SITES OF MIGRANT LANDING: (UN)BRAIDING TOPOGRAPHIES OF RELATIONS ACROSS HAIR SALONS IN MOWBRAY

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INTRODUCTION

In her seminal writing on Black life in the diaspora, Dionne Brand writes, “landing is what people in the diaspora do… landing at ports, dockings, bridgings, borders, outposts” (Brand, 2001, p. 191). This section of landing in her book, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, influenced the title of this thesis, where I think through this constant praxis of *landing* as a relation to mobility, migration and displacement within the African continent. To land is to set foot and to find grounding, and as Brand notes, it is to contend with borders, outposts and ports. I situate landing as a process and metaphor that further explicates Black geographical knowledge and systems, as a locator for people who pass through familiar and unfamiliar territories, another country, or those who land in another city. Through landing, I am invited to witness and encounter networks, world-making, establishments and practices that are embedded in the movements of those who continuously land, for example documented and undocumented migrants and refugees.

As a Motswana woman who has been making multiple landings in various geographies over the past eight years, I stumbled upon the neighbourhood of Mowbray on Facebook while looking for a place to stay for the duration of my master’s degree in Cape Town, another outpost. In any new city that I land in, there are various ways that I locate myself; in Montreal it was through companionship with a friend who was fluent in French and in Vancouver the locating was experimental and never took a distinct form as I was in my early twenties and experiencing living outside Botswana for the first time. In Mowbray, Cape Town, over time I located myself through hair — through the hair salons that operated in the area; hair salons that were ran mostly by migrant African women. I had been growing my hair for over a year when I lived in Mowbray and finding myself in a neighbourhood rich in hair specialists was exciting as I thought about the different experimental styles I would do. In Mowbray, my frequent visits to the hair salons helped to navigate and position myself in this new city of Cape Town. Hair salons are multi-functional urban spaces where beauty, economic and cultural exchanges are practiced in various urban geographies in African and the diaspora. Therefore, I was inspired to carry out a critical undertaking of this Black space and how it functions as a diasporic and landing space for African migrant women.

Within this framework of landing, thinking through the hair salon as a landing space, I hypothesise that the hair salon becomes somewhat of a node of connection and mobility for

migrants who have settled into a city, are arriving or in transition; a critical spatial point that some migrants can use to establish their location, to orient themselves in the city through their labour, social relations, networks, etc. This dissertation therefore provides a critical analysis of the hair salon industry in Mowbray as a landing site for migrant African women. The analysis that unfolds prompts to "map black women's aesthetic practices" (Macharia, 2021) and to encounter care infrastructures and their social relations, to contend with everyday city-making and to explore structural and political implications of the establishment of hair salons in Mowbray. These important factors contribute to the significance of writing through and with hair stylists and the hair salon as a geographical spatial marker that renders urban spaces that are informed, designed and maintained by migrant African women. In other words, this dissertation offers a Black reading of space that centres African women.

To return to Brand, the choice to centre this thesis on the craft of hair braiding and hair salons as proposed sites for landing is an inquiry of the migration of women from different parts of the continent to Cape Town, whose labour, world-making and life lands in the hair salon space in Mowbray. Within the framework of Southern Urbanism, to conceptualise the hair salon as a landing space is a deliberate geographical choice that situates landing in the inner city. The significance of this is to emphasise that migrants do not land only once at national borders such as airports, shores, land ports, etc., that landing is not a single event, and continues on as African migrants try to find grounding in their new urban contexts. Additionally, that the high policing, xenophobia and structural terror implicated at the borders also continues where migrants make their landings. The various successions of landings that migrants make constitute a portion of how an urban space is configured as their relations to each other, to the law and to the urban space influence how hair salons develop.

This thesis therefore seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What relations and networks are sustained in the hair salon and how are they produced? What do these relations mobilise or make possible?

2. How do hairstylists influence the geography and making of Mowbray?

3. What structural and socio-economic factors are embedded and encountered in the establishments of hair salons in Mowbray?

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters which are the introduction; literature review; methodology; case study; arrivals; departures; and landings. The introduction details the point of entry, rationale and the aims that will guide how the writing will unfold. The literature review will discuss the theoretical framework drawing on various scholars who have contributed to conceptualising urban spaces that migrants engage with, and how the framework applies to African migrant women. These include the use of the terms such as people as infrastructure, arrival infrastructure, and critical spatial literacy. Additionally, in the literature review I look at how African hair salons have been written about, to create a layout or landscape of the discussions that will aid in situating this thesis with other scholars.

The methodology chapter accounts for the methods and the processes followed to carry out research in the hair salons, Mowbray and with the hairstylists. Qualitative methods were used throughout the research by using ethnography (participant observation and semi-structured ethnography), with Black Geography as an anchoring framework. Additionally, an experimental braiding as cartography emerged as part of the methodology. The case study chapter provides the setting of the study and a relevant brief history of Mowbray, Cape Town. The intention with this contextualisation is to specifically engage with Mowbray as a site that situates hair salons spatially with an overview of how Mowbray has transformed over the years, and to examine the factors and conditions that have possibly led to Mowbray being a neighbourhood where mushrooming of differentiated businesses takes place.

The findings and discussions have been divided into two chapters, titled Arrivals and Departures. When working through the findings after the fieldwork, two distinct relations to the hair salon emerged, one that emphasised place making through social relations, and the other that showed the different ways that displacement and anti-migration attitudes and policies affect the survival and maintenance of hair salons. The conversations with the hairstylists produced rich insights on the networks of the hair salon, therefore the two chapters provide space to discuss the findings and their implications in detailed length. Lastly, the conclusion is titled Landings and brings the conversation to the point of departure, where I discuss the argument of hair salons being sites of landing and how the construction and unfolding of the thesis helped me respond to the research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter intends to discuss the theoretical framework that focuses on migrant city making and how existing scholarship has conceptualised African women migrant spaces such as the hair salon and other spaces. Through piecing together the theoretical framework, I hope to expand the meaning and implication of *landing* as identified in the research title and introduction. I will draw connections and relations between various theories such as arrival infrastructure, people as infrastructure, and critical spatial literacy, amongst others. By constructing the theoretical framework for this research, I intend to situate the hair salon as it relates to intra-African mobilities, urban infrastructure, and discussions on the ways in which migrant-operated businesses such as the hair salon facilitate a network for migrants and other people.

Arrival infrastructure

The use of *arrival* in urban migration scholarship is gaining traction to describe the entrance processes, procedures and policies for migrants landing in countries. Arrival has been conceptualised as a process "that cannot be socio-spatially fixed, is oriented toward the future, with migrants shifting their relative engagements toward certain places for a variety of reasons over time" (Meeus, Arnaut, & van Heur, 2019, p. 4). These authors offer a definition of arrival that considers a flexibility and temporality where one activates their movements without being fixed to a certain location. Similar to landing, arrival is a constant and continuous process of mobility that does not fixate on a final destination. For example, when writing about the various geographies she has lived in, Dionne Brand states that she does not want to use the phrase 'end up at' as a refusal to an ending or finality of her life and opts to use the term landing instead (Brand, 2001, p. 191) which generates space and time for movement. To think about arrival and landing as a continuous process is to recognise the various negotiations, modifications and becomings that happen as people move. The movements and paths of arrival create multiple trajectories in the city where migrants are active participants in its construction. Moreover, "arrival manifests itself materially through a temporary territorialization" (Meeus, Arnaut, & van Heur, 2019, p. 14) which means that there is a recognition of the structures, infrastructures, design practices and other activities that incorporate or appropriate the relation that migrants have with the territories or geographies that they land in.

Arrival situates the process of landing through an infrastructural lens, where scholars write about migrants' landing being facilitated by infrastructures which play a significant role in shaping and facilitating mobility. Arrival infrastructures are "those parts of the urban fabric within which newcomers become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or trans local social mobilities are produced as much as negotiated" (Meeus, Arnaut, & van Heur, 2019, p. 19). It is important to note that this definition of infrastructure does not only entail robust physical structures such as roads, airports and land borders that are vital in migration (Jung & Buhr, 2022). It emphatically includes the social and personal relations that are essential to the facilitation of movement. Thinking of infrastructure in an intangible way helps us to understand how people organise themselves in the city through the networks and infrastructures that they build. The term "soft urban arrival infrastructure" has been similarly used to analyse community and social integration of recent migrants in Belgium (Boost & Oosterlynck, 2019). These intangible and less robust lenses of thinking about infrastructure highlight the ways in which selective configurations route or transmit migrants through the city and their "future trajectories" (Zill, 2023).

In the Senegalese owned businesses in Jung and Buhr's study, "Senegalese, Haitians and Ghanaians, who reside in Caxias do Sul, visit the shop to get information about legal procedures of immigration" (Jung & Buhr, 2022, p. 8), in turn facilitating movement and an information sharing space for the Black community in Caxias do Sul. Arrival infrastructures are written about as essential networks for migrants where the sharing of knowledge, information and various resources is possible and is vital as the roads and bridges that people cross. Similarly, Salome Odhiambo (2017) provides several theories of migration when conducting research in Ghanian women owned hair salons in Pretoria, South Africa, one of them being the 'network theory' as a "predominant theory used to explain the perpetual increases of international migration over time" where "webs of kinship, friendship and shared origin" (Odhiambo, 2017) facilitate movement and travel between countries. In addition to the scholars discussed above, literature on migration on the continent is growing and provides a nuanced account on migrant people's practices and experiences, for example, Kudakwashe Vanyoro (2024), Henrietta Nyamnjoh (2021, 2020), Faisal Garba (2021) and Caroline Wanjiku Kihato (2013) have focused on writing about migrants practices in the South African urban context. These scholars will be engaged more when discussing the findings of the research.

The term “people as infrastructure” (Simone, 2004) has been applied in Southern Urbanisms to develop a framework that also centres marginalised people, their relations, collaborations, and activities as a significant structure that “anchor livelihoods” and “reproduce life in the city in Johannesburg, South Africa” (Simone, 2004). The vocabulary of arrival, soft, mobile and people as infrastructure provides an expansive, layered, and complex analysis of urban migration that grapples with national migration policies that focus on dispersion of migrants across the city to integrate them in their new cities (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020). These policies often problematise and stigmatise urban areas where migrants live and work, and write them as “spatially limited container goods”, where integration and assimilation is a priority that aims for uniformity in nationality (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020). Through the framework of people as infrastructure, there is a shift from viewing migrant spaces as limited to recognising the far-reaching networks that transcends into neighbouring areas and international markets and networks. For example, Simone indicates that in African economies, markets and households, a large majority of “commodities are imported by South African based immigrants” to their home countries (Simone, 2004, p. 422). There is a continuity in the social and economic practices embedded in these mobility infrastructures where scholars provide a language for a spatial analysis that does not reduce migrants’ activities only in relation to nationalism or gaining citizenship.

When writing about Somali malls in Bellville, Western Cape, Huda Tayob (2019) posits that the malls “are infrastructural in that they provide the base for the movement of goods, provision of services and access to space” for Somalis and others (Tayob, 2019, p. 51). Infrastructure such as the migrant owned Somali malls facilitate mobility and in Tayob’s study, the Somali mall is an actor in the retention of transnational paths that move goods between places like Dubai, Nairobi to Bellville. In this discussion, the structures of the mall — the economic and social practices of the shop owners, workers, messengers and the community constitute a system that Tayob describes as “porous infrastructures” (Tayob, 2019). Similarly, Tayob asserts that a porous infrastructural analysis addresses a shortcoming of previous scholarship that reduces migration and arrival as settlement in a fixed location. When writing about the Somali malls as an infrastructure, Tayob proposes that “reading these spaces as porous infrastructures enables holding their multiple scales and associated places together at the same time, across vast geographies” (Tayob, 2019, p. 54). This broader, dynamic, and multiple reading of infrastructure is important in researching practices and spaces within the migrant urban landscape that are often “glossed over as informal” (Tayob,

2019, p. 54) where informality has often been used as a mechanism to dismiss people and their groundwork in marginalised communities.

