do fieldwork, I kept recalling the statement that "*things* had changed in South Africa" after apartheid, and this statement intrigued me. *Who* are the people stating that *things* had changed, what these things are and what the factors are that can cause said *things* to change in people's subjective experiences. Rogers states that "the more perspectives one can bring to their analysis and critique, the better grasp of the phenomena one will have and the better one will be at developing alternative readings and oppositional practices"(Rogers, 2012). Economics has so often been described and affirmed as a discourse of the "future", one that can take notions of aspirations, considerations and expectations of the future and make them native to their discipline (Appadurai, 2004). Anthropology as well has a perspective to add to this and the framework of political economy adds an anthropological voice to this discussion.

Humans as social actors can be seen in many ways as holograms, projecting past experiences, forms of intersectionality's, social networks and upbringings that frame their personhood. Simultaneously they are sites for the future, future perspectives, social trajectories and ambitions. The collaboration between anthropological discourse, methodology, and a theoretical framework that puts an investigative lens on the greater structures that inform social processes is ideal for this particular research enquiry. Appadurai speaking on the capacity to aspire in Mumbai, India state that "the poor are neither simple dupes nor secret revolutionaries. They are survivors. And what they often seek strategically (even without a theory to dress it up) is to optimize the terms of trade between recognition and redistribution in their immediate, local lives."(Appadurai, 2004; 07). Ambition is political, upward mobility and the means of how people go about attaining it, are contextual. How social actors 'survive' and 'make due'

with current circumstances in this paper requires a framework that is aware of the actor's position in society and how they got there. Patrick Chabal, writing on African politics, argues that to get a "grip" people's experiences, it is through "on the ground" observation and conversation that this can be done effectively (Chabal, 2014;Oberdare & Willems, 2014). Attempting to understand the way that people try to assert their own agency simultaneously requires an understanding of the "economic, cultural and political" that abide over their everyday existence (Chabal, 2014; xiii).

1.6 Research Method

My research took place over a non-consecutive two month period. The planning of fieldwork was dependent primarily on the schedule and availability of informants. The 'participant observations' took the form of informal conversations with informants primarily in their work environment and in certain occasions, in their homes. As the bulk of my informants were employed as security guards in the apartment complex, much of my interactions involved following(and at times assisting) them as they undertook daily tasks such as helping tenants with administrative duties or reporting to their supervisors. It became habitual that I would walk with informants to the station at the end of a working day, or walking around the neighbourhood with them as they met with neighbours and friends.

A key methodological approach to this project involves the collecting of life stories Geiger states that life-stories as a fieldwork technique give the researcher "a link between experience and consciousness", particularly if this experience is layered in the socio-'politics' of the environment that the life stories take place in (Geiger, 1986; 349). I am attracted by the 'depth' that the life stories method allows for, and through using multiple life stories accounts in field work, it allows me as the researcher to see if patterns exist. Miles & Crush states that there is invariably a "narrative" structure embedded the life histories methodology (Miles & Crush, 1993).

In interacting with informants and learning of their life stories, I made use of semi-structured interviews. As it is often the case that non-probability sampling involves "few members who are scattered over a large area", I

made these interviews as detailed and long as participants will allow. Participating in their daily activities, seeing their home environments, finding out who moved with them to the city space, assessing kinship ties and looking at symbols such as clothing and photographs, assisted me in the interviews. Crapanzano highlights the imbedded subjectivity in the idea of life stories. (Crapanzano, 1984). Life stories can add depth to a research project that is looking for texture on a certain topic and not necessarily an objective 'truth' (Miles & Crush, 1993).

Henri Lefebvre describes a "rythymanalyst" as someone who has the proclivity to "listen to the world" (Lefebvre, 2004; 29). He goes on to say that as the rhythmanalysist interacts with their participants, "he should come to listen to them as a whole and unify them by taking his own rhythms as a reference."(Lefebvre, 2004; 29). I drew on Lefebvre's ideas as I conducted my own fieldwork and participant observation, applying 'thick descriptions' along with engaging with self-reflexive elements that are expected to arise in this study. In doing this, I wished to look at the intersection between structure and agency in the rhythm of everyday life, and to what extent the two speak to one another.

In doing this research I identified two types of mobility at play that require addressing. The first is the mobility of physical movement, using the life stories method to excavate how these people came to find themselves in the new environment, the new space, bearing in mind the socio-political context that their stories take place in. The second is social mobility, referring to the daily interactions between the migrants and other people in the environment they are in. Social engagements, daily activities and the like which involve methods such as Lefebvre's rythymanalysis and direct participatory fieldwork.

1.7 The Gender Gap

As I assembled my field notes, combing through them for themes and ideas which would guide this research project, there was an omission that became more glaring as I delved deeper into my data. This omission unsettled my post-fieldwork theorising and had me rethinking the thoroughness of my fieldwork engagements. My three premier informants,

Happy, Pascal and Luvo, had initially given me a feeling of assurance that I had covered a spectrum of migration experiences. Happy, having arrived from rural Eastern Cape to work in Cape Town represented an archetypical experience of internal migration in South Africa. Pascal, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, revealed the complexities of moving beyond borders, traversing both the physical and political space to self-actualize. Luvo provided the narrative of a first generation "local" in Cape Town, with both his parents arriving to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape. I felt confident in the multi-vocality of my informants and the relevance of their experiences on the power of ambition and desire. However, my fieldnotes revealed that there was an analytical fissure in the data; a gender gap. What did the lack of female informants mean for my research? Having felt as though the phenomenon of *imfuno* was myopic through a solely male-oriented lens, I had to think about whether this was true, or if the physical lack of women in my fieldwork revealed something else. I wish to interrogate the elusive gap in gender in my field notes, and also how the physical absence of women may not necessarily mean that femininity and female personhood is not covertly present in the narrative of my fieldwork. I also attempt to give rise to the implications of a fieldwork of migrancy and ambition that is without physical female presence.

As I thought back to the engagements that took place during my fieldwork, from an outsider's perspective, the research environment that I fostered could easily have been perceived as a "boy's club" and not a research enquiry that privileged the multifaceted manifestations of migrancy in 2015. The picture presented would be a male with a notepad engaging with other men, one by one, in a public space, yet that same space was socially insular and exclusive in the proxemics of how I engaged with the men. As an ethnographer I was a manifestation of the argument that the "treatment of migration as a male phenomenon and men's issues" marginalised the participation of female ethnographic perspectives on this issue (Boswell & Barbali, 2007; 142). I would like to purport that this treatment must be scrutinized by the ethnographer. Shannon Morreria argues for an 'ethics of care and engagement' when conducting fieldwork (Morreria, 2012). This type of engagement is one which observes the enormous responsibility

placed upon researchers, who are in a position of authorization to be constructing and re-constructing knowledge and particularized world-views. As she stipulates that “ethics do not play out in the abstract, but rather occur in the daily spaces where we do our work with real people, not with an essentialised Other” (Morreria, 2012; 102). The responsibility to interpret and analyse social realities from people’s daily lives is indeed a large one, and within this responsibility is an understanding where one’s intersectionality comes into debate about the construction of knowledge. Identifying as a Xhosa man speaking solely to other men, most of whom are Xhosa themselves, provides certain problematics that I wish to expand on here. The histories of male dominated spaces come with patriarchal implications, whether acknowledged or not. Listening to my informants speak about women, be it their wives, daughters, sisters or mothers, I needed to be conscientious in reminding myself that these are *their* experiences of womanhood, and that this does not represent the entire picture of these women’s realities with ambition and migrancy.

I then turned to the environment in which I was conducting my research. The apartment, located in the epicentre of Cape Town’s CBD, was the ideal, politicized space to interact with informants. Layered with the legacies of the Group Areas Act, the areas surrounding the apartment became points of discussion to see how the space influenced their desires and ambitions. The apartment, as a place of work for the informants, was layered with interactions between them and tenants, which added to the discussion. Considering the structure and work patterns of members of the apartment, I found that my fieldwork routine caused me to miss any female participants. My movements in the apartment were limited to the parking lot and the reception area as I did not live or rent space in the building. *Tatom’khulu,* the moniker given to the head of security at the apartment, only hired males to work as security guards. Females who wanted work were deployed to cleaning jobs, working in the office blocks and inside apartment rooms. Most of this cleaning would take place in the mornings and I would often arrive at the apartment in the afternoon. What this revealed was that even in a professional environment, gender roles were segregated and females were thrust into domestic roles (Dodson, 2001). The stories of the female cleaners were absent, and required me to observe how gender politics

played into the lives of my informants, and what implications came with these politics.

"In South Africa, the transition to a liberal democracy is also requiring a rethinking of migration." (Boswell & Barbali, 2007; 146). This rethinking involves the reconsideration of the male-in-city, female-at-homestead trope. Simultaneously it also requires a new conceptualisation of how the legacy of patrilineal migrancy can be inherited by first-generation 'settlers' in the urban space. Luvo, is such an individual; born and raised in Cape Town but his social rhythms are similar to those of his colleagues; people with multiple sites to pay homage to and to consider both socially and financially. During our conversations, Luvo would speak on the notion of having a woman in his live as a factor to quell his parent's anxieties about his progress as a man. Being the only child living at home in his early 30's, he expressed a desire to move out of home and start a family, not necessarily due to wanting a family, but because his contemporaries at church were doing so and he viewed it as a natural step of healthy progression. The symbolic, non-intrinsic, value that is placed on women and marriage, as crude as it may appear, is also explicable in a sense. What Luvo may have been practising in his desire to "find *umfazi*[wife]" was taking cues from his immediate environment, an environment where gender politics look a certain way, masculinity is often defined by a desire *to desire* women, if not for one's oneself, then to appease those who occupy the social network (Ramphele, 1993). One's society can dictate *imfuno* upon its social actors, forcing them to aspire what is *ought to be* aspired to, and to want what is expected to be wanted. The patriarchal undertones of seeking out a spouse for social capital within one's environment cannot be ignored. Contrasting Luvo experiences as a single male to those of Happy and Pascal, this desire is contrasted by the financially and emotionally taxing work that is involved starting a family, made harder by the multiple constraints that these men face on a daily basis.

Although my informants were male, they would often speak about the women in their lives and how they played a critical role in the construction of their social lives. Wives, daughters, mothers; my informants would elaborate on how these figures bolstered or emasculated their ambition and

desire to change their circumstances, however those participants never actually spoke but were spoken *for* . Happy lived with three women; his wife and three daughters. At the beginning of my fieldwork, his wife was unemployed; relying fully on him, a responsibility he wore proudly but knew could become problematic. Boswell and Barbali deduce that their literature and research shows “that men tend to restrict women's mobility and that women's traditional roles in childcare or care of the elderly would inhibit their migration. Women remaining at 'home'… struggled to survive in the absence of remitting male migrants.”(Boswell & Barbali, 2007; 142) A critical difference between the findings in the above literature and Happy’s situation is that Happy’s remittance does not only go far but is apportioned between his Khayelitsha family and his Eastern Cape household. The power dynamic posed by Happy being the sole breadwinner was one that could breed resentment coupled with the demanding, inconsistent work schedule of the apartment. At two different occasions Happy had promised to introduce me to his wife, stating that she would love to meet, and at both occasions he had cancelled the plans, stating “it was not the right time”. It was at this point that it became apparent that Happy spoke *for* his wife, communicating her financial and social desires. His participation in the relationship meant that I was not able to engage in her experiences of Happy’s migrancy or ask her about her personal ambitions and notions of *imfuno.* The narrative became male-mediated, and being unable to be granted access to her as an informant, left behind valuable perspectives on this social reality. My lack of access also showed the protectiveness of Happy over his family and his family’s story, a jealousy I could not disregard as a researcher.