Despite the rich literature that exist by these scholars, in some instances, literature on migrant-owned businesses in South Africa is still saturated with descriptions related to a limited scope of informality. In their analysis of hair stylists in Cape Town, Dodson and Northcote (2015) write about the hair styling trade in Mowbray and Claremont through migrants' presence on the 'mean streets' of South Africa (Northcote & Dodson, 2015). In their descriptions, the language of informality marks hair stylists' activities, for example by using terms such as casual labour, makeshift labour, and day labour. In their discussion, hair styling and salons are located on these South African streets together with other various forms of traders such as painters, spaza-shop owners, fresh produce stands, artisans, and domestic work that point to a temporary and non-reliable form of labour. Although such studies are important for an overall view of migrants' activities in Southern African cities and how they relate to immigration policies, their critical analysis sometimes falls short, and often reproduces already established reductive conceptions.

In the context of growing xenophobia on the continent (South Africa, Tunisia, etc.), where African migrants' presence is met with national contempt and further displacement, these porous infrastructures "express in everyday details how forcibly displaced people assemble new spatial nodes as a way of overcoming formal exclusion" (Tayob, 2021). It is in this way that I conceptualise the hair salons in Mowbray, where more than being written as informal trading spaces, a porous infrastructural analysis can be deployed to engage with the African hair salon as a spatial node that forefronts African women's place making in the city. In her book, *The Migrant's Paradox*, Suzanne Hall (2021) writes about migrant operated businesses by locating the 'street' as a unit of analysing economies and structural systems in urban margins around multiple UK cities. In parallel, Hall emphasises the claims of space and an affirmation of one's place by migrants in these UK margins as a form of improvisation and redefining a space through making. For example, when interviewing migrant shop operators in the various UK cities, some operators rewired circuits and partitioned shops to accommodate more people in a limited space. These spatial improvisations are a form of maintenance and repair that occur against a backdrop of high rent prices, casual employment, and xenophobia (Hall, 2021). The making of these spaces is a form of resource building that reveals a degree of spatial agency in arrival streets.

Migrants are involved in the production of these infrastructures not only through labour and social network but also through their maintenance and repair. The Somali malls in Tayob's study also function as an arrival infrastructure where newcomers use some of the rooms in the mall for accommodation. Moreover, there is a negotiation and production of mobility in these infrastructures for new entrants that occurs. The construction of lodging rooms in a 'commercial' space blurs the lines of business and residential use of space. Similar to (McDermott, 2023) who notes that in her study of black women migrant owned hair salons in London, "some parents brought their children to appointments", while some customers brought their own traditional food to the salon to eat during long appointments (McDermott, 2023). McDermott writes the salon as a multi-functional and communal space where childcare and communal eating are made possible. Therefore, porosity as a quality that Tayob uses to describe the infrastructure that emerges in such migrant maintained architectures becomes important to analyse what this blurring of lines establishes and mobilises, a way of thinking about space in a non-clinical and non-confined manner.

Critical Spatial Literacy

Critical Spatial Literacy (CSL) is a theoretical framework "that provides the tools for a praxis of documenting and analysing women of African descent's contemporary spatial conditions and agency, just about anywhere in the world" (Amoo-Adare, 2013, p. 4). When developing a Critical Spatial Literacy for Asante women in Accra, Amoo-Adare argues that "there has not been explicit or extensive theorizing of how spatial configurations affect the daily lives of women of African descent" (Amoo-Adare, 2013, p. 44). Therefore, through the development of CSL, what she offers is a gendered account that provides a methodology and praxis that thickens "a feminist critical pedagogy of place mapping the spatial dimensions of our many and complex lived experiences" (Amoo-Adare, 2013, p. 2). CSL is a complimentary framework to *landing* that I am mobilising more broadly and allows us to understand the negotiations and politics that are present in contemporary African cities through the daily activities of African women and their articulations of the spatial configurations that they encounter. Through descriptive text and analysis, Amoo-Adare generates a map that articulates the different spatial trajectories of the Asante women and how they perceive their mobilities. CSL grounds me to think through the experiences and the position of African women migrant's development of a spatial literacy in Mowbray via the hair salons space and

how its engendering provides possibilities on mobility. CSL also invites me to consider the socio-spatial dialectic (Soja, 1980), where people, in this case African migrant women, modify, appropriate and create urban spaces while at the same time are being conditioned in various ways by the spaces in which they work, i.e., the hair salon.

Through research on braiding epistemologies in Bree Street Johannesburg, Matsipa pays attention to the mushrooming of black-owned businesses ran by women on the streets of Johannesburg to complicate and enrich the field of urban studies that is frequently over determined by the narrative of the 'limited space' African women often have in the city. Matsipa emphasises that braiding practices provide an epistemology that refuses the "narrative of a 'crisis' that overlooks the fact that the departure of established white-owned businesses from the Johannesburg CBD created conditions for the proliferation of black-owned micro businesses, many of which are run by women" (Matsipa, 2017, p. 32). Matsipa writes with Bree street and attributes city making to women, more specifically African migrant women where policies, laws and planning regimes alienate. This is particularly important considering that African woman "are disproportionately under-represented in spatial development decision-making processes" (Amoo-Adare, 2013, p. 2) —the Bree Street salon operators provide a narrative and archive that highlights the micro-proliferations and porosities undertaken by women across Southern cities. Similarly, Tayob's undertaking in Bellstat Junction, a Somali mall ran by African refugee women provides a counter-archive through the framework of architectures of care through a series of drawings produced over a year (Tayob, 2021). Here, Tayob writes the Somali mall as an affective site where various spatial practices of care, intimacy, mobility, and refusal are possible and undertaken by refugee African women in the margins of Cape Town, South Africa (Tayob, 2021). There is thus an explicit naming and consideration of the position of African women migrants in these spatial discourses, similar to the framework of CSL that Amoo-Adare (2013) proposes.

African women-centred spatial praxis such CSL helps me to think about the metaphor and practice of landing as a "reconceptualization of geographies of kinship" (Purewal, 2019) where a making of community (infrastructure) is possible. When writing about Afro-Caribbean hair salons in London, McDermott illustrates that "the salons created safe spaces for women like them, building a community that alleviated the disorientating struggle of being an immigrant in a new country" (McDermott, 2023). These salons provide a space that facilitates formation of long-standing friendships, attaining economic agency and establishing

their own structures and beauty practices. In Senegalese hair salons in the United States, traditional gender roles and social status are challenged, where Senegalese migrant women exercise their social mobility through monetary gain (Babou, 2008). Similarly, in Johannesburg, Matsipa argues that the presence of black hair stylists, specifically African women migrants "occupying large sections of Bree Street violates cultural norms of black female domesticity" (Matsipa, 2017, p. 39). Thus, there is a territorialization of the street through hair that signifies a shift in the place of African women, where their roles have "traditionally" been at the home. Matsipa asserts that there is a "dense transfer point of power, through which market driven regulatory regimes inscribe differentiated modes of social, cultural and economic power in the city" (Matsipa, 2017, p. 41). Through the mushrooming of hair businesses in Johannesburg and the US, their associated economic and social activities build networks that create trajectories and different maps that provide a critical spatial reading of the urban.

Spatial praxes that are facilitated by marginalised groups such as African women can be put into conversation with frameworks of "queering of space" where LGBTQIA communities through various "generative socio-spatial practices, forge alternative possibilities for Black LGBT life" in urban spaces (Bailey, 2014, p. 489). For example, in Bailey's study, there is an examination of the Ballroom culture in Detroit where "social kinship and performance geographies challenge and undo the alienating and oppressive realities of built environments in urban centres" (Bailey, 2014, p. 489). In a similar manner McDermott (2023) also writes about the Afro-Caribbean hair salons as a queering of space where queer hairstylists and queer customers or visitors have space to exist in their own agency — the making of space constitutes a kind of *soft* landing, one that insists on building across difference, similarities and holding multiple Black trajectories.

Care Interventions

A surprising finding when consolidating literature on the hair salon industry was the considerable amount of literature on hair salons that explored them as a site for health care interventions. Such health care interventions differ from how I have so far written about kinship in the above sections as they point to the influence of third parties such as medical institutions leveraging the sociality of the hair salon to reach the public for implementation of health care initiatives. These include distributing sexual reproductive interventions,

psychological support against domestic violence and cancer screenings. For instance, in a recent study conducted in Kwa-Zulu Natal in the Umlazi Township in Durban explores the potential of contraceptive delivery and decision making in hair salons in the area (Wara, et al., 2021). This study was taken to explore hair salons as spaces where clients who are mainly young women can have access to reliable contraception and birth control, as well reliable information about their use. This study frames the salon as a community-based ad hoc health facility from which health interventions such as contraceptives have more potential to be successful than traditional methods of contraception intervention such as hospitals and clinics. The authors highlight and emphasise that stylist-client relations provide fertile ground for the community and sociability of the salon. The study also somewhat compares the salon to "other health delivery programs in South Africa (…) in community-based locations such as supermarkets and churches" (Wara, et al., 2021, p. 12). By comparing the hair salon to a church, or a supermarket — spaces where people gather, congregate, exchange services — it becomes evident that the hair salon fosters a nuanced environment of exchange and possibility.

Whereas above I discussed Tayob's work on "architectures of care" as a making of space by refugee African migrants, the feasibility studies on hair stylists and their potential to provide health care to the community do not explicitly frame this as infrastructural work. However, the social and intimate relations encountered in hair salons, that facilitate health care ecologies echoes the socio-spatial practices that make up arrival infrastructures functional, where a structural service such as health care is facilitated by women hair practitioners. Such health care interventions in migrant hair salons and in poor neighbourhoods complicate the line between private business and public entity where a health care public service can be offered. Notwithstanding that the studies that are carried out are feasibility studies, the dissolution of this private/public binary is a point of class and power analysis where such interventions also reveal the state failure to provide appropriate basic health care and clinics in the areas where migrants and the poor are located. In another study focusing on black women in America, implementation of such health initiatives is an attempt to "address health disparities amongst Black women in the US" (Palmer, et al., 2022) by leveraging the trust that customers have to their hair stylists. When writing about hair salons as health intervention spaces, the literature and studies, as seen above, emphasise location, ethnicity, and race. The studies show that hair salons are carriers of a generally specific clientele and consequently the structural conditions that make the social relations possible for black

American women. The hair salon thus becomes a setting that is deemed “culturally appropriate for health care intervention” (Floyd, DuHamel, Rao, Shuk, & Jandorf, 2017)

With reference to hair salons operated specifically by women migrants, similar studies have been carried out that explore the sociability that hair stylists provide to their clientele and their community as a recognised node of interactions for migrant women. For example, Kim (2021) explores the potential of hair stylists to be “lay health advisors (lha)” amongst Korean migrant communities in New York. “An lha is an individual who is indigenous to his or her community and consents to be a link between community members and the service delivery system” (Kim, 2021, p. 8214). Her intensive study looked at intimate partner violence and the potential that hair stylists have at aiding the victims of domestic violence in the Korean community in New York where the customers were based. The hair stylist-customer relations are anchored by the clients' conversations with stylists, the long duration and frequency of salon visits, shared culture, language, and that the women go to hair salons alone. Kim’s study mobilises Korean migrants, including new entrants through the hair salon where “clients are more likely to talk to their stylists about their health issues through cultivating a long-term relationship” (Kim, 2021, p. 8224). There is something productive to be said about such health care interventions in the hair salon that points to a recognition of established relations that offer care and resources for new entrants facing cultural and structural barriers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I engaged with some of the literature that looks at the hair salon space as a facilitator of mobility, spatiality, and care in its various forms. The literature forms a framework that positions various migrant and refugee spaces through an arrival infrastructural lens, as well as an African feminist spatial configuration. Infrastructure provides the language to analyse the structural networks emerging from migrant’s socio-economic activities. The argument underlying this dissertation is that hair salons facilitate the process of landing for migrant African women in Cape Town, therefore I have explored how arrival, porosity and infrastructure extend this theory of landing in various settings such as the Somali malls in Bellville, the Senegalese businesses in Brazil, the hair stylists in Johannesburg and others. The literature on arrival infrastructure allows scholars like myself to engage with the spatial configurations in geographies where “black women are most subject to restrictive spatial allocation and movement within urban capitalist contexts”

(Amoo-Adare, 2013, p. 2). Moreover, noting that these migrant spaces are a “spatial idea, as opposed to an ad hoc and unplanned typology” allows us to move away from the illegitimatising language of informality (Tayob, 2019, p. 51). The co-opting of the hair salon by third party institutions such as health programs that reference the social structures present in hair salons as key facilitators of provision of essential health care services in areas where there are barriers to access also opposes writing and thinking about African hair salons as ad hoc and unplanned typologies. Here, I am interested in these spaces not as a form of institutional and Western legitimisation but as an exploration of a critical spatial practice that emerges when migrant African women’s infrastructural network in the hair braiding industry is mapped.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is a multidisciplinary discussion of the methods that I used to engage the day-to-day occurrences in the hair salons and also the methodological processes that developed during the field. The qualitative method that was used throughout the research was ethnography, with Black Geography as an anchoring framework. The chapter starts by providing an overview of the fieldwork and the ethical considerations surrounding it. Additionally, I go into detail about the rationale behind choosing ethnography, specifically a Black feminist ethnography and Black Geography that led to a cartographic exercise during fieldwork. Given the multiplicities that exist within the hair salon, how I engaged with the research also resulted in a layered and textured methodology, some of which was experimental and embodied. The methodology was designed with the following aims identified in the introduction:

1. What relations and networks are sustained in the hair salon and how are they produced? What do these relations mobilise or make possible?