Belinda Dodson problematizes issues around gender and voice, using South African policy on international migration “The majority of people who are asylum seekers are *young men* in their twenties who have fled African countries such as Angola, Somalia, Zaire, Liberia, Rwanda, and Ethiopia” (Dodson, 2001; 77) She continues to argue that “no explanation was offered for this gender bias…. Do these men leave behind female partners, parents, and children in their country of origin?” (Dodson, 2001; 77). Pascal, one of my primary fieldwork informants, represents the aforementioned young man who undertook the diaspora to leave the Congo to enter South

Africa, however he did not leave alone as the discussion in one of the chapter's in this paper reveals. In my fieldwork I also failed to meet Pascal's wife and in this failure was relegated to hearing only his perspectives on her experience in South Africa. Representing the young female migrant that Dodson decries policy is excluding; Pascal's lamenting discussions of her expectations of South Africa revealed how the couple reacted differently to their circumstances in the new country, as highlighted in another chapter. One of the first utterances about his wife from Pascal was that "she doesn't listen" and that she is spendthrift given their status as a one income home. *Listening*, according to Pascal meant getting a job, it meant curbing on spending, and to an extent it meant focusing on a better life for their son and not attempting to spend disposable income on luxuries. What is not revealed by Pascal, however, are whether or not these are coping mechanisms brought about by the vastly different environment that she is now faced to with. During our interactions, Pascal would reveal malaise at the lack of prosperity he was promised before arriving in South Africa. This is a prosperity he reproduced and assured his friends and loved ones as well. The prescriptive nature of how his wife should 'listen' becomes problematic when it disallows his wife any means of expressing herself in this new environment. As the breadwinner, there are power relations that complicate this dynamic of what he wants his wife to do with their (his?) money, whilst feeling like he is not doing enough to "provide". New, micro-experiential literature on migrancy has centred gender politics by "exploring ideologies, institutions and practices, households, families and generations…. [and how] how migration influences personal autonomy and parity and yields information about trans-national communities" (Boswell & Barbali, 2007; 144). The male-dominated narrative of what it is like to be "out-of-space" takes away what it must be like to be a woman in this new space, a woman who must stay at home and care for their boy. There may be a toll that it takes upon her and in ignoring it, perpetuates a male-led narrative. To account for this, I do not take Pascal's account at face-value, but rather use to elaborate on how *imfuno* manifests itself in many ways and can cause new, unforeseen behaviours in people trying to make sense of new social realities.

In her theory of performativity, Judith Butler argues that gender cannot be viewed simply as something that one is, but also as "something one *does*… a verb rather than a noun, 'doing' rather than a 'being" (Salih, 2002; 55). Even as the well-intentioned fieldworker trying to gain knowledge of the migrant experience, my behaviour was ingrained with a specific kind of masculine performance which inadvertently muffled the female narrative of migrancy. What I found when gender was presented to my informants was an expectation of the 'gender performativity' that Butler theorises. Salih elaborates on Butler by stating that gender takes the form of "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Salih, 2002; 56). When Pascal claims that his wife does not listen and acts out of turn, he is speaking to a specific framework of how wifehood should be performed, and there is a mental dissonance experienced when she behaviours otherwise. In conclusion, the lack of physical female participation provided a point of view on the ways in informant's behaviour have socially entrenched performances of gender expectations.

1.8 Conclusion

In this study, one of the questions posed is how, **within the city, informants navigate various spaces and forge place from space.** These range from spaces that informants were told they must live in, to spaces that now, in a post-apartheid arena, they are free to inhabit. Apartheid and the colonial conquest sensitised and politisized space, with the effects still experienced and felt in post-apartheid South Africa. Orli Bass, in his study of post-apartheid political narratives in Durban, calls for such a prioritisation of spatial analysis in the debate. He categorises Durban as "a palimpsest" city, in that its "[l]ayers supersede one another" and that the colonial appropriation of space left an "impression on identity, urbanity and cultural memory" (Bass, 2011; 125, 126). The post-apartheid agenda, as typified in the National Development Plan, recognises the social production of space in South Africa as imperative in ridding the country of its historical tropes. Henri Lefebvre's spatial theory attempts to work as a supporting framework to speak to how informants orientate themselves in

this new arena. The reproduction of space and its politicization makes for a dynamic and relevant merger of theory. Spatial theory works as a companion to the guiding structure of political economy. The reproduction of space(in post-apartheid South Africa) is the "battleground" for agency, where these social relations are contested and fought for; but even the existence of this space needs to be scrutinized, analysed, and the power dynamics contextualized within a history of contestation. Debates around transformation, restitution are manifestations of this contestation. Moore states that "[c]ultures are now being 'deterritorialised' and 'reterrotorialised'"(Moore, 1999; 11). Space, simultaneously like cultural activity, is being contested both in ideological and physical realms.

The National Development plan is an initiative that is attempting to undo the wrongs of the past and try to make major socio-economic changes in South Africa. The document has assessed the status quo and seen the issues that need to be fixed and addressed for the future. In a chapter entitled "Building Safer Communities", one of the aims is to create a South Africa where people "feel safe and have no fear of crime" (National Planning Commission, 2012; 63). These are lofty desires and this is seen by many as a project of ambition. The exact same can be said of my informants on a micro, lived and experiential level. Their spirit of *imfuno* reflects a lived striving to change the status quo, similarly to the NDP. This leads me to my premier research question asks **what the ambitions and self-producing mechanisms are that keep migrants pushing forward in pursuit of upward mobility in post-apartheid South Africa.** In essence, this question scrutinizes how the big influences the small, and how people try and work around the big, to make small changes, that challenge the big forces. This is why political economy works for my thesis inquest – it helps illuminate notions of agency, historical analysis, and the push and pull of power structures that influence said agency and ambitions. "Culture" doesn't take place in a vacuum, and therefore cultural analysis should not take place in a vacuum either. Culture "is a dialogue between aspirations and sedimented traditions, and in our commendable zeal for the latter at the cost of the former, we have allowed an unnecessary, harmful, and artificial opposition to emerge between culture and development."

(Appadurai, 2004; 28). To paraphrase Appadurai, culture in my discussion can also be seen is a dialogue between *imfuno* and the sedimented traditions of apartheid which have formed social realities for people. Political economy, like my thesis enquiry, is not just about the larger structures that dictate levels of agency. What is also a point of analysis here is how below the pervading frequencies of those with power and influence, what the marginalized voices are saying, and how their micro discourses around aspirations to power and agency reflect the status quo of a given society.

Chapter Two:

Home And Away:

Social Dynamics of Ambition in Post-Apartheid Migrancy

2.0 Abstract:

This chapter examines local notions of ambition and desire in a post-apartheid context through the use of space, particularly in Cape Town and the way that it informs the lives of people. Age and the lived legacy of apartheid are key themes in this chapter as informants interact with different class groups, and the difficulty of attaining their dreams is highlighted that much more by these encounters. Feasibility of post-apartheid desires for migrants who lived through the struggle hoping for a different social reality also falls as the main focus of this chapter. The chapter also examines concepts of social consignment and negotiation as people need others to accomplish and realise their desires.

2.1 Introduction

It was December 2014 and I was rushing from my car to the lobby. I was on my way to meet friends on the fourth floor with a plastic bag filled with groceries. As I walked in, I saw him smiling, watching. I felt an urge to greet, and his congenial hello ended my haste, starting a brief interaction that made me curious about his story. We spoke about what it was like to work as a security guard, and he shared jokes about how foreign tenants would be startled that he could speak English "so well". On a superficial level, he seemed to enjoy his job even though it came with much administration. His optimistic charm was disarming, his candid nature engaging, and from that encounter I got the sense that there was more to this man and his life as a security guard to the wealthy of Cape Town. As I said goodbye, and told him that I would see him next week perhaps, he told me that he would be in the Eastern Cape. "I have two homes bra" he said with a smile and a shrug. In that moment I knew that I had found my first informant for my dissertation. As I said goodbye, he responded, saying "*Enkosi Bhuti*". Thank you, young man.

In an earlier chapter, I had mentioned that one of the research inquiries of this ethnography was exploring how the narrative of migrancy was inherited, embodied and permeated into current-day South Africa. If the rhythm of my grandfather's generation had been the cyclical movement from rural to urban, instituted and normalized under apartheid law, my curiosity lay in what this dynamic would look like for people who transitioned between one political epoch to another in their lifetime. Maria Pandolfi argues that

"identity is defined by historical social structures that inscribe the body and naturalize a person's existence in the world"(Low, 2003;11)(Pandolfi, 1990). The informants that I interacted with during my fieldwork exist with dual perspectives of identity, one as defined by the denigrating system of apartheid, the other build around a 'new' South Africa that avows freedom and prosperity. These informants, particularly 'Happy' Mavakali with whom I spent the most time with engaging on this duality, reflected the how desire and respectability adjusted as new opportunities in a democratic South Africa beckoned.

This chapter explores the complex experiences of post-apartheid migrants and how *imfuno* in Cape Town with all its history, politics and opportunities is navigated. In my fieldwork, I engage with informants such as Happy, as he attempts to actualize various versions of himself, as a marathon runner, as a business man, a father and a husband.

2.2 Neither Here There

I see him walk into the apartment lobby, eyes transfixed on his iPhone, taking slow, clumsy steps as he types furiously. He looks up in what is similar to a blind-spot check before he collides into the reception desk. “All’s well?” he asks the men behind the desk as they stare at him swipe fervently at the phone screen. Pleasantries are exchanged as one of the men, Pascal, hands him a parcel from one of the many drawers of the desk. Happy smiles eagerly and nods. The man looks up for long enough for me to able to take in his face; light stubble, tired, blood-shot eyes, a face that appears to smile only under duress . He thanks the men and mechanically returns back to attention; eyes-to-screen. He takes a measured gait towards to the lift. Happy turns to me with a rapt smile, “*LaChap* [Colloquialism for a male] is a hustler. He lives here and in Europe, and travels back-and-forth, *nje* doing business, logistics”. ‘Another migrant labourer’, I think to myself. Travelling back-and-forth between Cape Town and a European country that Happy is not sure of. I ask Happy what the man's name is. "Josh". Josh the migrant. I silently wonder if Happy notices see the similarities, or is it just the differences he focuses on.

In Fiona Ross's ethnography, *Raw Life, New Hope,* one of the interviewees, speaking on her fear of having her Eastern Cape relatives come visit, objects vehemently to their arrival, stating that "[they] do not know that I live like this"(Ross, 2010; 22). This statement represents a spatial hierarchy where the environment that someone is ought to belong to is contrasted to the space that they currently occupy (Lefebvre, 1991). The sentiments expressed by this interviewee, more subtly and covertly, speak to expectations of a certain 'performance' that migrants have to fulfil when they are out of the homestead. *Imfuno*, ambition and desire may be personally crafted and designed, but they are publicly critiqued and scrutinized. During our conversations about his family back in the Eastern Cape, Happy would often uses phrases such as "We must sacrifice bra" and "*kunzima* [it is hard]". These fretful musings about his situation in Cape Town represent a burden about how much is required of him in Cape Town and that this 'performance' can be quantified. His thoughts on the homestead are often coupled with fiscal calculations about how much of his salary needs to be sent back home. Social and emotional ties take a backseat to the financial stress that comes with supporting two households essentially, constantly calculating remittance with each salary. On one of my visits to the apartment, I found Happy less amiable and more pensive, an emotional switch-up which immediately indicated to me that something was wrong. He would fake smiles and force laughs, but on that day, his rest position was stern, filled with malaise. "*Kunzima* bra" his usual refrain, came thick, weighted and heavily from his pursed lips. He explained that his eldest son, Asthandile, had contracted a heavy chest infection and money was needed for medicine and hospital fees. Happy revealed that he would need to add R600 to the usual R1200 that he sends home on a monthly basis, crippling him for the month of April. Adding to the frustration was that he had asked me to look at weddings rings online for him and his fiancé. As the situation stood now, those plans needed to be put on the back-burner, amongst other more pressing plans. As he spoke about the unplanned costs that unsettled his intentions, it became apparent to me that as a satellite primary breadwinner, the weight caused by (two types of) dependents becomes a complex dynamic to manage for two reasons. The first is that the weight for 'performance' can take on such a heavy financial

toll that the emotional bonds may wither to bear that toll for dependents far away. Happy spoke at great, meticulous length about his son's health situation, and all of it was centred on money. In-between what was present in his discussion, the absences were just as revealing. Happy did not, at any stage, express worry about whether his son would feel better or that he wished he were there for him during his ailing. He appeared hardened, emotionally sterile, not out of desire, but perhaps out of necessity. As a primary breadwinner so far away, the financial transfer to the homestead becomes a proxy for the physical, emotional connection that is harder to maintain over such strained, wrought proxemics. This transfer acts as both a symbolic and physical representation for the performance for Happy and potentially other migrants negotiating the complexities of this socio-economic market.

The 'performance' for the homestead is consistently in tension with the performance with the work-space, the day-to-day home. Limited resources put limitations on one's actions. When he has to send extra money to his son, these actions impacts deposits that he had wanted to make on rings for a November wedding. He had intended to make consistent deposits into his savings account for the next months to be able to buy his fiancé her desired ring. The extra remittance back to the Eastern Cape also proved detrimental to another investment that he had in Cape Town. His usual running shorts had been torn weeks earlier and he had plans to replace them so he could properly train to participate in an upcoming marathon. Happy made no secret of the fact that maintaining running as a hobby was costly; from the running tights, slim fit vest, nutritional supplements, to the running shoes that needed to be kept in tandem with various spares, the activity often required disposable income. Granted, some of the running enthusiasts of the apartment, such as man named Garren, would provide Happy with some equipment (or at times money for it), but this was not a regular occurrence nor where they reliable to follow through if they would make a verbal offer of charity. This particular financial setback had impinged on two vital aspects of Happy's Cape Town life; his marital plans and his running ambitions. There would be other financial disruptions during my field visits, and not only from the Eastern Cape, but issues in

Cape Town that would cause disruption to how much he was able to send back home on a particular month. Earlier in the month, Happy had been attacked in Khayelitsha, with his phone being stolen and other belongings he did not elaborate on. Due to the fact that having a phone was such a necessity in his job as it helped him effectively organise shifts with co-workers and communicate with his fiancée should happen something at work, he had to replace it immediately. His family in Eastern Cape was sent less money that month, and this troubled him greatly as 'new needs' were developing back home .As much as working in Cape Town provides Happy with constant, predictable income that he can send back to his family, it also provides clear tensions and unanticipated harms. His interests in running and wanting to start a new household in Cape Town comes at certain costs and a clear conflict emerges between with his initial impetus to provide for his homestead family and his work-space desires. During our many conversations, when Happy utters the phrase "we must sacrifice bra" , it feels that he is not just speaking to me, or himself for that matter, but rather statement holds weight to livelihoods of many people, far away in location, but intricately linked in dependence on this one man, who is neither here nor there.

2.3 The Running Man: Limitations and Social Consignment in Ambition and Desire

"To exclude Africans from permanent settlement in town, the White rulers organized asphyxiating legal repressive structures. To understand this process, one must grasp the objective socio-economic processes to which man is subject in society and the effect of the objective facts on the consciousness of individuals in their everyday existence"(Magubane, 1973; 1702)

In 'Homes Apart', Anthony Lemon identifies three phases that "may be identified in the development of urban policy and practice in South Africa" (Lemon, 01; 1991). The colonial conquest ushered the development of a so-defined 'metropolitan area' that became an economical meeting point between traders, a hub; a marketplace. During this period demarcations

were made between who may live where, spatial dictations were made such as the actions taken by Jan Van Riebeeck in the 1600's to create a “physical barrier by planting a hedge to separate” Africans and Khoi-San from entering after various conflicts (Cook, 1991; 27). From this primary settler’s period, the construction of space became a highly politicized, racialized process which, centuries before, set the structure of how the apartheid city would look. Cook goes on to postulate that the city of Cape Town had the “dubious distinction of being the first city in which homes of African residents were deliberately separated from those of other citizens” (G.P Cook, 1991; 27).

If the ideology of those in power can clearly be reflected in law, then the Natives Areas Act (1923) “marked the beginning of the conscious nationwide pursuit of urban segregation,” (Lemon, 1991; 01). During this period, Cook reveals that Africans “faced a deliberate policy of exclusion” (Cook, 1991; 27). The demography and spatial appropriation set the tone for what would decades of structural violence. “Coloured people, who made up 54 per cent of the population were only allocated 27 950 hectares [of urban space] while 75 213 hectares” was set aside for White occupants who made up less than 30 per cent of the population. The increasingly stringent rules on movement placed on indigenous Africans accentuated the policy of exclusions, as “African residents required exemption to live outside the location” and enter the above mentioned metro pole (Cook, 1991; 29).

The third phase which solidified the maxim of building cities on exclusion was the Group Areas Act (1950), a law which instituted micro-structures within individual municipalities that streamline and instilled the plan for spatial segregation. “For over 30 years the full range of control measure was used against African residents of Cape Town” (Cook, 1991; 30)

The consideration of spatial inequity enforced in law extended itself to the notion of Black bodies as not only replaceable but also set in law that the presence of non-Whites as an inconvenient hindrance to the institutional status-quo. “The job market [was] very precarious and limited but also enabled business to employ Africans until sufficient Coloured labour was available” (Cook, 1991; 30). Lemon cites statements and decree such as the “native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are

essentially the White man's creation" to serve the needs of the White man(Cook, 1991; 30) The institutionally nonchalant yet operationally rigid disregard for Black bodies laid above nourishes post-apartheid inequities experienced by my fieldwork informants Happy and Pascal.
"Construction of houses in Gugulethu adjacent to Langa started in 1956 but removals continued every year for five years." Cook continues to say that "11 222 Africans were evicted from Windermere … and another 1 240 were made homeless by closing the Simonstown location"(Cook, 1991; 30). Statistics such as these about the Group Areas Act reveal the offhand, ill-considered formation of the urban space. The biggest issue at hand in this edition is the inefficiency of the apartheid system and not the people affected by it; the human lives affected by the structural violence. This is a critique that has its limits as Lemon's edited volume is a more of a quantitative endeavour. There is, however, something more to these figures besides providing value for antiapartheid apologists. These numbers are much deeper that, they furthermore reflect social lives, families, livelihoods. People with names, nicknames whose activity in this political economical denigration in this structure is still spoken about *today*, long after these laws have been repealed. Lemon states that the through his research it "became clear that the Group Areas Act can no longer be effectively enforced" and that Apartheid government's actions will continue to affect urban futures"(Lemon, Cook, 1991; 205, 207).

One of my earlier fieldwork encounters with Happy occurred as his shift was ending. As we were speaking, I see him disappear into one of the storage rooms. I fiddled with my phone and minutes later he emerges dressed in running gear. I asked whether he plans to run when he returns back home, and whether it would not be too dark. "I'm running to *eGugulethu mfethu*" he says coolly as he jogs slowly on the spot, as though no one would think that statement bizarre. I watch in equal measure of awe and bemusement how Happy, a man who had just completed an arduous twelve-hour shift, still possesses the zest and zeal to run from the nucleus of Cape Town's business district to Gugulethu, a space which is often described as archetypal of the "political and economic" exclusion that the Black body experienced during apartheid (Ramphele, 1993). Scholars,

politicians and urban planners profess that “the shadow of apartheid planning will be evident in the geography of the city for years to come” (Lemon, 1991; 207). Happy’s act of running through these disparate, politicized spaces became a theme throughout our encounters.

As Happy tightens his shoelaces, stretches limberly, gathers his belongings and puts them in his backpack, he explains his process. “There are times when I don’t feel like taking the train *yabona*? Or sometimes I don’t have taxi fare“. He zips up his backpack and swings it over his left shoulder and looks over to me. “*andiqali ke yazi* [This isn’t my first time doing this you know]”. This act of running home exhibited freedom and agency; Happy taking charge of his movement in a very subtle way. His desire to run counteracts in many ways the harsh, stringent laws that limited the movement of Black bodies in the city in the past. By literally running the city, Happy is not at the mercy of the train system or the taxi’s that are going to his home, but rather chooses to run to Gugulethu and will decide himself whether or not to take a train from there to Khayelitsha or run further. As he finished explaining, I realised that he could have asked Pascal, Luvo, or any other of his colleagues for the shortfall transport fare, but chose not to.
Running and marathons are one of the saving graces of Happy’s job and daily life as he himself professes. The man who once said “I live running” takes what those around him consider to be a mere hobby and uses it as a psychological instigator to push him in his daily, wearisome routines. His running acts as a symbol of his *imfuno;* showing just how much he wishes to differentiate himself from the pack and forge his own path.
Tomlinson argues that people "have a tendency to imitate others in their environment, whether it be their parents or …other people with similar habits appear to be clustering together on predictable class-lines"(Tomlinson, 2003; 109). As Happy said his goodbyes and appears ready to go on his journey before the sun sets, I ask him whether he always runs the route alone and he nods contemplatively. “The one time I went on a run with uGarren [one of the tenants of the apartment] and he turned around at 10k and *mna* I went to eGugulethu”. I became curious where exactly on the course Garren turned back and whether Garren and Happy appreciated just how different their reasons for running were. Referring to

Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical model, Mark Tomlinson states that there is empirical data to suggest that "different classes exhibit different lifestyles that in some sense reflect their class position in society due to differing levels of social, economic, and cultural Capital"(Tomlinson, 2003; 97) Garren would move from the CBD to areas like Woodstock and then return back to the heart of the city, leaving Happy to run further away, closer to Khayelitsha, the periphery. Both men are the exercising, but for vastly different reasons, as shown by their differing lengths and also where they end up on the map of the city. "Enkosi Bhuti, but I must go now". He said his final goodbyes and I watched him run through the apartment doors, looking left, then right, and jogging into the street.