2. How do hairstylists influence the geography of a city?

3. What structural and socio-economic implications are embedded and encountered in the establishments of hair salons in Mowbray?

Overview of Methods

The field research was conducted in Mowbray, Cape Town, where I visited over 15 salons for a period of six months, between the months of June 2022 to December 2022. Additionally, some consolidation site visits were made in July 2023. Ethical clearance and consent forms were approved by the Faculty of Science Ethics in Research Committee Board in May 2022. The demographic of the participants of the research were African migrant women from the ages of 21-55 years who worked in or owned the hair salons in Mowbray. The main countries that the hairstylists landed from were Zimbabwe, DRC, Cameroon, and Nigeria. From the onset, largely descriptive ethnographic qualitative research methods were used to engage with hairstylists and the hair salons such as interviews and participant observation. This includes interview conversations conducted during hair appointments where the hairstylists plaited my hair, while others were conducted as semi-structured sit-down interviews in the hair salons. A total of 16 semi-structured interviews were conducted with hair stylists with varying

durations, between 20 minutes to 1 hour interview sessions, which were audio recorded with consent. Furthermore, I drew upon academic articles, newspapers, archival books, and informal conversations to engage more with the spatiality of hair salons in Mowbray. Engaging with the hairstylists by way of conversation helped me gain an understanding of the structures that are formed in the salon and each stylists' landing journey to the hair salon. Being on site allowed me to also make note of the changes that occurred in the salon and in the neighbourhood of Mowbray at large. Below is a map that shows the area where I conducted the research; all the salons are within walking distance.

Figure 1 Map of Mowbray showing area where hair salons are situated (Google Earth)

Ethical considerations

This research focuses on migrant communities in Mowbray, and therefore a thorough ethical consideration is required as African migrants are vulnerable to heavy surveillance from the state and public. The vulnerability often exposes power differences and dynamics between researchers backed by academic institutions and communities marginalised by the law or whose access to 'valid' immigration papers is limited. The standard for any ethical research is to ensure that participants are not under any harmful threat, such as violating private information, intimidation, psychological harm or any physical threats by the researcher or

other parties. The research was carried out in the hair salon, a space where participants work in, to ensure that there is no introduction of any unforeseen threats. A decision was made to use pseudonyms at certain parts in the findings chapter where I go into detail about any information shared that relates to immigration regulations and their impact. This use of anonymisation is provided as a layer of privacy and sensitivity to conceal any identifying characteristics, specifically as this thesis will be publicly available. All the participants included in the thesis consented to their preferred names being used. I did not use any surnames or family names nor provide any other details beyond these preferred names.

There is an ongoing discussion in academia on research fatigue in the Humanities and Social Sciences, where qualitative research methods such as ethnography focus on minoritized groups leave members of the group exhausted from constant research done on them (Way, 2013). Research fatigue in its own way can be a form of surveillance and invasion when research monitors specific groups. During fieldwork, two participants told me that they had been approached by a few people in the past who have asked to interview them. The possibility of research fatigue was a discomfort I grappled with and had hoped that interviews taking place during a hair appointment would feel more natural. From the onset, it was important to introduce myself to hairstylists in Mowbray and share with them my intentions, my background, consent process and research. These introductions also allowed me to answer any questions that they had and for them to vet me. After the introductions, there were opportunities to visit participants who were interested and consented at their salons to have further engagements. Notwithstanding that being a customer in several salons beforehand provided a level of comfort and familiarity, the changes in the contexts to which I entered the hair salon certainly affected power dynamics and cannot be ignored. Hence, the agency that participants had to leave and stop the interviews or conversations at any time was an important part of the consent process.

The main limitations for this study were language barriers, as I am not fluent in French or Lingala, therefore I could not conduct interviews where hairstylists were uncomfortable speaking English. There were hair salons where the majority of workers were new-comers, and some expressed that language was a barrier. This language barrier was at times a productive way of refusal, where instead of prioritising the researcher's language, potential participants are able to set and more importantly refuse the terms of engagement. One of the principles of Embodied Inquiry is to foster an "awareness of experiences and positionality"

(Leigh & Brown, 2021) where my positionality is that of an African woman from Botswana who speaks fluent English. My positionality allowed me to acknowledge and know that this research would have been impossible without the generosity, time, and effort from the participants. Additionally, the distribution of consent forms that required signatures and full names was another limitation. Notwithstanding that these forms are private and concealed from the public, presenting them to migrant people came with a level discomfort to some potential participants. While a majority of participants had no issue with the forms, some people cited distrust regarding where their information would end up. Moreover, two people declined to be recorded and asked if I could take handwritten notes instead, which even though shows the limitation of recording as the main way of keeping track, it also shows that a negotiation of agency in the field was constant.

Ethnographic Research Methods

Ethnographic research methods were utilised during the field to foster a direct understanding of an everyday interaction with the research site. Ethnography is a research method "that takes a cultural lens to the study of people's lives within their communities and has roots in anthropology" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015, p. 149). Since the research is mainly a social inquiry, employing ethnographic methods such as observation and semi-structured interviews was fitting "to observe and analyse how people interact with each other and with their environment" (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015, p. 150). The critical focus for the observations and conversations during field work were on the relations, networks and systems that are produced and sustained in the hair salon as per the aims. Additionally, a spatial lens was also incorporated to analyse any socio-economic or structural changes that have taken place in Mowbray, particularly changes that directly impact the hair salons.

A list of flexible questions was developed beforehand to provide guidance and an anchor to the conversations. An example of questions asked was on the hairstylist's hair braiding work history, and how they acquired the craft of braiding. While another question asked what the processes of establishing hair salons as salon owners was and for workers how they found employment at the salons that they work in. As flexibility is an important aspect in ethnography, it became valuable to not be rigid with the questions and allow for a conversation flow when the situation allowed. This became crucial as I learned from the respondents and also learned with the site and where to attune when it was necessary.

Although I had frequented hair salons in Mowbray before this dissertation, it was important to have an elaborate ethnographic method such as observations and asking open questions to participants. This helped me to avoid jumping to conclusions and assumptions in a space I was familiar with as a customer. By operating from openness and remaining curious, I gained an understanding of the research participants, research site and of myself.

Similar to the Critical Spatial Literacy discussed above, this research was guided by a Black feminist ethnographic epistemology, wherein “feminist epistemology is a particular manifestation of the general insight of women's experiences as individuals and as social beings, their contributions to work, culture, knowledge have been systematically ignored or misrepresented by mainstream discourses in different areas" (Narayan, 1989, p. 256). As previously mentioned, I centre African women hairstylists to produce spatial knowledge of Mowbray through the lens of the hair salon. These participants are situated knowers, where what is known by them expands on their viewpoints through embodiment, being embedded in the site, their beliefs, and practices. Hair stylists use their labour and bodies in hair salons and have made networks that enable the mushrooming of their businesses. They also have background similarities and differences that situate them as the knowers in this research. If geographic knowledge has been historically grounded in omission and oppression of African knowledge (e.g., Cartesian maps), then multiple accounts of African women’s situated knowledge provide a ground for exploring situated ways of geographic knowledge production. This Black feminist ethnographic epistemology exists at the intersection of African migrant women and adds onto research in Southern urbanisms that focus on the spatial pedagogies of African women migrants such as Kihato (2013) and Matsipa (2017) who have used ethnographic methods. Therefore with these in mind, a development of a braiding as methodology emerged during the fieldwork.

Braiding As Methodology in Black Feminist Geographies

The roots that hold the method is ethnography, which is explored through the branches of a Black feminist geographical reading and writing of space. The entry point for expanding the ethnographic research methods was developing a hair braiding methodology — through hair braiding we encounter beauty practices, a negotiation of agency and spatialisation of urban landscapes by and for African women. The act of hair braiding requires the presence of the braider and the person whose hair is being braided, a partitioning of hair through lines from

the scalp and the unique technique of plaiting or weaving together the hair into a desired style. When these different elements come together, braiding as methodology for this particular research emerges, entailing the framework of duration and braiding as cartography.

Duration

When writing about a speculative hair braiding project by Nontsikelelo Mutiti titled *Braiding Braiding*, Sheila Chukwulozie posits that an important aspect when engaging with the practice of hair braiding "are the notions of duration—the hair braiding process is itself a time-based work of art—and community investment" (Chukwulozie, 2022). Duration is the time that it takes to do something, or the time that an activity lasts. Hair braiding requires the time to sit where different activities such as washing, hair partitioning, braiding and conversations take place. Reflecting on this element of time associated with braiding — a methodology that emphasises temporality through duration accounts for the ways that reflexivity, improvisation, and flexibility developed in the field. Duration became a crucial point of reflection at various points in the research. For example, the time in between interview appointments facilitated reflexivity where I had adequate space to refine research questions, consult relevant literature and collaborative reflections with the salon practitioners. Embedded in braiding is an encounter with time.

During the fieldwork process, there were moments of cohesion and harmony, like the fibre that holds "braiding patterns—populate the conversational thread to continue marking time; braiding takes place under, over, during, and throughout the conversation" (Chukwulozie, 2022). For example, sitting with hairstylists as my hair was braided during some appointments allowed me the time to hold the dual role as a client and observer, and a researcher. Beyond the fieldwork, threading together the research material was paramount when allocating the time to transcribe the recorded interviews as I was able to sit with the work and the detailed insights shared. To listen back to the conversations and write them down was a productive way to reflect on the subject matter of the interviews and pick up anything that I may have missed. During transcription, there was a consideration in the ways in which I asked questions, including the tone and which questions respondents were more engaged with. Additionally, this allowed me to determine if there were any leading questions which could create a bias. Notwithstanding that the questions were approved by my supervisors beforehand, however, being in the field is different from what is written on paper, therefore spending time mindfully transcribing was an exercise that facilitated improvement.

These processes of reflexivity and the durational work of reflection facilitate a sense of renewal, like getting a fresh hairstyle in a salon, that keep the research up to date and considerate of various perspectives.