Writing on the complexity of identity in Africa, Nyamnjoh argues that in order to understand “agency in Africa…calls for a recognition of how African societies have creatively negotiated and synthesised the different historical influences on them into a new reality”(Nyamnjoh, 2002; 2) Happy had had no interest in running earlier on in his life, but this would soon change in 2008 when he worked as a gardener for a family in Newlands. He would often cite them as mentors of his, as the people who ushered the beginnings of his running career. They had hoped it would be a positive hobby for him which would keep away from the “bad habits” that their previous gardeners had, as Happy put it. The way in which Happy speaks of the ways in which he came to start running reflects the interconnected nature of his past but also the particular history of his former employees who were in a position to dictate what this hobby could do for him – leading him away from “bad habits” of their previous township dwelling gardeners. What started off as a hobby, running a few kilometres between work shifts occasionally, became recreational as Happy became more adept and fanatical. He eventually took part in the Cape Peninsula Marathon in 2010, with his employees sponsoring his equipment and the registration. “They believed in uHappy *bra,*” he proclaimed. He would often speak in the third person when expressing a comment made about him that he took pride in. This was a belief instilled in him that he appeared to want to live up to, typified in the way that his home is set up; running certificates, medals and pictures of his fiancée and children at marathon finish lines embellish his

living room cabinet. Happy is the type of person to exhibit his ambition, take his *imfuno* and speak it loudly into existence.

Whenever the topic of his running arose, Happy spoke of it not only as a passion, but as symbolic of how it differentiated him from his surroundings and what was expected from 41 year old Xhosa men living in Khayelitsha. In the fieldwork engagements I had with both him and his environment, Happy stands as a firm exception to Tomlinson's theory of imitability(Tomlinson, 2003). Instead he attempts, with his running, to display an association with habits that are unfamiliar with his immediate environment. I recall a tangent that our conversation went to that same evening that he asserted running as his passion. As we conversed late into the evening, the topic of alcohol would arise, as it had prior to our in our engagements. He says to me “6 December 1991”. 6 December 1991; the last time he had ever taken a drink. He says it earnestly, his face still with the conviction of a man who has not questioned his decision since he made it. He cites the circumcision ritual and his father’s alcoholism as a reason for this. Happy was born in 1974, and as he told me, I could not think of a single Eastern Cape Xhosa man in his 40’s that I know who [claims he] does not drink. He is visibly proud of his abstinence and says that the Newlands family he worked for as a gardener lauded him as the first gardener to not drink, a badge he wears proudly. Running, as I notice through my conversations with Happy, falls not only within the category of asserting pockets of agency within his daily rhythms, but also reflects a passion that he expresses proudly and differentiates him from others with similar rhythms,. Mamphela Ramphele, speaking to oft-perceived notions of helplessness amongst apartheid migrant labourers in the outposts of alterity argues that it is, “however, important to not lose sight of the fact that the majority of migrant dwellers are peace-loving people who [have] developed creative strategies to cope with the limitations of their social reality” (Ramphele, 1993; 01). When Happy professes that he “lives running” there’s something more nuanced being reflected there than him just enjoying the act of running. The way in which he arranges the passion of marathon running is that he appropriates it as *his* lifestyle and centralises *it*. He does not prioritise the strenuous twelve hour shifts that he works behind the desk, not the seventy-minute train rides in carriages packed to

the brim with people each hoisting their own social, financial stresses and pressures. His running puts subordinate the pressures he receives from friends in Site B, Khayelitsha who would often approach him on the street to join them at the bar or modified backyard *skokiaans*. Running works as such a “creative strategy”, sequestering and isolating himself from his social reality, and creating a new passion from within the socio-political structure that he is located in. Happy's running evokes the notion "there are many forms of resistance not recognized in orthodox revolutionary strategy"(Gordimer, 1984;Comaroff, 1985; 05). This personal motivational tool that pushes him to cast aside the feelings of alterity and denigration is his spirit of *imfuno* that guides him. Happy’s attitude exemplifies these strategies used by people to make meaning in the political economy that they are placed in. During our conversations, there would often be moments which revealed how his passions were often linked to other social networks, a reliance on others for him to carry out his passion at times proved problematic.

Happy is a man that appears aware that his passion can become quite costly; the regular upkeep of running equipment and registrations for tournaments is a burden he knows well. Due to this, he would often show noble deference and appreciation to Garren and other members of the apartment who would donate their equipment to him and further encourage his running ambition. It was one day that it became more apparent that this relationship with donors from the apartment could become paternalistic and result in tensions.

Happy relayed such a story of resentment in the pursuit of his passion. Garren, his occasional running mate, was meant to run the Two Oceans marathon but due to an injury, he could not participate. Since he had already registered for the marathon, he decided to give Happy his registration as a gift. “He came just to me and told me it was mine *bra*,” To change the holder of a registration ticket, both Happy and Garren were required to go to the Cape Town Convention Centre to log in the change.

As the weeks progressed and the race neared, Happy noticed Garren becoming distant, aloof as he passed the reception area. “*Watshintsha lotsotsi bra* [this man just changed]” Happy said as he shook his head,

becoming crestfallen again as if the event he was describing was happening again. When Happy tried to remind Garren during registration week he “snapped at him”, saying that Happy had disrespected his girlfriend and that he would not give him the ticket. As Happy and I discussed this, it was the fact that Garren was fully aware that the registration fee was too expensive for Happy, and that it seemed as though Garren used it as a tool of spite, that left Happy flummoxed and “hurt”. The tension between what had been established as a relationship of ‘helping out’ from Garren’s side through gifting Happy with old kits and running shoes had lob-sided power relations and at any point of Garren’s choosing could label Happy as ungrateful. “H*ay*i *uright bra*, we’ll leave it *bra*” Happy reflected at the end of his discussion. This statement displayed a resignation from Happy’s end, resigning to the power dynamic that exists between wealthy and poor, between patron and beneficiary, tenant and security guard. It was yet another dynamic that he needed to negotiate in this space where his desires were subservient to the will of others. As a 41 year old who works such lengthy, unpredictable shifts and has a family to support, his participation in his passion is limited. Partaking in the marathons is not limited merely to class, but it is clearer in observing Happy’s situation that upward mobility affords certain privileges to the wealthier, and that Happy required certain a level of wealth to fully express himself in this desired passion independently.

Happy’s willingness to be mentored and receive donations from his former employees, Garren and other tenants at the Apartment reflect a power trope that persists within the post-apartheid narrative. This is a narrative that emphasises that township-dwelling Black residents who wish to gain entrance into various social networks or structures are still in many instances reliant on the charity or consignment of the White upwardly mobile. This consignment can be abstract, such as Happy’s former employers who merely spoke faith into Happy and gave him the belief that he could indeed engage in marathon running effectively. This consignment can also be clearly defined and accounted for, such as the financial, physical transfers of running equipment that various people have gifted Happy. This ‘upwardly mobile consignment’ motif revealed itself in a dually

literal and metaphorical form when Happy needed Garren to be physically present so that he could sign over his two Oceans registration ticket. Happy needed Garren to allow him to enter this network of participants as it was beyond Happy's realm of command. Nyamnjoh argues that agencies of individuals cannot be viewed in a vacuum, but are rather mediated by the social, economic and historical context of these societies (Nyamnjoh, 2002). Happy's *imfuno* is reliant upon the will of others; his "creative strategy" cannot be successful unless he is assisted by eternal sources. Daily, he finds holes and crevices that allow him to enter this social network with the consignment of others, even if the entrance itself is transient.

Running as a passion and a way to motivate oneself and aspire differently from one's context is unique

to Happy but the underlying principle, however, is not. There may be a miscellany of other recreations and passions that a previously marginalised people could wish to realise in the post-apartheid realm. *Imfuno* manifests itself in different ways and hence the way in which people focus their energies will such. In the discussion of post-apartheid migrancy, Happy's testimony is a testimonial to the idea that the wants and desires of the marginalized are still linked heavily to those in power and that this speaks to the tropes of race relations in South Africa. The deep-seated power inequity influences the way in which people not only perceive their aspirations and desires, but themselves. Happy's testimony here represents many others like him whose identity is still largely "defined by historical social structures"(Low, 2003; 11).

2.4 *Imfuno* and Age

Happy once said to me that he is "in love with proving people wrong". He states that few people believe that a 41 year old from Khayelitsha can run and finish the Comrades marathon. This is one of Happy's grand passions, and holds completing it as the holy grail of his pursuit of road-running.

The following week I had returned to see Happy appearing more pensive. Our encounter this week is one that is fixated with dates and backward-looking considerations. As we sit in that dark, sparsely lit complex

reception, with the sun about to set; he ponders for a while again on the Two Oceans marathon that he wished he could have participated in. The thought of participating makes him both excited and nostalgic; a nostalgia which has him lamenting for not having started running ten years earlier.

In many ways, Happy's difficulty in gaining entrance to the elusive network that allows him to participate in marathons with full agency is coupled by his age. In many ways his regret in starting earlier may also be restated as a yearning to not have been "discovered" earlier in life as someone with running potential. He would often reminisce on his age during our conversations; not in the romantic sense that valorises youth and one's achievements, but more subtly, in a manner that creates an 'alternate' history and lives through it. "If I was 20 years younger *bra*" would often be his catch-phrase during times of frustration with the status quo.

When Happy speaks of his ambition, he attests that it was only in later years that he became aware of the ways in which he could increase his wealth and change his financial circumstances. Working at the apartment and witnessing the all the (potential) work opportunities that the tenants often promise him, he becomes more single-minded to try pursue them. By pursuing them, however, he is also risking two households' potential incomes and this weighs heavily upon him. By wishing to be "twenty years younger" as he often does, he would have had no children (Happy's eldest son is eighteen years old) and been able to participate and take more risks. The consideration of age must also be seen relative to the aforementioned "mentors" that Happy engages with. The paternalistic relationship he has with Garren is also underscored by the fact that both men are in their late thirties, early forties. Happy being subservient to the will and charity of someone so close to his age requires a humbling that can be both frustrating and demeaning. Being the eldest of all the security guards, Happy observes that majority of the tenants of the apartment are his age, and finds himself in many ways playing "catch-up". If he was in his twenties, this mentorship dynamic might look and feel different to Happy. The dynamic between the two men reveals the unequal histories experienced by the two men, and how these manifest themselves in

different ways in Happy's life, one of which is the tendency to day dream for an alternate reality. This alternate reality requires not only a younger Happy, but also a Happy that existed in a regime that encouraged his ambition, validated his *imfuno* and provided him the same opportunities as the likes of Garren.

Happy's nostalgia reveals itself to desire more than just for youth and young manhood, but wants a different set of opportunities from the beginning; a different history.

2.5 Conclusion:

"*Uzobona bra.* You'll see bra. They believe in *uHappy*, I won't disappoint them." Few words encapsulate Happy's spirit like these. This is his philosophical adage, a mantra which frames and dictates his *imfuno*. Happy is the Running Man, defining himself through the hobby-turned-passion. Marathon running requires stamina and a grand vision that affects one's short-term efforts. In those moments where he is running, be it in the Cape Peninsula Marathon or on an afternoon with Garren, those power relations fall away and it is just about the competition. Happy is a fellow runner, and not a subordinate, or someone who travels an hours to work a graveyard shift.

I mentioned in an earlier chapter that *imfuno* is as idealistic as it is political. Happy is a man that observes that he is at the receiving end of a dehumanising political system. Throughout his life he worked as a gardener, as a miner and now as a security guard. All of these jobs were designed by a colonial government to not only limit the upward mobility of indigenous Africans, but also as an attempt to limit the very psychology of what they could be in society (Lemon, 1991). He is not alone and his stories of trying to breakthrough a psychological and political barrier are part of the experience of millions of other South Africans trying to disentangle themselves from an old regime. Happy has lived half of his life in this system, and for him to still have the belief that he can change his social reality, whether he can or not, is a feat of the mind,the spirit of *imfuno.*

Chapter Three:

Crossing Borders:

Foreign Politics in Negotiating Ambition and Desire

3.0 Abstract:

This chapter discusses the notions of aspiration and ambition as intra-continental politics come into the fray of everyday social relations. Ideas around hear-say, social capital, and intricate networks formed across borders, inform people's ideas of where their *imfuno* can best be realised. The chapter also attempts to articulate on the fluidity of *imfuno*; how the same emotional yearning can manifest itself in a set of different behaviours, calling actors to different forms of action. The political landscape in 2015 of the xenophobic attacks and global migrant crisis reflected larger issues around national gatekeeping, and this chapter uses the accounts of a Congolese migrant, Pascal, as a touchstone of the everyday politics of the cross-border quest for upward mobility.

3.1 Introduction: African Desire and Expectation of Upward Mobility

During a speech to UCT students in 2010, Former President Thabo Mbeki implored the continental citizens of Africa to rebuild Carthage; an ancient, pre-colonial empire that flourished as a political and financial polestar (Mbeki, 2010). Through the use of metaphor, Mbeki was in essence

advocating for a contemporary ideological shift which privileged Africanism, putting secondary the individual's states of origin. The postcolonial process, however, has created distinct lines of who belongs where and through this, and in those lines, vast inequities are clearer to observe and articulate (Ferguson, 1999). National identity has become politicized, stratified and commoditized, and the result of this makes the Africanist utopia of Carthage that much harder to attain.

In the South African discourse of xenophobia, violence is often discussed as the main theme of trans-national dynamics. This could be the physical violence inflicted on foreign bodies or the looting and incendiarism of objects owned by foreigners. What is not often articulated in such discussions around xenophobia is the intimate relationship between violence and fear. Fear, as insecurity, can easily morph and take the form of violence as a way to protect what people define as their 'own' (Coates, 2015). Governmental socialization produced decades of sensitizing and politicizing space, creating a hyper-awareness of borders and jurisdiction that feeds into said fear. When one's allotted environment is perceived to be under threat from an 'other' who was never granted clearance in that space, then that fear can manifest itself in a multiplicity of violence's. As I went about my fieldwork I realised that space and belonging are themes in South African social dynamics that are currently prevalent not just in trans-national dynamics, but also amongst residents of the same city. Nyamnjoh argues that ideas around "juridico-political citizenship as articulated nationally is often challenged at local and regional levels by claims of autochthony and indigeneity," (Nyamnjoh, 2013; 107). Belonging is political, and perpetually in negotiation as people try to forge dignity and respect where they live. *Imfuno*, desire and ambition are not insular concepts, but rather people will seek them out where they reckon their chances of self-actualisation are most likely. In this context, the quest of *imfuno* occurs amongst "contested notions of citizenship and belonging in a context of complex postcolonial politics of rights and entitlements" (Nyamnjoh, 2013; 107).

In Chinua Achebe's novel, *A Man of the People* (1966)*,* these very discourses of social change and aspirational claim are scrutinized and brought to the fore. During one of the later chapters in which a political rally

is held at the home of the protagonist, Odili Samulu, one of the elders of the village of Urua takes the floor and gives a speech that reflected the spirit of expectation and desire that had arisen in post-independence Nigeria;

'I want to thank the young man for his beautiful words,' he said. 'Every one of them has entered my ear. I always say that what is important nowadays is no longer age or title but knowledge. The young man clearly has it and I salute him. There is one word he said which entered my ear more than everything else---not only entered but built a house there. I don't know whether you others heard it in the same way as I did. That word was that our own son should go and bring our share.' There was great applause from the crowd. 'That word entered my ear. The village of Anata has already eaten, now they must make way for us to reach the plate. No man in Urua will give his paper to a stranger when his own son needs it; if the very herb we go to seek in the forest now grows at our very back yard are we not saved the journey? We are ignorant people and we are like children. But I want to tell our son one thing: He already knows where to go and what to say when he gets there; he should tell them that we are waiting here like a babe cutting its first tooth: anyone who wants to look at our new tooth should know that his bag should be heavy. Have I spoken well?' (Achebe, 1966; 116)

This particular excerpt shows how the pursuit of *imfuno* relies on social networks, hear-say, and an ability to replicate methods that brought others success. The novel as a whole also communicates the personal yearning that people tend to have after an oppressive political regime ends, and is replaced with a new government that assures restructure and reform for the underclass. Focusing on the post-apartheid activities of the former struggle veteransturned government administrators, Deborah Posel elaborates on this idea of expectation and desire after a revolution. She argues that, as one ANC politician postulated that the “struggle against apartheid was, in part, a struggle not just to transcend poverty, but to become rich; that freedom was expressed, in part, in acquisition” (Posel, 2010; 158). This expectation can easily become wrought with angst and frustration when not

actualized, resulting in a cognitive dissonance that juxtaposes imagined realities with a lack of practical realization. Guy Arnold, writing on institutional change in South Africa, says that “coming to terms with changes that are agreed to as just in theory is very different from doing so when implementation forces people to alter their lifestyles”(Arnold, 2000; 12).

The key themes of my interactions, conversations and engagements with my informants revolved around what was held in stock for the future. What did a democratic South Africa have to offer, what opportunities did Cape Town have that they could take advantage of, and what purpose did they find in their jobs? In my discussions, it became clearer that a democratic South Africa does not just hold opportunities for South Africans. The conversations were a symbiosis of the political and existential. My enquiry into how *imfuno*, a person's deep desires and ambition, drives them, pushes them, is entangled with the socio-political changes that occur in society, and attracts others from other environments, adding trans-national politics to the myriad of social dynamics being negotiated. Pascal, arriving from the Congo to South Africa almost a decade ago, has many such desires which both motivate and cause him a great deal of anxiety. This chapter details the ways in which transnationalism and inter-Africanist dynamics are contested daily. Pascal’s testimony became symbolic of the hopes and expectations of arriving in South Africa from the outside, and attempting to manage these “complex postcolonial politics of rights and entitlement” (Nyamnjoh, 2013). His *imfuno* adjusted with each field visit I made, revealing the fluidity of desire and want in this precarious realm. Whether minified or expansive, I found that the goals would change with the moods of all the informants, but regardless of magnitude, Pascal and others like him that I encountered expressed a desire to ‘eat’, just like the character in the Achebe novel, and they held their plates firmly with both hands.

3.2 Distant Crossings

As I entered the doors of the apartment that greyscale, overcast afternoon, Pascal appeared bored; there was hardly a tenant in sight to smile or wave

at as he cut an isolated figure behind the reception desk. We exchanged pleasantries, commenting on the upcoming winter and the like. It was the first time that he and I had the opportunity to sit alone together and engage, free from agitated tenants and banter with the other security guards. Pascal possessed a lanky frame, standing centimetres taller than most that stood next to him. He leaned forward as he spoke and hardly made eye contact, smiling occasionally to emphasise a point about the beauty of Kinshasa or the pride he felt on his wedding day.

As we both became more comfortable, Pascal spoke more on his history and how exactly he came to live in South Africa. After graduating with an Engineering degree, which he later asserted was in Computer engineering as opposed to the Mechanical that he had told me initially, Pascal wanted to travel around southern Africa. He was then convinced by a friend, Roderick, to become a stone dealer in Zambia. He is vague about how successful this venture was but he says that he spent a total of three months in Zambia, partially as a stone dealer and partially as a miner on the Copperbelt. After this he tells me that he travelled from Zambia to Tanzania, through to Malawi and then finally to Johannesburg six months later, *in 2008*. He describes these adventures as a combination of “scary” and “fun”. As he speaks, he pauses often, either from the language barrier of being a third language English speaker or having to mentally travel back to a certain period in his life. He expresses regret about leaving Zambia, claiming that he and Roderick were “making good money” there. Roderick would arise often in our conversations, and became a symbol of what lay back home, a nostalgia for an environment that made Pascal question why he was still in South Africa.

I realise that there is a vague nature to his way of recounting stories, changing details and highlights between field visits. During my first conversation with him he told me that the journey from the Congo to South Africa was a more direct and urgent one as his family relied on him. Now, however, his travels are framed by him as more leisurely and wanderlust. After Johannesburg, he then travelled to Durban to see “an old friend” from “back home”. He says that for the month that he was in Durban he was alarmed by the fiscal leaps and bounds that his Congolese expatriates had

made in South Africa. Seeing their success was the critical factor that made him definitively decide that he would remain in South Africa. He set off to join his sister in Cape Town. As I heard this augmented version of the story, I recall feeling bothered by his new approach to storytelling, as it felt more animated and gesticulatory this time around.

Looking at his journey and trajectory, Pascal's testimony would often reveal desires to make something of (and for) himself in faraway places. I mentioned in the introduction that the spirit of *imfuno* is often privileged when it involves people leaving their immediate contexts to find success elsewhere. Pascal displays a more urgent, easily piqued desire to change his circumstances, a desire that is quick to change its mind regarding the fruitfulness of a venture. His itinerary after leaving the Congo highlights this; switching between starting a business and working as a miner and then traveling throughout sub-Saharan Africa and eventually deciding to settle in South Africa after seeing the "successes" being made by his friends. Pascal will be the first to admit that he worked in a rush to make more money, reacting to an internal clamour that urged him to strategize, and change his immediate situation (Appadurai, 2004). The manner in which he spoke about his Congolese compatriots in South Africa both excited him – "They are making here man!", and simultaneously added pressure for him to fulfil his *imfuno* "I can't go back home until I do something too". The variables that he would face upon settling in South Africa would test his very desire and the personal wager that he had made with himself to stay away, until he *made* a way.