Duration is a locating tool, where the time that it takes for an activity to last, happens at a specific geography or location. For this research, spending time in the field and taking field notes and walking allowed me to build an understanding of the Mowbray main road neighbourhood and its networks in a way that is not rushed, but rather experienced at different times. This helped me to keep track of the changes in the neighbourhood, for example there was an antique shop that closed during the research period. The antique shop was later remodelled into a hair salon, a month after being vacant. I approached the woman who was setting up the new salon and she shared that she was a previous employee in one of the other hair salons in the neighbourhood and had decided to start her own salon. Spending time in the field allowed me to have these conversations and to witness salon set up processes in real time. Additionally, taking the time to immerse myself in Mowbray allowed me to develop other connections beyond hair salons, such as electronic shop operators, residents, food shop owners, and others, contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the main street where I was able to have conversations about life in Mowbray. Being flexible during site visits was also necessary as the salon is primarily a business space, therefore being mindful of the length of interviews was taken into consideration and some interviews were rescheduled or cancelled when stylists were occupied. I was also able to revisit the same salons several times, which granted me the time to develop relations with the space. When developing a braiding as methodology, a consideration of duration can be compared to African hairstyles, where a period of three to six weeks is typical in between hair appointments.

In her review about the documentary film *Nan*, Sindhu Thirumalaisamy posits that "duration is our tool to put bodily, social differences into relation" (Thirumalaisamy, 2021), where the duration of the research process highlighted the different socio-economic relations produced in the hair salon landscape. There is an Embodied Inquiry (Leigh & Brown, 2021) that emerged wherein the sensorial experiences of both the researcher and participants are foregrounded. The salon is a space of sociality where communal and social exchanges regularly take place, therefore when developing braiding as methodology, the time spent in the hair salon space accounts for the sensorial, bodily and social relations that are embedded in the space. For example, some interviews were conducted during hair appointments, where

the hairstylist I interviewed braided my hair. Salon practises such as hair braiding, washing and manicures deeply involve the body and expose most parts of our bodies that we deem undesired — the dandruff on the hair, the dirt under the nails and the blemishes on our skins. Moreover and most importantly, the processes also allow us to maintain our beauty, to renew and regenerate ourselves and to construct our identities. To sit down and witness a change happen to one's hair after several hours is also an acknowledgement that braiding is labour intensive. Therefore to develop braiding as methodology, in a similar manner, the conversations that were conducted while braiding took place uncovered both the undesired and desired parts of the profession while also acting as a point of connection. This methodology aimed to minimise disruption while situating the research in a setting that attunes to the rhythms that hairstylists are familiar with.

Braiding as cartography

In the multiple ways that we read the city and understand space, a braiding methodology emerges as a cartography that provides a way of knowing and understanding mobility in the urban space, that is routed and rooted in African women's beauty practices. This way of moving allows me to position myself spatially and to encounter the multi-faceted structures that unfold when I follow and interact with braiding practices — a mapping of the city is provided through the practice of hair braiding with hairstylists in Mowbray. Similar to CSL, I constructed this experimental cartography to account for the ways that hair has informed my movements in the city. Additionally, I situate this research within the interdisciplinary field of Black Geography, particularly of a Black feminist epistemology as described earlier in the chapter. When writing about Black Geographies, Katherine McKittrick writes, "geographies of forced exiles have produced nuanced spaces that are imbibed, historically and presently with misdirection, changing locations, memory, hope, music, bodies, streets, parks, intellectual exchanges, shores" (McKittrick, 2003). When extending McKittrick's interpretation to the African hair salon, we encounter textured stories and narrations of migration and refugee and movement that trace the movements of black women, where a production and maintenance of such architectures such as the hair salon occurs. Additionally, hair braiding is contextualised as a productive site of engagement where issues of African feminist labour practices, porous infrastructures, care structures, and the market economy are concerned with ways of *Black space-making* amidst racialised and xenophobic urban displacement in South Africa.

There are various artists and researchers on the continent who engage with hair braiding as a cartography, such as the Salooni Project based in Kampala, Uganda by Kampire Bahana, Darlyne Komukama, Aida Mbowa and Gloria Wavamunno who "explore different communities through the medium of hair" (Nzinga Effect, 2018). The Salooni Project is a set of "travelling, modular, multidisciplinary art installations exploring hair" that interweaves people's stories and experiences with hair practices on the continent and in the diaspora (Salooni, n.d). The artists host a series of hairstyling, art, and conversations in various cities. I see these interventions as a form of an experimental cartography, where a mapping of embodied African knowledge and epistemologies are exchanged in these various geographies. During fieldwork, I started recognising braiding as a cartography illustrated by the cartography notes and a sketch of a map below. This provides a reading of Mowbray that pays attention to the ways in which space configures porously and is reproduced by established local networks and infrastructures that are often not accounted for in maps or plans is an enriching and vital exercise. As counter-narratives, there is a possibility to imagine space beyond the limited territorializations shown to us on conventional maps. Hair braiding is a spatial practice, and we can map or represent the movement facilitated by it. The development of the map followed a non-linear cartographic exercise where prompts for cartography evolved as follows with the key prompt: **Where can one get their hair braided in Mowbray?**

Cartography Experimentation:

A sketch showing a strand of braid representing Main Road Mowbray

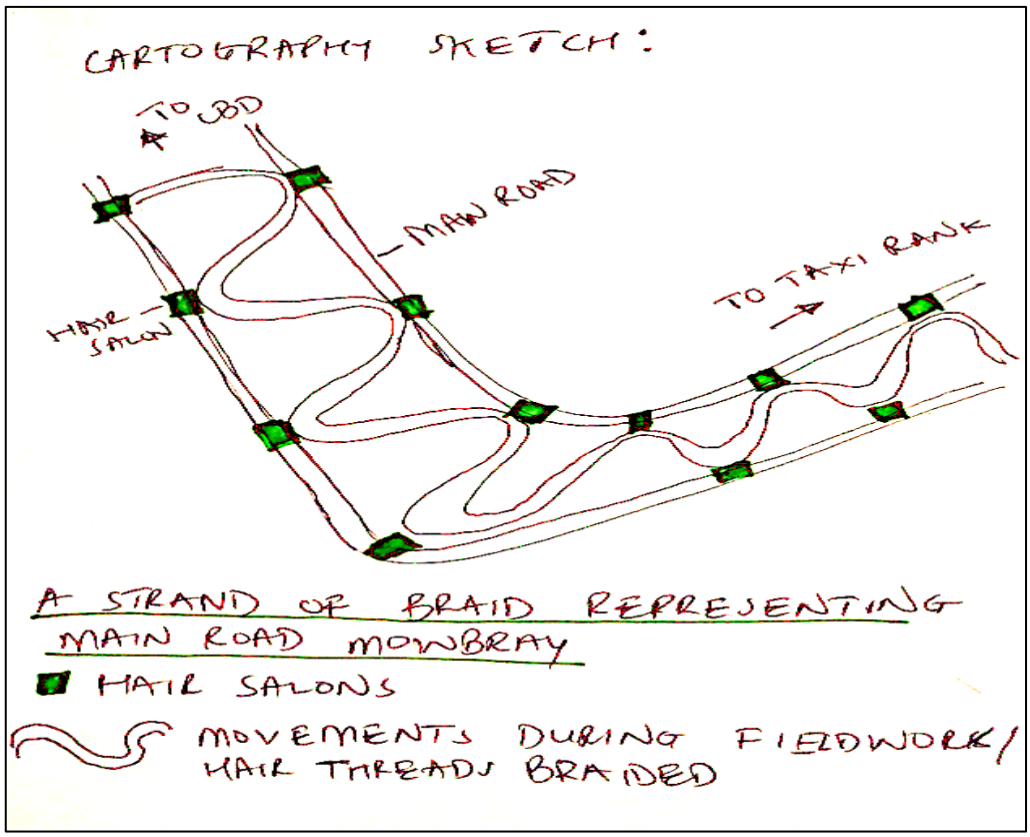

Figure 2 Cartography experimentation hand drawn by author Keamogetse Mosienyane

If we think of the city as a scalp that is being partitioned and being braided together by different structures, then we can zoom in on Mowbray main street as strand of a braid representing the textures and movements of the street where the different salons are represented by the green squares as shown. On the given sketch, I can start off anywhere and still be in close proximity to a salon. When I take walk, I often come across an advertising board outside salons with various hairstyles to choose from as shows in Figure 3. I am met by a hairstylist outside ready to greet me and help me decide on a hairstyle. Sometimes I take out my phone and I show them a picture of the hairstyle I want, and they tell me the price. We then both enter the hair salon.

Salon: a gathering

The etymology of the word 'salon' has some roots in French and Italian reception rooms, living rooms or rooms of gathering in houses where knowledge was exchanged by various

members of the community. I am interested here in these early definitions of the word where it is defined as “a spacious room set apart for reception of company or artistic display” (Harper, n.d). The etymology of the hair salon complements the practices of reception, exchange, and artistic display where hairstylists are the hosts who receive people and crafting their hair, making the salon a place of artistic endeavours. Simultaneously, the salon is also a spacious room that receives migrant women or is a room set aside where migrants can arrive and gather. I also think here of the social and storytelling environment shared by hairdressers and customers alike. This will be detailed specifically in the upcoming chapters where the salon was a space of storytelling and exchange during the fieldwork and beyond, an aspect that began this inquiry into the framework of landing.

Figure 3 showing different hairstyles as shown in Mowbray, captured by author Keamogetse Mosienyane

Salon: a landing

Landing is to bring something to land, either from flight or water (Oxford English Dictionary Online) — the salon as a site for movement where migrant women have a space to land and gather themselves. Landing in architecture is a “platform, an area of space immediately at the top or bottom of stairs, or in-between series of flights where landings are necessarily to allow stairs to change directions” (Frank Betz Associates, n.d). In a house with stairs, landings become a resting stop, to catch a breath and to change directions. In a building with a long

flight of stairs, landings provide a platform for residents and other people taking flight to rest. In an aircraft, the landing strip is where a plane contacts the ground and arrives. In both cases of landing in a house and plane, movement and pause are integrated into the space.

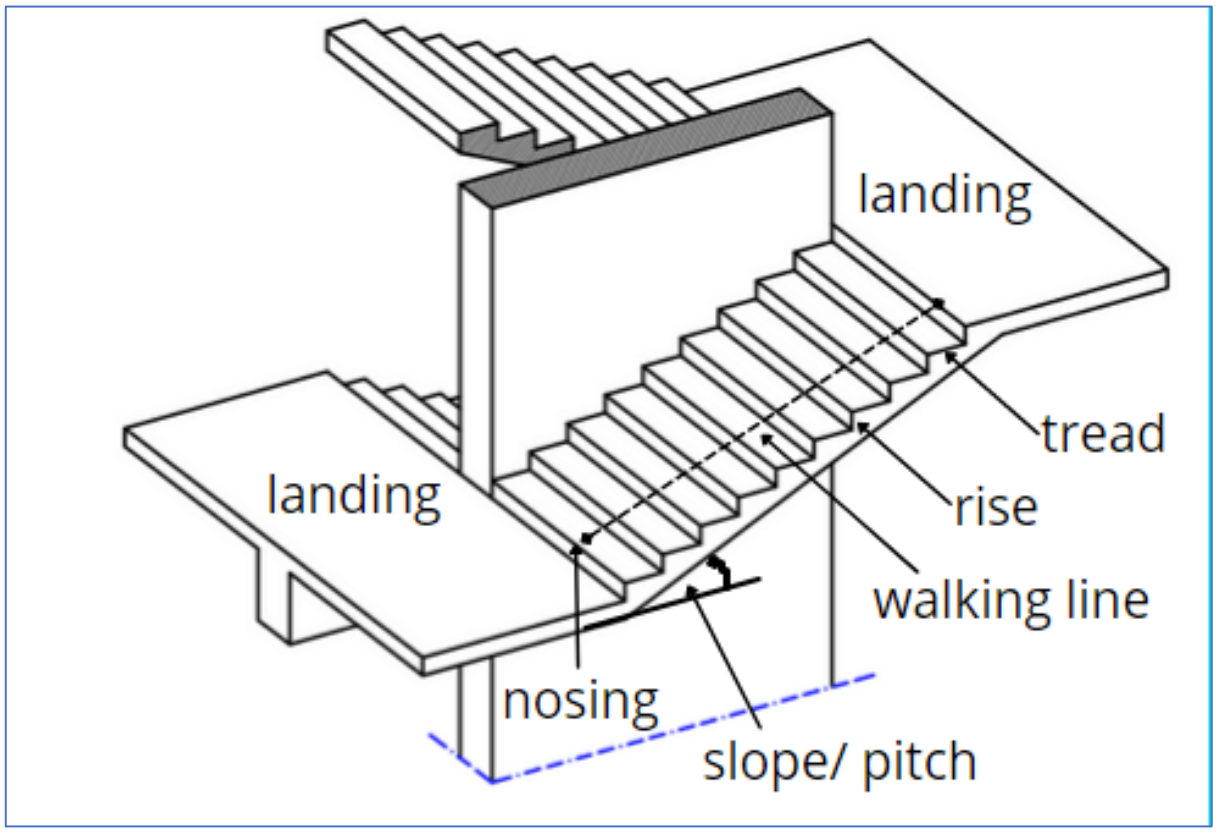

Figure 4 Showing components of stairs including two landings (Civil Engineering Notes, 2022)

Therefore, landing as a term is adapted to describe migrant spaces such as the hair salon where there is a multiplicity of happenings that are grounded in both space of the salon and the practice of hair braiding. I recognise both the physical space of salons and presence of hairstylists on the streets as factors that influence the spatialising of the city in various specific sites. Additionally, I acknowledge the practices that emerge from hair braiding as cartographic in themselves, or specifically Black cartographic imaginations regardless of whether they take place in a physical form such as a hair salon or shop. These practices allow us to write space through migration, specifically an African femininized migration. Braiding as a cartographic practice that leads to these various landings such as the hair salon. If we imagine migration as a succession of a flight of stairs, then we can imagine the hair salon as the landing platform that can facilitate a change of direction.