3.3 The Gamble of *Imfuno* Across Borders

Over the course of my engagement with my informants, notions around spatial hierarchy bring attention to the prevalence of a certain dissonance between the homestead and work environment. The work space in this ethnography refers to the to-and-fro journey that informants make between their houses and work on a daily basis. Lindell (2009) problematizes the "dichotomous" perception of the global and local environments, often thought of as separate and distinct to one another. She argues that the "geographical scale suggest alternative conceptions that depict scales as

mutually constituted, relational [and] contingent upon the practices of the social actors"(Lindell, 2009; 123). Pascal once said to me that he “lives *here*, but life is *there*”. Using this seemingly antithetical statement, he details his attempts to familiarise the local, whilst not becoming detached from his ‘actual’ home in Congo. Pascal's *imfuno,* and the factors his success hinges on, is his ability to be ‘glocal’; to strategize within his immediate environment whilst considering the larger networks that influence his everyday experiences (Lindell, 2009).

In an article in which he analyses two different letters written by two different Africans, both calling for attention from ‘first world’ countries such as Belgium and the United States, James Ferguson analyses the global society. In his discussion, he scrutinises the way in which power dynamics can crystallize in a world with interconnected politics and historical patterns. Ferguson posits that both letters “make implicit claims to the rights of a common membership in a global society (Ferguson, 2002). In a global society often curated by digital media, members can celebrate victories remote from their immediate locus and can also mourn tragedies that occur in faraway places; a global village experiencing and interacting together. The information age allows us to see past our immediate contexts, and through various lenses into the social lives of others. Similarly to the Allegory of The Cave, it is by looking outside, that we get insight. Pascal is a man who is fond of exploring, stating many times throughout our conversations his love of travelling and seeing how others conduct and construct their lives. Pascal, in a multitude of ways, from his engagement with social media, to his experiences in Southern Africa, is a self-aware member of the global network.

During my initial field visits, Pascal would often sit and observe with a fascinated curiosity as Happy told me his life-story in Xhosa. Catching bits and pieces in-between in the Xhosa that he understood and the borrowed English words, he would often chuckle at Happy's hyperbole's or nod when a melancholic truism was heard. When I finally engaged him, our conversations revealed that South Africa was held in high esteem in the Congo. As much as his testimony changes and expands, one thing remained constant throughout our engagements: He moved to South Africa

because he honestly believed it to possess opportunities unattainable in the Congo. From where he came, the social capital attributed to living in South Africa was so great that it buoyed the man through the hardships involved in arriving here. It is that same passion that allowed him to remain in South Africa even when circumstances turned strenuous. In 2010 after trying for nearly three years to find a suitable job, he considered returning to the DRC; the combination of home-sicknesses and lack of prospects had fully deflated him. His sister begged him to reconsider staying, as she would be all alone in the country. He stayed, partially out of solidarity to his sister, but predominately to not have to face those waiting back home. He then found his current security job at the apartment and decided to stay under a new impetus; he would save up enough money to do an engineering bridging course that validates the academic credits from Congo and work as an engineer in South Africa. As Pascal was speaking that day, I recalled a story Happy had told me about Pascal. Happy said that before arriving in South Africa, Pascal had heard that so much of South Africa's lush employment opportunities that he had given away all of his clothes to neighbours and friends in Congo. I initially met this story with scepticism, unable to believe something like this to be true of Pascal.

Spatial hierarchy at play in Pascal's account; he decided to forgo research into South Africa, but instead relied on hear-say from friends. The fact that he realised only upon arrival that his qualification did not qualify him to work as engineer here, speaks to the perception that things would 'just work' in South Africa, not like in other countries (Lefebvre, 1991). Happy's story about Pascal giving away his clothes, which Pascal later confirmed to be true, exposes a type of behaviour that would be considered strange in his home, but the way in which this environment has been perceived led to an embodiment of new behavioural norms. Pascal's discarding of his clothes from the Congo also became an act of pre-empting what his 'performance' in this space would look like; new clothes (which he later confirmed to be true) *will* be needed, new rhythms *will* be established; a new social network with different politics.

After giving his testimony, stream-of-consciousness style, of his journey to the present, Pascal pauses for a beat and sighs. I assumed that it was just his recent reflection had cut a solemn figure out of him. He tells me that he

is struggling with his wife's lavish spending and that it frustrates him greatly. "She does not understand how it works here" he says. His wife, Jane, has a communications degree and it irks him greatly that she wants no other line of work even though her English is not good enough to find work here. He reveals that she is unemployed because she is unwilling "to lower herself". This statement struck a chord as I heard it, because of how much it conflicted with Pascal's earlier perspective of South Africa. Processes of socialisation are practical, lived and experienced. It is through these lived experiences, not through hears-say from remote perspectives, that one truly understands how "it works here" (Simonsen, 1992). The 'global society' can be insincere in its portrayal of faraway places. Pascal's statement, along with the non-verbal cues such his sigh and the retreat within his mind, revealed an understanding that in this environment, his 'performance' had to change along with his unfulfilled expectations in this space. His wife says that she does not wish to "lower herself" by finding a job that does not meet her Congolese qualifications. To lower one's self is a deeply personal, subjective process; an embodying of ideals and behaviours that are in conflict with rhythms that you either wish to occupy or are currently occupying. This theme of lowering oneself discloses the ongoing negotiation in the lives of my informants between the individual's expectations and the current social, political construct that they find themselves in.

He details a story of Jane spending R 2000 on a dress in the Congo, and after he implored her to return it, she said that "the man in Congo" would not take the dress back." He pauses and sighs deeply. "R 2000. What if our boy gets sick, what if she is sick, what if I get sick? She doesn't listen." He continues to talk, describing how frustrating it is for him to hear her speak of friends back in the Congo who are wealthy and own their own houses instead of renting as they do. When they fight (as they had done just the night before), Pascal says she will often chime in that perhaps she should have married the richer suitors back in Congo. "How can we save for a house if she buys such expensive dresses?! She doesn't work and she knows how much I earn".

Pascal's wife and her constant referral to friends back home and their successes adds an additional pressure and anxiety on his already taxing role as a sole breadwinner for his family. The pressure of 'performance' comes in tension with the fact that he sacrificed ties to family, ties to his home language, to try and provide not just a life for his family, but particularly a *better* life. Pascal's journey has been hard; the cognitive dissonance experienced from believing that South Africa had certain opportunities to living out a reality that is unlike the imagined one is difficult. From the conversations we have, it seems at times that his wife acts as both an emotional pillar for Pascal yet simultaneously as an audience member; watching and critiquing his 'performance' and comparing the fruits of labour to those of friend's back in the Congo. For Pascal, South Africa is by no means separate or severed from the politics and socio-economic network of the Congo. His trips back to the Congo and his wife purchasing clothing from the Congo shows how even within a South African space, those Congolese networks are still prevalent, and with those prevalent ties is the pressure to justify one's mobility, to present the self-actualization of *imfuno*, and whether the hear-say and rumours are true with regard your personal lived-experience. Those networks are kept alive because of the construction of Pascal's non-South African social life. Pascal claims that he lives in East-River which he states predominately has "foreigners like me", many of whom understand French. His wife speaks French and is in constant communication with friends back home through social media. In very subtle and nuanced ways, one could say that Pascal lives in Cape Town, South Africa, but goes home to the Congo every night through these diverse networks. This is encouraging, as he has emotional links to his homeland, and is able to that part of his personhood alive even though he embodies different rhythms during the day. Its negatives lie in the intrinsic and extrinsic pressures that lie with having to communicate how well you are doing in the so-perceived land of opportunity.

Within the complex, intricate dynamic of navigating the homestead and the work space politics, I do observe similarities between Happy and Pascal's situation and ways of navigating this trope. Both men place great importance in building a household and providing a stable home environment in Cape Town. Pascal's anxiety about saving for his son's

school fees demonstrate this. Happy's attempt to purchase rings to marry his fiancée shows just how much a specific kind of domestic life matters to both men.

Henri Lefebvre refers to perceived, conceived and lived space (Lefebvre, 1991;Simonsen, 1992). This theory works on the understanding that space is first psychologically anticipated and this anticipation prompts social actors' experience of the environment. Pascal had been told that in South Africa, things are possible that are not possible in the Congo; certain freedoms, opportunities and economic patterns. That was his motivation, what drove his *imfuno* as he interacted with South Africa. "Space... is not isolated as a static concept; it is *dialecticized* in the role of product-producer" (Simonsen, 1992; 81). As a producer, Pascal's *imfuno* has (temporarily or permanently) locked him in this space. He knew that coming to South Africa would have its precarious elements, but it was a gamble he was willing to make. The stories, both testimonies and what he had seen from friends in Durban, caused him to *double-down* on his plan and make a bet with himself; he will not return to the Congo until his *imfuno* has been realised. To leave behind all that you know as a community, cross from the familiar to the strange, with no guarantee of success, is a gargantuan commitment. This is a commitment that is a testament not only to the guiding spirit of desire that fuels Pascal and many other like him, but also speaks to how powerful spatial hierarchy is. It makes people believe that a certain environment is better, even if empiricism says otherwise; they stay in it with the hope that it will become better. Pascal told me that he will not settle back in the Congo *until* he makes something of himself. This is Pascal's Wager and one that many others wrestled with.

3.4 "They Are Killing Us": Trans-National Allegiances in Xenophobic Attacks

Ramphele theorises that "macro-level space also encompasses the global dimension, which… has significant bearing on national local level power

relations” (Ramphele, 1993; 02). *Imfuno,* ambition and desire often involve the penetration of another network, gaining access into other spaces. These are spaces which are well-guarded by gatekeepers. Gatekeepers can be self-assigned, institutional or social. Pascal's national identity constantly came to the fore during his time in South Africa, *othering* him in subtle ways such as language and cultural code, and in more precarious, harmful ways such as the haphazard xenophobic violence.

Pascal’s first ever job in Cape Town was a driver for tourists at Robben Island. He professed to enjoy the job very much for the first few months. By this stage he was staying with his sister and brother-in-law in Philippi. After a while at the job, he says he felt tensions arise amongst him and the other drivers, a large number of whom were from Zimbabwe. "They were telling lies to my supervisor, saying *'Oh, Pascal is lazy*"'. Pascal reasoned that the drivers wanted one of their friends, a fellow Zimbabwean, to usurp the job from him. Living hand-to-mouth on his salary heightened the stresses brought about by these antagonistic colleagues. Pascal's account may have been filled with biases, but it revealed a partial truth about transnational dynamics. Much is discussed about the 'South African-to-other' tensions that exist, but the competition for resources and jobs in South Africa can cause people from other countries to come into conflict. As groups both at risk of being discriminated against in this current South African, solidarity does not lie simply through being "non-South African", but rather the identity-politics are more nuanced and complex(Ratele, 1998). Pascal conjectured that the only reason that these Zimbabwean men would conspire against him was because he was from the Congo and they wanted "one of their own" in the position. His reasoning, true or not, reveals the sensitive dynamics of existing in a contested space, with competing ambitions and desire posing a threat to one's own *imfuno*. I mentioned earlier that *imfuno* is highly politicised, and instances like this testify to this idea.

James Ferguson develops an argument to deconstruct notions of localism versus cosmopolitanism in urbanisation studies. He postulates that the creation of binaries exist amongst cross-national (or international) workers, are amplified by competition for resources, ideological and political

differences (Estey, 1999). Where you come from is pitted against where you *are* and one must carry the social codes of both spaces simultaneously. During the time that I was conducting my fieldwork, the wave of xenophobic attacks resurged across the country, sparking national outcry on social media. As the scenes played out on the television in the apartment lobby, Pascal and I spoke about what it is like for him to see this type of violence. Pascal often constructed binaries between perpetrators and victims, highlighting a certain social allegiance. His friends from across the country would send him pictures and videos of attacks taking place in that environment. Pascal would then share this media with friends around his neighbourhood and at work. Pascal was helping curate a digital activist network. He often used language such as “They are killing us” and “We did not do anything”. With the attacks that took place in Durban and closer to home in Hout Bay, he seemed uncertain of the nationality of the people being attacked but it seemed as though he had already done the classification; these are foreign migrants like him, out-of-space, like him, vulnerable to vicious unsystematic assaults, like him. In this instance, he was in solidarity with their *imfuno*. This is *his* network. He presented a collective consciousness about the joint suffering and persecution of the African foreigner(Nemedi, 1995). Pascal's experiences, amidst the xenophobic attacks that plagued South Africa at that point, reflects on the social polysemy of discrimination amongst expatriate foreigners from different countries within South Africa itself. The binary of the South Africa-to-*other* trope may be reductionist, and other more complex politics of belonging are at play between people from many nationalities, as evident from Pascal’s perspective. The "national power relations" that Ramphele speaks of, are at play here. In one context Pascal makes distinctions between his Zimbabwean co-workers and himself, feeling '*othered*' by another type of '*other*' and heightening the malice experienced when different migrants want the same thing. Simultaneously the lines are blurred by Pascal when he homogenizes non-South Africans and creates an us-versus-them dynamic.

“The colonial appropriation of space left an “impression on identity, urbanity and cultural memory” (Bass, 2011; 125, 126). Bass continues to argue that historical patterns have inflicted a multiplicity of understandings of

personhood as people's contexts change. "They are killing us". As I reviewed my field notes on Pascal, it became clear that the "us" is not necessarily Congolese people, nor is it limited to just foreigners in South Africa. One of my other fieldwork informants, Happy fell into the category of "us" when Pascal spoke about the abusive treatment they receive from the apartment tenants.”Us" is anyone who has their desires, ambitions and strategies threatened by external forces. It could be someone attempting to take your job, violent perpetrators who want you to abandon the life you have built and leave the country, it could even be a partner who does not share the same vison as you. Pascal, in his journey, has been a victim of circumstance in many occasions, but he still pushes back against the circumstances, impatiently, doggedly.

3.5 Conclusion: The-Grass-is-Greener Theorem

During an Honours seminar on African Societies in Transition, one of my Anthropology professors proclaimed that in fieldwork, you "cannot look everywhere", because as you look in one direction, you miss a whole sequence of events that take place behind you. His solution: find the social phenomena where you have the ability to see.

At the end of my fieldwork engagements with Pascal, the primary foreign informant that I worked with, I realised that there were many elements left unknown. I attempted multiple times to visit his home and came out unsuccessful at each request. There were parts of his story which he purposefully did not clarify. He had mentioned that he was unemployed for three years after leaving his Robben Island job, but did not want to tell me what he did for those three years before finding his current security job. Pascal never told me where he got the money to travel through sub-Saharan Africa for months on end, as well as what ended up happening to the R2000 dress that his wife bought. These are large events, all unresolved and fleshed out, but there was much to be said of Pascal's story in-between these crevices and gaps.

On my final day of working with Pascal, I asked him a question before I left. He had experienced much in his life, and was, like another informant Happy, a first-generation migrant. Happy moved between provinces of a country of which he was a second-class citizen, but a citizen nonetheless. Pascal was a foreigner, the first of his patrilineage to be in a space where he was forced to register as an asylum seeker as opposed to a refugee because of financial constraints. He has been in Cape Town for nearly seven years now as of this writing, and I asked him, what the next ten years held in stock for him. He paused, ruminating on the gravity of the question.

He looked at up and announced that he wants his "son to live a life that is absent of this life of suffering" and that he wishes to make enough money to leave and go back and retire in the Congo. He then tells me that he hasn't started saving for his son's education, and it is something causes a great amount of anxiety. He really wants to change this way of life for his son, and I realize that the question of forecasting his future sparks an awakening in him.

I do not know what Pascal is going do in the future, I cannot claim to. Today it could be Cape Town, South Africa, tomorrow it could the Coppperbelt of Zambia, or even rural Tanzania. What is apparent is that trans-national politics for many migrants adheres to an ideology which privileges the faraway, the "anywhere but here" dictum. This way of thinking is symptomatic of a history of movement; displace yourself in order to find your success. I refer to this belief as The Grass is Greener theorem. From Pascal's story, the Grass is Greener Theorem requires turning your lived environment into what you think it can become, socially and ideologically producing a new type of space (Lefebvre, 1991). The Grass is Greener theorem is looking at what others have achieved and *making* it fit your environment as adequately as your means allow. This theorem is not about rebuilding an African utopia but rather reconstructing your social condition inorder to live a life that has one's perceptions of dignity and respectability. What is reflected here is the spirit of *imfuno* which calls for a dogged perseverance that does not accept defeat because one defines their own parameters of defeat and success. Pascal, on a daily basis embodies these ideals and they are entangled with his social rhythms. He says that he

made a bet with himself to not return home until he had some*thing* to show to friends, family and detractors. In his time in South Africa, Pascal expected to replicate the successes that he had witnessed his Congolese friends achieving. They were creating a new social reality for themselves in South Africa and he wanted that. Like the character in the Achebe novel, he saw friends 'eating' and brought his plate in hand to receive as well. It is not simple, as he discovered, and the complexities that make up his everyday life hurdled his quest. Since he has not yet achieved this success yet, he is trapped in the Grass is Greener ideology. *Imfuno* can be binding and trapping, suffocating one's mobility and choices at times. Until then, Pascal and other foreigners remains here, tightly clutching their desires and ambitions as they persevere and strategize. The Grass may still get green.

Chapter Four:

Men of Faith: Religion and Destiny in Imfuno

4.0 Abstract:

The majority of conversations with informants during fieldwork revolved around money, upward mobility and the search for it within a still racially unjust system. However, some informants cited different sources of inspiration and energy that separate from money. This chapter explores the relationship between the spirit of ambition and spiritual faith. I examine how, at the intersection of religious faith and *imfuno*, informants find pockets of agency that mentally liberate them from the oppressive structures that force them into a labour-market of spatial oscillation. Through an illustrative discussion with an informant who left his job to pursue a mobility of another kind, the discussion reveals that *imfuno* can transcend monetary value.

4.1 Introduction

In my initial readings on migration and mobility before undergoing fieldwork, I would initially read themes of religion in these monographs as markers of those colonized and those resisting Western 'norms'. My assessments of Mayer's "Red"/"School" labels of Xhosa migrants were merely an ideological consideration, and one that merely required the critique of the Xhosa-in-Town trilogy for a false dichotomy (Mayer & Mayer, 1961). I found readings on Hellman, Wilson and even 21st century contributions by Bank engaging on a theoretical level and the conclusion was similar; religion was important for informants, but for ethnographic purposes served to further the decades-long urbanisation/detribalization discourse.

It was not until the tail-end of my fieldwork that my assumptions of faith were destabilised. I entered the reception area that evening of the apartment and was greeted by no one; the rare sighting of an unmanned desk. I noticed a well-kept King James Bible lying next to the computer. As | went to inspect it in greater detail, a short man with a neat appearance emerged from the security guard changing room holding a notebook that had leather binding. We greeted and he introduced himself as Luvo, making piercing eye contact and smiling resplendently as he shook my hand.

This chapter explores the relationship between the spirit of ambition and spiritual faith. I examine how, at the intersection of religious faith and *imfuno*, informants find pockets of agency that mentally liberate them from the oppressive structures that force them into a labour-market of spatial

oscillation. I aim to discuss how scholars' earlier work on religion inform the concept of *imfuno* and how, in a post-apartheid context, religion takes on other meanings for informants besides 'modernisation' and acceptance of western norms. Through discussion with an informant Luvo, who would eventually leave his security job to pursue a mobility of another kind - a travelling minister preaching the Gospel, the following discussion reveals that *imfuno* can transcend monetary value and give a different kind of hope.

4.2 Historical Considerations on Mobility and Religion

In one of his many discussions on post-colonial racial discourse, Archie Mafeje asks a question to the academic community and South Africa as a wider audience. "Does 'social change' or 'being civilised' mean, unambiguously, being assimilated into the White middle class cosmic view? What will it take for that view to transcend itself? “(Mafeje, 1975; 184). The question posed four decades ago still remains difficult to answer today’s South African context and often reared its head during my fieldwork and writing. Existing in spaces historically designed for White people at times requires non-Whites to interrogate how much of their behaviour is westernized and what is lost in this cultural compromise. Westernization requires that something be given up, exchanged or let go for a person to be considered part of the society. Ellen Hellman argued that for 'detribalisation' to take place for Black workers **“**…permanent residence in an area other than that of the chief to whom a man would normally pay allegiance” was required (Hellman, 1948; 110). In the Mayer's *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, “literacy” is a major value that ‘School’ Xhosa people hold in high regard, and this keenness to absorb Western ideals “liberates” the group (Vons, 1964; 171). The Red Xhosa however, by sticking to their tribal and ancestral roots, are shunning modes of operation that could have “liberated” them (Vons, 1964; 171). In these works, a necessary condition for a 'socially changed' Black resident of town was the submission to a new set of priorities, rhythms and values. Jean Comaroff argues that an apartheid project which functioned to both denigrate Black bodies whilst expecting them to shed precolonial rituals creates "fractured...individuals, abruptly wrenched from their human and spiritual contexts, [who] are no longer able to recognize and realize themselves"(Comaroff, 1985; 13). Earlier works on

this topic did not elaborate on the psychological toll on detribalisation but rather outline a schema of how one could note and observe detribalisation. In the literature review, I discussed how this framework in classic works often focused on the notion of the negotiation between modernity and tradition (Ferguson, 1999). James Ferguson, speaking of dualism, says that, “the idea that urban Africans were caught between two distinct systems is at the heart” of the Rhodes Livingstone Institution theoretical framework (Ferguson, 1999; 89). Earlier works in migration and “urbanisation studies” (a term which itself which poses great threat to the very study that was being conducted) approached analysis of the construction of daily lives and rhythms within a theoretical framework that seemed more to categorise and tabulate rather than to understand that the experiences of informants were bigger than what the eyes could presently see. Bernard Magubane states that “every field of scientific endeavour rests on a paradigm,” in that he means a “conception of reality accepted by practitioners of the discipline”. Magubane argues that a “truly comprehensive understanding of social change requires more than an analysis of the victim’s oppression” (Magubane, 1973; 1708). Clothing, language, social rhythms and rituals became the determining factors of the relationship between the modern and the traditional (Mayer & Mayer, 1961). Spirituality and faith lay as symbolic markers of how much this assimilation had taken place in many classic monographs. Within religious conversion lies something deeper than a reaction to conquest or a method to usher people into a capitalist system (Hunter, 1936) (Comaroff, 1985). In my field work interactions and conversations, faith acted as a companion piece to *imfuno*, working as a motivating force that put circumstance into perspective and pacified current suffering of any kind. Informants showed me how faith functions not only as a provider of meaning, but also as a technique of survival under the status quo. Survival under a racial capitalist society is also a vital component in how people choose to engage in the forced assimilation that Mafeje speaks of (Ramphele, 1993). Through the theoretical lens of earlier works I saw faith as one in a larger network of 'signs' that migrants had been converted and urbanised. In this discussion I wish to reframe this view and speak of the ways in which informants have

experientially restructured faith to overcome the aforementioned racial capitalistic domain that they live in.
Faith and *imfuno* work in conjunction to push actors to form identities beyond financial and social hierarchies.