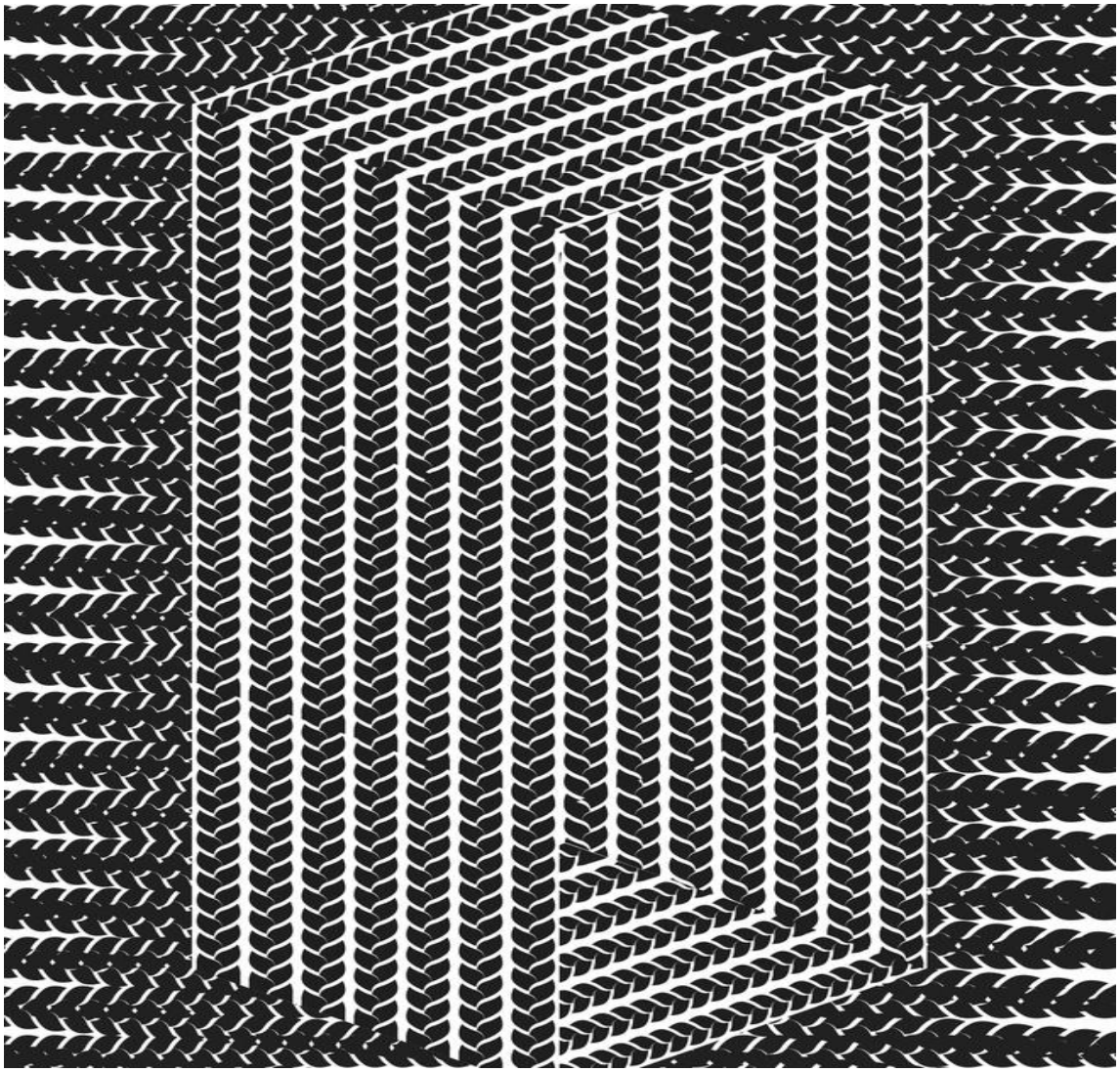

Figure 5 Print of hair braiding digital experimentation by Nontsikelelo Mutiti as part of her exhibition "Everything is where it is expected" (2019) at Printed Matter, New York. (Printed Matter Programs, 2019)

MOWBRAY

This chapter intends to provide the setting of the study and a relevant brief history of Mowbray, Cape Town. The intention with this contextualisation is to specifically engage with Mowbray as a site for hair salons with an overview of how Mowbray has transformed over the years, and to examine the factors and conditions that have possibly led to Mowbray being a neighbourhood where mushrooming of differentiated businesses takes place. Like many cities on the continent, their histories are often tied with power disparities that resulted from colonialism, and more specifically, entangled with apartheid in the context of South African cities. Cities in South Africa have historically been sites of contestation, where spatial access was pre-determined by polarizing and violent colonial and apartheid regimes, for example through the Group Areas Act of 1952. Additionally, the presence of African migrants in South African cities is usually contested through land-use policies, poor working conditions, and anti-migration laws (Vanyoro, 2024). Notwithstanding that urban land was controlled by a powerful colonial regime, placemaking by black South Africans and other Africans in these divided urban areas has always been continuous.

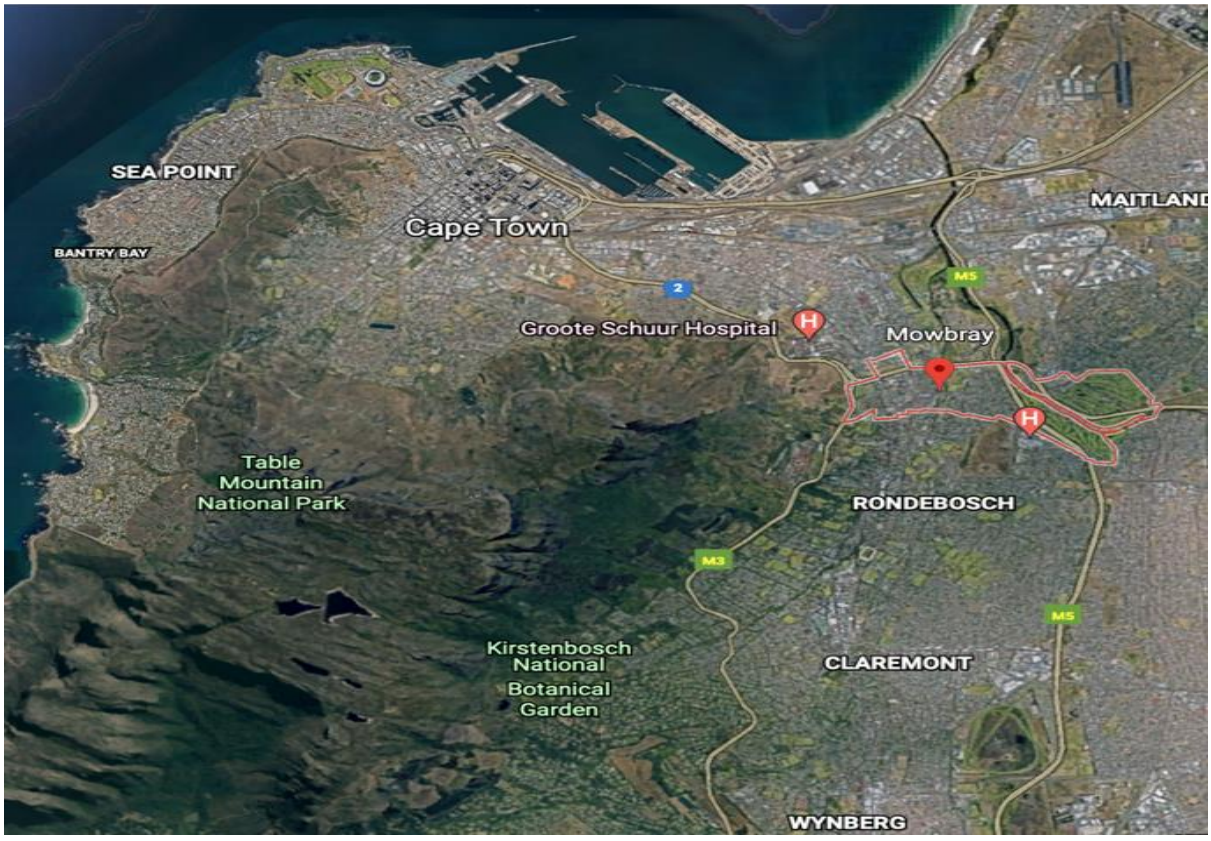

Figure 6 Mowbray and surrounding areas from Google Earth

Mowbray is a southern suburb located in Cape Town in the Western Cape province of South Africa. It is about six kilometres away from the city centre and it is a hybrid residential area, with commercial activity mostly concentrated on the main road. Mowbray is located at the foot of Devil's Peak, Table Mountain, where there is a noticeable natural landscape present. This includes the Liesbeek River and Newlands Forest which is close by, thus making Mowbray a neighbourhood where access to outdoor leisure activity amongst students and other residents is within proximity. Regarding urban physical infrastructure, Mowbray is at the intersection of major highways and roads in Cape Town, namely the M5, M3 and N2. This allows a facilitation of mobility for residents who use private and public transportation through mini-bus taxis and the metro. The public taxi rank is located next to the railway line. These transport networks allow both workers and students to access the University of Cape Town (UCT), commercial establishments in Mowbray and other businesses in the city centre and surrounding areas. It is in this way that Mowbray is primarily a transitory suburb, because of its significant transportation network (Seeff Southern Surbubs, n.d).