4.3 "It is time": Faith, Desire and Destiny in the lives of Informants

The evening that I met Luvo, I was engaged by his demeanour; he had a precise posture and spoke with a slow, intentional manner, his sentences often punctuated by the phrase *jonga bhuti* ('look young man'). I enquire about the Bibles and where they come from; he tells me that he received them from one of the tenants and as a Christian he was overjoyed about the gift. The very same gift-receiving and consignment that Happy experienced with one the tenants is present with Luvo as well, however this transaction appears to have had less complications than Happy's. As we speak of Luvo's background, he makes it clear that faith formed the tapestry of personhood from a young age; his father is one of the elders and a regular preacher at Assembly of God church in Khayelitsha, where the family stays. As an only child, he made his first friends within the church and built his community there from a young age. He informs that he is still living at home which surprises me; as short as he may be, Luvo has an old face, a face that appears both matured and ready for what the world has in store. He goes on to tell me that his faith is linked with him staying at home as during his 20's he was into what he refers to as "evils" in Xhosa. He does not elaborate on this. Happy, during our conversations, would also cite youthfully careless days which arrested his development and harmed his future running career. After finding God and completely rejecting the life of youthful violence and truancy, Luvo finished his Matric and started working at the apartment as security guard a few years later.

I was fascinated that Luvo's stories were similar to other migrants I've spoken to, consideration he told me early that he is a first-generation Capetonian, born and raised in Cape Town. His parents however are from Lady Frere in rural Eastern Cape and moved to Cape Town in the late 1970's. Luvo was born at a political intersection of a system where the

labour market was displaying signs of changing in the country, whilst he still inherits the tropes of a migration economy from his parents. The line of mobility stretches across generations, and is transferred in sometimes covert, symbolic ways. Ramphele, writing on this inheritance in the Langa hostels, postulates that "a significant number of cases exceeds 25 years. In some cases beds have been handed down from father to son"(Ramphele, 1993; 25). The majority of Luvo's co-workers do not call Cape Town home, but consider it a work place. Included in this list are Happy, Pascal, another Congolese expatriate Sedrick, Anele, who hails from Butterworth in the Eastern Cape and Luvo's own cousin, Leonardo, who actually recommended him for the job. The rhythms and tropes of migrancy can be experienced and felt by someone who is not a migrant and it may take longer, certainly more than one generation of 'non-movement' for the legacies of migrancy to fall away. Throughout our discussion, Luvo expresses empathy for his colleagues who feel disconnected from the intimate social lives at their respective homestead. His participation in these conversations are also informed by his parents' musings about the difficulty of resettling in a new environment. During our conversation, Luvo stresses that he grew up "with all the opportunities" available and that it was through his own misdoing that he didn't get to go to university and get married by "this age", 32 years of age. As we speak, I tell him that Happy and Pascal view this security job as a stop-gap and find it difficult to navigate twelve-hour nightshifts with families. He smiles calmly as I tell him this, whilst clasping on his leather bound notebook. "*Jonga bhuti,* God told me I would work here and I am following his vision*".* He begins to laugh as he sees my bemused facial expression.

Mamphele Ramphele argues that a poor "self-concept and a lack of self-worth inhibit the capacity for transformative action"(Ramphele, 1993; 08). Observing Luvo go about daily, mundane tasks with dignity and self-pride illuminated his sense of purpose in this environment. He elaborates on the prophetic vision he had, explaining that even though he wished to be a preacher like his father, God told him that he would work a "menial position in society" for two years and then greater things would await him. Luvo's faith in God's plan and a deep desire to be in ministry fostered a new

approach the strenuous work schedule and the beck-and-call of wealthy White tenants. Instead, he saw his work at the apartment as a lived servant-ship and subservience to the prophecy put before him. Living on the socio-economic margins of Cape Town and openly noting the degrading aspects of the work done by him and his contemporaries would warrant the profound disgruntlement and cynicism often present with my other informants. Luvo smiles at the denigration, laughs off the wage-hour imbalance and at days-end, prays for the privileged tenants he serves. The Xhosa-in-Town trilogy theorised that 'School' Xhosas had been freed from old customs by accepting Christianity and all that came with it (Vons, 1964). I wish to conceptually reframe this liberation and its implications for faith and *imfuno*. When I asked Luvo during one of our conversations what his desire and aspirations were for the future, his answer took me by surprise. "Bra, I just want everyone to be saved and know *uThixo*[God]". Statements like this reflected how Luvo's self-view was not defined by his position in society, but rather a higher calling that gave him meaning. His *imfuno* liberates him because it looks beyond the capitalist construct that was part of the colonial conversion process. This liberation also removes itself from the dichotomous relationship between what is urban and what is rural (Ferguson, 1999). On long weekends he would return to his parent's homestead of Lady Frere to perform funeral rituals and on other occasions accompany his father on church missions to other parts of the Eastern Cape. What Luvo's story shows is the complexity of identity and how the purpose of religion and faith can be thought of differently. This new conceptualisation is used by actors to counter to the original intention of 'westernization'; faith has been re-appropriated to form a new kind of liberation.

On my last day interacting with Pascal, I had seen him speaking with another friend of his, Sedrick. As I met Sedrick and we spoke, it became clear that Sedrick had recently arrived in South Africa and he had come in search of a job just like Pascal had done years earlier. What fascinated me here was that Pascal had seemed to encourage Sedrick to come to South Africa despite the great difficulties he had had in the country. As we spoke and caught up since it had been a while since we spoke, Pascal told me

that he was planning on definitively leaving South Africa before the years end. I was excited and surprised at the same time; this was the same man who avowed that he would not return to the Congo until he manifested a level of success that was would have him not return to shame and embarrassment. He was energetic and charismatic, excited to go back and be with distant relatives. What had changed, I wondered. As he caught me up on his son who was now forming full sentences, I decided to breach and ask what lay in stock back home. “Me and my partner are starting a political party; the African Democratic Liberation Party. We are going to register it and are speaking to funders. We can maybe get affiliation with the EFF.” It turns out that Sedrick’s arrival was part of the foundational phase of starting the party, and that Pascal, Eric (the President) and Sedrick would do legwork here and then return to launch the party. Pascal seemed convinced, and when I asked about money, how they would amass income throughout this whole process. He announced that t6he money would “come”

As we spoke, I asked Pascal how he knows that this is the right decision for him and his family. He then told me that he had attended his church, Command of Faith Ministry in Maitland and pastor prophesized over him and told him that a “big career in politics awaited him” in the Congo and that he could help change the country’s future by starting an opposition party to the Kabila’s PPRD. It was this faith instilled in him that caused Pascal to begin working on starting the party, alerting friends and family back home that he was in the process of returning. His *imfuno* had intersected with faith and something new had mutated out of it; the man who was struck by homesickness but too afraid to return home because of a lack of success had now been buoyed by spiritual prophecy to go back where he came, without fear. As we spoke, Pascal did not seem bothered by my questions of funding or how they planned to get party members, what was clear was that after this vision he had received from his Pentecostal church, he had found his greener pastures. He looked at me sternly and said "God has said that it is time. I must go back."

4.4 Conclusion: From Here to Destiny

Gordimer and Lemon both argue that the colonial regime was designed to take Black subjects and ingrain within their psychology a servant-ship to White desires(Gordimer, 1984)(Lemon, 1991). Within this system however, "there are many forms of resistance not recognized in orthodox, revolutionary strategy"(Comaroff, 1985; 5)(Gordimer, 1984). These "forms" when unarticulated and unexamined can be misconstrued as mere assimilation or ideological subservience to European culture, but something more nuanced and covert is taking place here. A few months after I had finished my fieldwork, I had gone back to the apartment to greet people and find out the state of affairs. I had gone during Luvo's usual working hours and was told that he was gone; he had resigned only a few weeks prior. Had *his* time come as well I wondered? I called him and he told me that his time had indeed come, and that he was based in Port Elizabeth, preparing a sermon that he would give at a nearby church and from there he had a residency at another ministry in rural Eastern Cape. He received pittance, food and free lodging wherever he travelled. As we spoke on the phone, the last thing he worried about was money and accommodation, instead he merely focused on whether the sermon was going to give made sense for the congregation.

Marcel Mauss speaks of a spirit that pulls actors to action; the *hau* is an unseen force operating in actors' lives. Similarly Turner speaks of possession and how it transforms the will and desire, prompting new behaviours and actions. This chapter has dealt with faith and the very real, tangible effects it can have on people's lives. The socially marginalised often come up with ways to reclaim agency within their circles, creating new identities and ways of being in the world (Ferguson, 1999). Notions around faith in this discussion have not been epistemological; the existence or benevolence of God is not in focus here. What I wish to emphasize is how faith in anything; a better future, evangelism, an honest government, can motivate people to see themselves and their situation differently. These men found dignity and a form of respectability in their jobs because a master plan lay waiting on the vista. The power of spiritual faith in *imfuno*, regardless of veracity, has the power to change destinies.

Concluding Thoughts and Remarks

(Attempt to create an introduction for this and give it some kind of context and how micro-interactions

Months after I had conducted my fieldwork, I would text and call informants just to find out how they had progressed. Most had left the apartment to work at other security jobs; Happy was working for I&J out at sea on a six month work contract. Luvo, on the other hand had embarked on his journey as a travelling pastor. Another man I had met,Anele, was planning on returning to Butterworth in a year and Pascal was in the throes of starting his political career in the Congo. I had said in the introduction that *imfuno* was fluid, ever-changing, shifting as actors saw other opportunities that they perceived as potentially lucrative. Observing the atomic-like shift that informants took; scattering to all sort of directions to try and make “it”, the search continues. South Africa is a country of movers, whether citizens of the country or not, people moving to new vistas to try and make things

happen and strategizing against their history, societies' constraints and just as importantly, their own self-view and perceptions. One of my informants said to me "*uzobona bra*, they believe in uHappy". It is with this faith held firmly in hand that he and other informants strive and work, to realize their *imfuno.*

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