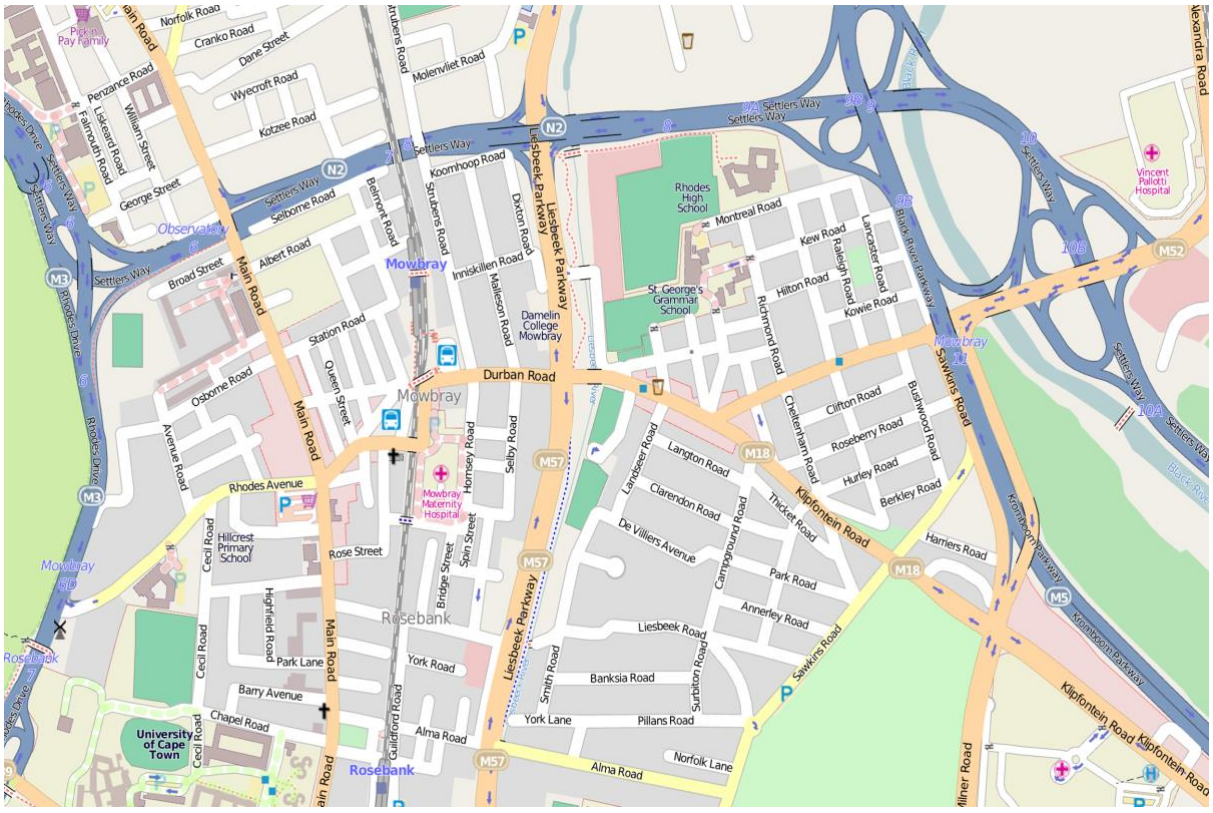

Figure 7 Mowbray showing the vast transportation network (OpenStreetMap, 2012).

Mowbray's proximity to UCT is another important aspect of how spatialisation in the neighbourhood has changed over the years. The university, one of the biggest in South Africa and Africa, is located within walking distance from the main road. When UCT's student body increased in the 1980's, UCT enlisted an "expansionist policy" that included a purchase of several flats and other real estate to meet its rising student population's needs (Bell, 1993). For example, the student residence, Forest Hill, was purchased at the end of the 1980s and this meant that families living in the existing flats had to find alternative accommodation. Recently, a long-standing Shoprite has been demolished, with plans to build a multi-use mall with student residences on top. This demolition will be discussed in length in the findings chapter as it was through my interactions with the hairstylists that I learnt of the development change. Other notable suburbs close to Mowbray are Rosebank, Rondebosch, and Observatory, where most students living in the area provide an essential customer base to the various businesses around. Main Road Mowbray currently has a variety of migrant-owned hair salons from various parts of Africa such as Congo, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Cameroon amongst others. Beyond the hair salons, Main Road Mowbray also has several Somali-owned spaza shops, Nigerian food stores, fast food restaurants, and tech (gadgets) shops and clothing stores, amongst others. Public facilities include a public library and the bus and taxi rank. There is also an activist space called Bertha House that often hosts events, talks, lectures, after school programmes and art-based interventions free to the public.

Migration into South Africa from other African countries continues to be on the rise after the first democratic elections in 1994 (Gobile, 2015). Given the precarity of the socio-political-economic status of most countries in Africa, South Africa is a leading economy on the continent and has somewhat of a stable political landscape compared to other states and experiences higher rates of migration. The specific history of hair salons in Mowbray and in South Africa is difficult to trace through academia articles or newspaper articles. Although it is also difficult to estimate the number of hair salons in South Africa, it is reported that the hairstyling industry, and more broadly the beauty industry contributes greatly to the economy (Tamasane, 2016). The studies that are available that have examined migrant owned hair salons have been prominently done in in large cities such as Cape Town (Gobile, 2015) (Settler, 2017) and Johannesburg (Matsipa, 2017) and there is less focus on rural or secondary urban areas. However, there is extensive documentation of the history of other forms of labour migration from other African countries into South Africa, this includes industries such as mining and agriculture. For example, exploited mining labour from black

South Africans and neighbouring African states has historically been used to develop the city of Johannesburg and greater Gauteng since the 1880's (Parshotam & Ncube, 2017). Therefore, this research makes a deliberate choice to focus on 'micro' industries such as everyday beauty salons and their banal or obvious existence in city landscapes and how their influence on the functionality of a city is often unaccounted for.

The Group Areas Act

The Group Areas Act of the 1950's until early 1990's was an "act that imposed control over interracial property transactions and property occupation throughout South Africa, establishing specific neighbourhoods as 'group areas', where only people of a particular race were able to reside legally" during apartheid (South African History Online, n.d). This resulted in forced relocations of non-white people across South Africa, and it is important to acknowledge that the Group Areas Act was amongst a long line of other legal measures of land dispossession during apartheid (Cochrane & Chellan, 2017). The impact of this Act in the Mowbray-Rondebosch area meant that racialised non-white groups were forcibly removed from the area to live around the Cape Flats and other areas further away from the city centre (Dhupelia-Mesthrie & Benson, 2020). The figure below shows that mainland Cape Town and the CBD became predominantly white-only spaces when the Act was passed. Later, solidarity movement from the racialised and displaced community who faced land violations and shortage of housing fuelled the abolition of the Group Areas Act in 1991. This slow process of abolition of the Act opened up the possibility for non-White people to buy houses or rent in White-only areas. Some white families sold their houses to coloured and black people who were able to out-bid white counterparts in the housing market in Mowbray (Bell, 1993). This market exchange that followed the abolition of the Group Acts was a turning point for Black and Coloured people who could afford to buy houses, where the rigid lines that divided Cape Town became somewhat porous.

During the racial segregation, some places like the Mowbray Mosque were still operating and provided religious and communal services to the Muslim community who had been displaced. On their website, the Mowbray Mosque states that the mosque "is a solid reminder of a community that refused to away, despite the ravages of apartheid" (Masjid Ar-Rashideen, n.d). During my fieldwork, it was evident that this Mosque was significant in providing a place of worship for the Somali migrants and other Muslims who would leave their shops to

go pray at certain times. In the Western Cape, The African Centre for Migration and Society report shows that the first Somalis arrived in Cape Town in the 1990s following the civil war in Somalia, where they established trading shops (Gastrow & Amit, 2013). Mowbray Main Road has a significant number of Somali shop owners. To contextualise Mowbray Main Road as a commercial migrant space is to also think of it as an arrival neighbourhood, in line with the theoretical framework. However, even if there has been an expansion of marginalised groups, including migrant households in the inner city, Cape Town still today significantly shadows and resembles the apartheid Group Acts spatial racial segregation. A majority of black and other racialised groups live on the outskirts of the inner city, and the fight for land justice in South Africa is still a crucial movement that the country grapples with.

Figure 12: Cape Town under the Group Areas Act.

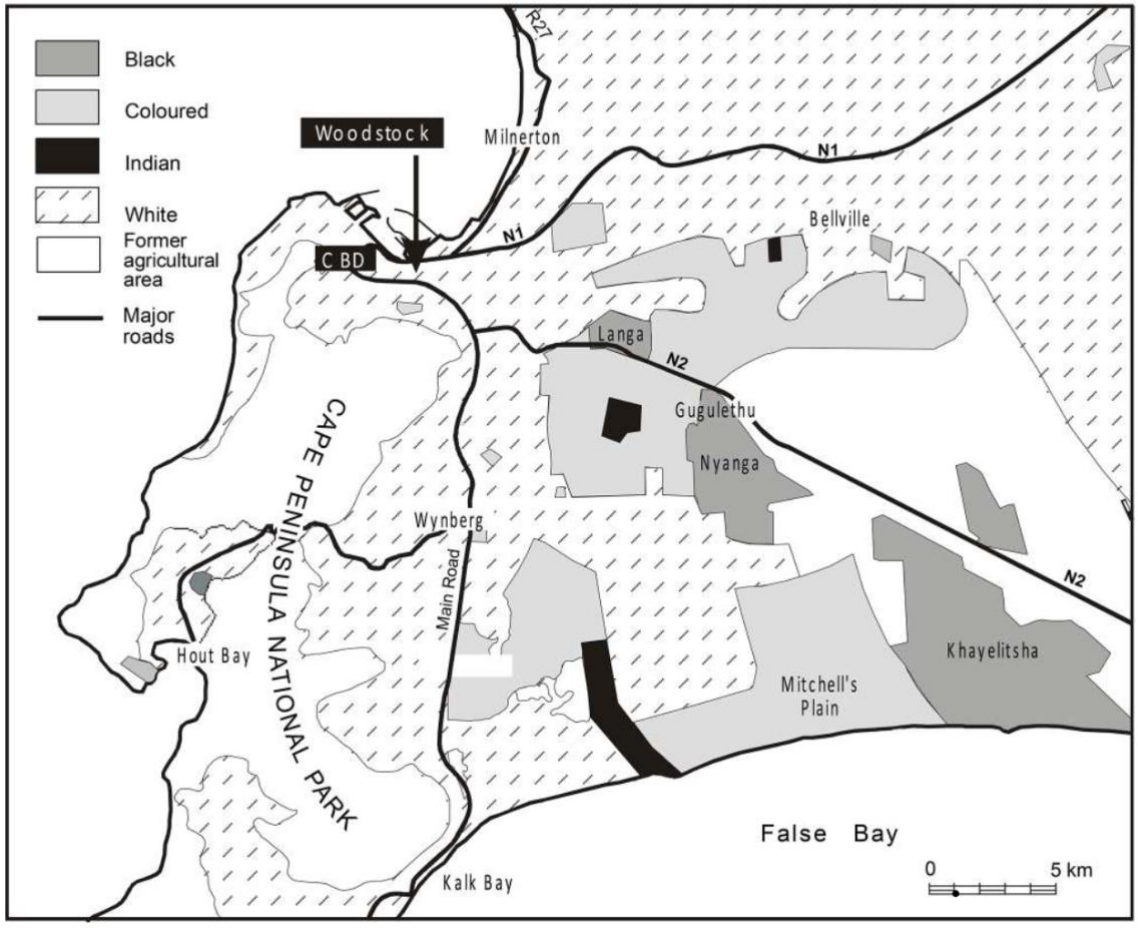

Figure by (Houssay-Holzschuch, Ninot, & Thebault, 2018)

Mowbray used to be called Drie Koppen, which means three heads in Afrikaans (Meyer, 2021). This brutal naming followed a violent act where the heads of three slaves were dismembered on a fence near the corner of Main Road and Rhodes Avenue in 1724 (Meyer,

2021). From the violent Drie Koppen, the name “Mowbray first appears around 1823” (South African History Online, n.d) where it was changed to Mowbray to signify the ‘takeover’ by the British when they occupied the Western Cape then. The name Mowbray came into existence because the new owners of the estate were from Melton, Mowbray, England (South African History Online). To read this history of Mowbray, particularly with the events that come before its name, is to show that a place in England, across the ocean, was part of the factors that led to the spatial configuration at the time. In this case, the social and spatial reproduction of Drie Koppen to Mowbray was through violence and settler colonial processes. For the latter, the “new owners” carried with them a new name for the place in which they settled, seeing the space that they settled into as a blank canvas to be named, planned, and spatialized. The genealogy of naming a territory or space is an overt point I make here to show these names reveal a social and political position, which where those in power had control of the land. Although we can trace the name of Mowbray to England, how the space has been restructured since then reveals a complex and messy enmeshment of land policies, migration, mobilities and as mentioned earlier the expansionist policies of UCT, amongst other factors.

To question these conditions is to contend with the colonial legacies of the Group Areas Acts, border policies, and immigration laws. When combined, these laws and violent legal frameworks have in the past established “whiteness as a social and bodily orientation, given that some bodies will be more at home in a world that is orientated around whiteness” (Smith, 2021, p. 99). This is relevant as Cape Town is still largely a city oriented towards whiteness and therefore the bodily and holistic experiences of those that contrast this orientation do not move with the same ease and comfort in an environment not oriented for them (Makhubu, 2020). Additionally, rigid planning, economic zoning, constant evacuations are continuously used to formalise, sanitise, and protect the image of the city in colonised countries that “uphold [the city] as a colonial construct and its majority black residents as historically inconsequential peons in its reproduction” (Kimari, 2021). It is within this context where I started the research by thinking with Brand, as Black diasporic studies offer us an opportunity to disrupt place, or rather the rigidity that the idea of place presupposes (Brand, 2001). Rather than overdetermining the migrant condition of coming-from-somewhere-else, Brand also emphasises the need of “coalition building across difference” (Cranston-Reimer, 2016). Thus, I continue to land at hair salons as sites of kinship, and coalition building.

FINDINGS

What follows in these next two chapters is an account of the findings that were shared through the various generous conversations I had with hairstylists during fieldwork. The conversations and observations were based on the ethnographic semi-structured interviews and were transcribed and analysed into various themes and divided into two chapters. The first chapter of the findings is titled "Arrivals", and the second chapter that follows is titled "Departures", both alluding to the process of landing at border posts, which can both be an arrival and departure point depending on context. In *In the Hold, On Blackness and Being,* Christina Sharpe writes about the "duality, that doubling of departures and arrivals as what happens in the hold" (Sharpe, In the Wake On Blackness and Being, 2016, p. 69). Sharpe continues to explore this duality by being in conversation with Charlotte Delbo, and she writes —

"There is a station where those who arrive are those who are leaving/ a station where those who arrive never have arrived, where those who have left never came back. /It is the largest station in the world" (Sharpe, In the Wake On Blackness and Being, 2016, p. 69).

The *Arrivals* chapter explores the key takeaways through an analysis that contextualises the encounters and exchanges in the hair salon as markers of city construction, mobility, and social infrastructure. In other words, arrival has an association with staying or a coming into, therefore I will look at the conditions that were shared by hairstylists that point to a making of place and sustainable life such as the networks that are created when various migrant women arrive and land at a hair salon. The *Departures* chapter came about as an urgency to address the spatial displacements, urban development, immigration policies and other structural issues that came up and were discussed at length during field interviews. Here, I consider the different surfaces that hairstylists land on, as some of these surfaces are inhospitable, and call for considering what a lack of immigration papers might mean for the survival of such spaces made and managed by African migrant women.

Therefore, to consider landing is to also to consider the surfaces, changes and atmosphere that people land on, not just as a final destination but to also as a consideration of the processes that take place at these sites of landing. To depart is to leave, and at border posts we use the

same space to get into and leave a territory, therefore this chapter will look at the conditions that undermine migrants' mobility or force displacements in these urban areas. The structure of presenting the findings as two chapters attempts to create a nuanced space for a discussion that reflects in its best capacity the insights that were shared, as "black hair braiding practices and the spaces they occupy constitute a form of knowledge about both the precarity and opportunities of a porous, unconsolidated and compromised modernist urban and architectural milieu" (Matsipa, 2017). To trace both the precarity and social infrastructure implicated in the operation of hair salons establishes an understanding of the urban spatial practices of African migrant women.

ARRIVALS

Landing: “an instance of coming or bringing something to land, either from the air or from water. (similar/synonym: arrival)
Arrival: the process of arriving”

— Oxford English Dictionary Online

In this chapter, an exploration of the various ways that relations, systems, and networks are produced and maintained in the hair salon is discussed. Arrival is used as an entry point to discuss these aims via the definition of arrival infrastructure given previously as “those parts of the urban fabric within which migrants become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or trans local social mobilities are produced as much as negotiated” (Meeus, Arnaut, & van Heur, 2019). Arrival helps to foreground the mobilities that are activated in the hair salon space and beyond — in arrival, there is movement, and to expand the aim, what does this mobility do for the migrant women who work in the hair salon and how it is facilitated? Thinking of arrival as a process of landing, where migrants are always arriving somewhere, this chapter starts by discussing the ways that hairstylists arrive at the hair salon space in Mowbray. These forms of arrival carry with them living stories of how they acquired the craft of braiding, salon rental systems, the different reasons why hairstylists entered the hair market and the personal and professional trajectories that are marked when hairstylists arrive at hair salons. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the various relations and networks that are sustained in the hair salon when hairstylists have entered the hair salon. These ways of arrival generate a mapping of a city that shows the social mobilities African hairstylists are entangled in.

Entry

The ways that access and connection to a hair salon is made by the hair stylists and salon owners is discussed through the experiences and systems of entry in Mowbray salons. Hair practitioners arrive at the salon space and market continuously, to start or continue their hair craft. Entry refers to access to the hair market, where hairstylists can trade their craft in exchange for an income in the salon. During fieldwork, all salons were at various stages; some had been in operation for a few weeks, months, and years while others had been operating for over a decade. To gain access to the hair salon space in Mowbray, there are

various ways of entry such a vacancy where salons are looking to hire new people to come in as workers; as a salon or business owner who is responsible for the rent and the labour management; and through mutual partnerships amongst workers who have acquired enough capital to start their own independent practice. Some salons are stand-alone salons, others are a mixture of a cosmetics store and a salon, while others share space with various non-related set ups such as electronics stores, clothing stores and corner stores. Since longstanding salon owners, workers, and newly formed partnerships were interviewed, it was evident that entering the salon space had different outcomes for practitioners and each person had a different reason for arriving at the hair salon.

In most, if not all cases, entry is facilitated by word of mouth, through shared recommendations, where there is a constant circulation of information on which salons are vacant, and who needs more stylists or where there is an available opportunity. Shared recommendations and referrals in the salon and street ecosystems are an important aspect of finding a place to rent or a salon to work in. Hairstylists enter salons after recommendation from friends, relatives, other business operators, or clients. For example, when sharing how she started working in the hair salon, Isabel recounted that she was recommended by a friend who introduced her to a woman who was looking for somebody to plait hair. She then worked at this salon for two years before starting an independent business at a salon down the road, where she works with Chantal now. They both told me that they knew each other prior as they are family friends. In another salon, Lydia knew Beauty, the current salon owner where Lydia works, through a friend who also currently works in the same salon. She shared that "*my friend is the one who came to look for me when they needed a hairstylist"* and she decided to join them (Lydia, interview, October 2022). Therefore, being in the know and a part of the circulation of information is important for practitioners in Mowbray. During fieldwork it became evident that most of the hairstylists spent time together, and some knew each other across hair salons. During several appointments, some hairstylists from a different salon would visit the hair salon I was in and vice versa. These are opportunities to exchange and share information facilitated by the social patterns and flows of life in businesses in Mowbray. Word-of-mouth travels with the sharer and receiver, mobilising those desiring a change in their circumstance.

There is a continuous and mobile flow that is possible when arriving at hair salons to work. These flows took form in various ways and were shared to be significant in how the

respondents navigated the city as African women who are co-producing their own agency. As "haircare is a vital source of employment for women, and a potential avenue for social mobility" (Matsipa, 2017), the various reasons that respondents gave in entering the hair salon market include business growth, passion, independence, and self-employment. Gaining a sense of independence was significant for some respondents who left their abusive relationships. Hair salons provided an avenue to earn an income where women can support themselves and distance themselves from the abuse. One anonymous respondent shared that when the father of her children proposed to her while she was still in Congo, he promised her family that he would marry her once she moved to South Africa with him. This promise was short lived when he abused her once they moved to Cape Town, and she explains that she was working for him "*like a slave, and then I moved there from him, and I left him alone, and I left with my two daughters"* (Mary*, interview, October 2022*)* [1]. This was not the first time a case of domestic abuse was mentioned when I asked about what the salon means for them. Another anonymous respondent shared that the salon means a lot to her, as it helps her as a single mother to pay rent, food and school fees for children. Here, arriving at the hair salon, and starting an operation mobilised them to move from abuse or as single parents. The nuances of the salon as a 'safe space' became more complex when cases of inter-salon verbal abuse were shared. For example, when another respondent shared that she had to leave the toxic work environment in a salon she worked to one where she felt safer:

> *"Where I was working, the lady and them were treating me poorly because where I was working it was a Zimbabwean salon, and I am from Congo. I used to go to the next salon which is a salon for Congo people, and I complained and said if I can find somewhere else and I want to leave. So, the lady who was working next door said there is someone moving this side (here) and is looking for someone, but it is going to be a little bit quiet than where you are working, so I said it is better to be quiet and be at peace than to have more money, but you do not have peace"* — (Esther*, interview, October 2022)

In the case above, leaving an environment where one was treated poorly happened amongst the salons themselves, where the respondent was able to move to another salon that worked better for her, where she could find more peace. The network that the respondent established with the salon next door where she was able to complain and move salons cannot be

[1] * Used to indicate pseudonym

understated, and what this network mobilises here is her attainment of peace of mind. This is also not to downplay the role that salons play in providing a breathing space for the women who shared those salons helped them when they left their abusive partners, but to show that within the multidisciplinary (multifunctional) architectures that salons sit in, there still exists various power dynamics that some hairstylists as workers have to navigate. To grapple with such power dynamics, Lydia shared that "*workers can move at any time*" and that the salon helps her as she is navigating changes in her life and in her career, where she hopes that one day, she would have a salon of her own, anywhere. This movement is not restricted to salons in Mowbray only but to other African hair spatial nodes that exist in the city, for example in the city centre, Wynberg and Bellville. Therefore, there is a level of space and individual choice in deciding where and who to work for, and more importantly when to leave, when it is possible. Just like leaving a land border means to enter another country — in entry, there is also exit, facilitating movement and mobility. When explaining the system of establishing hair salons, Margaret shared the following:

> *"If I own this place now, and I feel like I want to move to another area, or I just want to leave this environment or I feel like I'm not interested in the business anymore and I want to do something else, then I can place it on sale".* (Margaret, interview, October 2022)

Black hair trajectories

When hairstylists arrive at the hair salon, they carry with them the trajectories that contextualise the development of black hair braiding as a craft and integrated skill. To narrate how hairstyling skills are gained is to encounter the various personal relations to black hair and socio-cultural mobilities that precede when a hairdresser enters the hair market. These archives form part of the different trajectories that facilitate an opening for engaging with hairstyling in different urban or non-urban geographies. In Johannesburg, migrant hairstylists expanded the range of local hairstylists as they introduced them to different methods of styling from their respective cultures (Matsipa, 2017) or methods that they have developed along the way. At the core, hair braiding is a technical skill learned over time, practice, and patience. During fieldwork, intimate stories were shared of learning braiding skills from a parent, a sibling, a neighbour, self-taught observations or taking a hairstyling course at a school. When speaking about her journey in braiding, Miriam shared the following:

"For us Africans, you can see your mother doing hair for people, and you're busy putting your eyes (observing). After my mother, there is one neighbour back in my country, her name is Isabeya, she always braids people's hair, like house calls, and I was helping her with finishing people's hair". (Miriam, interview, June 2022)

Tracing African hair practices and beauty rituals extends far beyond the confines of hair salons in urban spaces, where hair braiding practices often start in the domestic home. Like Miriam above, hair braiding is an extension of her mother-daughter and neighbourly relations within her home country. For Chantal who learnt how to do hair from her siblings when she was in primary school, where the repeated practice of plaiting different hairstyles for herself and her siblings over the course of twelve years at her school cemented her skills. However, her hair trajectory during her formative years leads us to encounter rigid anti-black school laws. In Kinshasa, Chantal and her siblings plaited each other's hair to uphold the rigid hair code in the all-girls Catholic school they attended. It is at this school where black girls hair styles and appearance were policed, where neatness and respectability politics were used as a measure to manage obedience. They were not allowed to plait certain hairstyles, and each month they would be a standard hairstyle down to the number of plaited lines that were allowed, and anyone who strayed from the set style would be punished. This led us to have a conversation about the 2016 protests that happened in Pretoria over similar "oppressive and racist hair regulations in schools, where such hierarchies extend globally to black women throughout Africa and the diaspora" (Matsipa, 2017).

Chantal continued to share that she decided to cut her hair off after she was punished when she plaited a different number of lines on her hair than was stipulated for that week. Such punitive measures over black hairstyles have been ongoing since colonial times to the Pretoria protests over black and coloured students' hair policies, to my own sister being sent back home to 'comb' her hair and many others systemic injustices constitute part of an experience of going to school or work for black girls and women. Although the governing of Black hair is prominent amongst women and girls, there are similar cases of black boys being turned away from school because of dreadlocks and claims that locked hair violates the school's dress code (Joseph-Salisbury & Connelly, 2018). A 12 year old black boy was punished and was placed in isolation when he arrived for his first day at a school in London, and such cases of racism, discrimination and anti-Blackness are spread across the globe with documented cases in South Africa, Kenya, Australia, Ghana and the United States (Joseph-

Salisbury & Connelly, 2018). These experiences of the policing of Black hair that have roots in settler colonialism often attempt to 'sanitize' and standardize Black appearances to an European or Western appeal and tries to negate and undermine the multiplicity of Black beauty. I found the experience of Chantal and I exchanging such hair stories comforting, while sharing a conversation that took place as my own hair was being braided in a hair salon away from the rigid educational structures we grew up in, where I could choose whatever hairstyle I wanted and Chantal could also practice her craft.

In the hair salon, beauty is practiced and performed through hair braiding and hair maintenance, as Christina Sharpe writes "beauty is a practice, a method … a space to be precious" (Sharpe, 2019). I think of the salon and the practice of braiding as a space to be precious and the 'origin' stories that the braiders shared on how they started hair braiding to also be practices of beauty. For example, Patience told me that her relation to hair braiding developed because she wanted to "*look nice"*, and when the people around her admired how she always did her hair, they would often ask her to style them as well. For Imani, doing hair is "*something that she loved doing"* for the longest time, and had always wanted to open a salon to pursue that love. For Chantal, creatively expressing herself through hair was very important even though sometimes who would often be punished at school for sometimes doing her hair slightly different and found the rigid policies of the school limiting. Therefore, the way that these women described their styling journeys was from a place of self-expression, beauty, and creativity.

Hair braiding in the continental and diaspora context is intertwined with Black feminist practices of beauty and identity (Lukate, 2021). There is intention in taking the time to adorn one's hair. These women began their journeys wanting to nourish and treat their hair with preciousness, and their friends and family loved what they saw and encouraged them to extend that beauty-making with them, which forms part of their arrival trajectories to Mowbray hair salons. For Patience and Imani, their hairstyling venture preceded Mowbray as they both did hair professionally in Zimbabwe and DRC respectively. There is a general sentiment that all the stylists shared that everyone is on a different journey and making note of this helps to contextualise the various arrival points into the hair salon and that there isn't a singular or reductive story. Therefore, this is a productive engagement that resists to frame the labour that happens in hair salons to a generalisation of hustle or informality. When interested practitioners enter the hair salon, the capacity building of local hair spaces and

practices is actualised and ultimately an income is earned, and a social mobile infrastructure can be developed and sustained.

Ways of constructing the hair salon

"There are ways of constructing the world — that is, of putting it together each morning, what it should look like piece by piece" (Brand, 2001).

In this section of the arrivals chapter, I borrow the quote above from Brand, where I think of the salon as the world that is incrementally being constructed by those that arrive at /enter it. To construct the world, to put it together each morning, is to assemble, make and activate a set of routines, practices and exchanges that propel the continuous operation and maintenance of the hair salon. Here, I extend the framing to Mowbray where a zooming in and a mapping of the internal relations that construct that world are discussed. During and after the conversations in the hair salons, the different ways that migrant hair stylists develop a shared consciousness of placemaking to exist within the salon and outside of it emerged. Faith, customer relations, and spatial relations that uphold the salon as a site for employment and care for migrants and newcomers into the city.

i) Relation through faith

A foundation through faith and God emerged as central to how most stylists spoke about their life in the salon. In the act of 'putting the world together each morning', God was described as an anchor, a blesser, a provider and a stabiliser during times of turmoil and of growth. Some of the stylists mentioned and spoke about God in various circumstances even when there were no direct questions asked touching on spirituality. As time went on, it became clear that faith plays a significant role in how some of the respondents navigated their lives in and outside the hair salon.

Faith in God provides spiritual and emotional nourishment for hairstylists when structural failures continue to persist. For example, during COVID-19, when most businesses closed, and government support was limited, Patience sought some solace from God. She shares that "*It is only by the grace of God, that is all I can say, it was not easy, it was tough, because I thought maybe we are going to close. Salons were the last businesses to open, people stopped coming to the salon during and after lockdown"* (Patience, interview, October 2022).

Nourishing the spirit is an important part of constructing the world as it provides a structure that supports and upholds a level of hope that is at odds with precarious conditions that persists. To remain hopeful takes work, and it is this work that sustains communities and makes space for perseverance. For others, God shows up in their lives by boosting them with the confidence to handle competition and uncertainty on slow days. The role that belief systems play as a structure and resource that sustains communities is often minimized in scholarship. However, scholars such as Henrietta Nyamnjoh write about the role that the Pentecostal church and faith plays in migrant Cameroonian families in Cape Town as sites for divine healing and wellbeing, especially amidst health emergencies (Nyamnjoh, 2019). Similarly, I am interested in writing about faith in these urban spaces in the terms that the stylists spoke about their relation to faith and how they are mobilised in their daily lives when they commune with God either through prayer, meditation, attending church, and other ways. There is a recognition of the spiritual and emotional upliftment that extends an individual and collective life-affirming environment.

"It is a job that God gives me, I didn't study much, but you can see by the grace of the God, he helped me to do the hair to help my kids". (Isabel, interview, July 2022)

ii) Relations to customers

The relations that hairdressers build with their customer base by building trust and diligence through their work is an essential aspect of the networks that contribute to the operation of the salon. Customers visit the hair salon frequently and spend a significant amount of time during their hair styling sessions. Just as aforementioned in the literature review, in the hair salon there is a porosity that can exist between the client-practitioner relation, where overlaps between the personal, social, and entrepreneurial occur. Through some intimate conversations, a social space is created. In the hair salon space in Mowbray, there is a social exchange that is cultivated between the hairstylists and the people who visit the hair salon to get their hair made. There is a demystifying and undoing of secrecy surrounding exchanges that concern the wellbeing of women, where the relation that hairdressers have with clients in the hair salon becomes an avenue that extends traditionally taboo topics beyond the confines of domestic or family homes. As shared previously in the literature review, the social environment that hairstylists and clients create has been co-opted for health care interventions such as against domestic and gender-based violence amongst Korean migrants in New York

(Kim, 2021). Below are some of the excerpts where the hairstylists in Mowbray shared their experiences with their customer base and community:

"I like to talk, so it is good, you know its students, so you just welcome them good, so it is good to me. Some of them they just come here, and they only wash their hair, and they want to talk, some of them don't even plait, they want to talk". (Lydia, interview, October 2022)

"*Some people, literally wake up, before they go to work, they pass through the salon to get something, or they come from work, so you always hear stories of either how they days went, good or bad, so yeah it is really interesting."* (Karine, interview, August 2022)

"So, these things I share with them for example, there are other things that I share with some girls who come to do their hair here, like relationship advice, I want them to be clever". (Miriam, interview, June 2022)

In Mowbray, the clientele consists mostly of students and as shown in the excerpts, hairstylists expressed that there was space to share some relationship advice, jokes, and general conversation with customers. Beauty can also be used as a way of describing the relation between stylists and customers in the hair salon, where their work is to engage with the upkeep and aesthetic maintenance of the hair of their clients. Hairstylists expressed that it was key to retain their clients, and this is through making sure a 'proper job' is done, where customers are satisfied and can even recommend their hairstylists to their friends and peers. The relations that are nurtured in the hair salon are not immune from undesired interactions such as with entitled customers and negligent hairstylists. However, the salon was mostly described as an open and free environment where customers were welcomed with openness, and the same was returned to the hairstylists. If the salon is the world, then the people that exist in it are mostly clients and hairdressers, therefore maintenance of this relation is crucial in keeping this world running.

iii) Relations with each other

The relations that the hairstylists have with each other varies and is layered. This includes power dynamics that exist in the hair salon, such as owner-worker relations, different nationalities, newcomers, and long-established stylist. To imply that everyone "gets along"

would be disingenuous and limit the role that difference plays in relation and community building, an example given by a hairstylist who faced a toxic work environment and had to move where she was welcome. However, through observation and conversation, there was a clear social support that exists in Mowbray amongst migrant hairstylists. Throughout this chapter, I have written about friends starting salon operations together and the support that they provide each other that allows flexible working hours. Additionally, the social environment that is constructed in the salon was observed through some hairstylists eating, buying food together when there were few customers, saying that they attend church together, chatting and making social visits to the other salons. The excerpts below contextualise how the hairstylists spoke about each other:

"Before we were just friends, and then we become more like family, family friend. Me, I come before her when she came, it was like newcomer and then we start". (Isabel, interview, August 2022)

"Sometimes when I have a day off, I can still come into the salon, and if there are no customers, I have lunch with the other ladies. We buy food from a Nigerian shop on the main, KFC or Congolese food next door". (Chantal, interview, June 2022)

"The salon is a salon; you cannot work alone." (Patricia, interview, November 2022)

The salon is a gathering space. The key sentiment is that in as much as the salon creates a social space between the hairstylists and their customers, the level of engagement is stronger amongst themselves – *the salon is a salon, you cannot work alone*. There is strong level of relatability and recognition amongst some hairstylists where the relations are practiced through a family, sister, aunt, or close family friend level of intimacy, regardless of blood relations. This type of understanding was mostly seen in the relationship between Chantal and Isabel, who had been working together for a few years and had their salon in the back room or between Florence and Dreyfus who had just started their own operation a few months prior. Florence had also acquired Lingala from her co-workers over her 20 years of working in hair salons and was now fluent. Language played a significant role in world making, where the respondents showed adaptability by being fluent in more than their first languages such as Lingala and French, they were able to converse in English and a working understanding of Xhosa. In the hair salon, opportunities to learn through practice, exposure and repetition are

created, where these language skills are transferable and mobilise them in their different contexts.

iv) To their space

The last part of this theme pays attention to the ways in which the design and atmosphere of the interior and exterior of the hair salons is carried out by both owners and stylists. These are the ways in which the physical space is made their own and accommodates their needs. There were small details that stood out in ways that the salon was designed to reflect ownership. For example, when observing the names of the hair salons chosen, a clear personalised ethos emerged. Naming as a place marker — the names were often playful and alluded to ideas of beauty. Few that stood out were Perfect Touch Salon, Doctors of Hair, Impressions Hair & Beauty Parlour, Toss Touch and Levels on Ice. These names depicted the care and haptic sensation of braiding that are present in the hair salon — that each salon promises an impressive, perfected touch to their customers. Additionally, other names were a direct nod to the establishers' names. These included Delightful Patience, A-Z Imani, Beauty's Hair Salon, Mafo's Hair Salon, and John's Touch. In Mowbray, Patience, Imani, Beauty and Mafo reclaim a piece of Mowbray and signpost it.

"The salon is a free environment. I like the variety and I also like how it represents, not represent perse, but when you walk in you see the hard work". (Patience, interview, October 2022)

The salon is depicted as a free environment where the labour that it takes to practice a craft is present and cannot be missed. When asked about feelings about the hair salon, almost all the respondents spoke about how the salon has provided provision and an income for sustenance for themselves and their families. Beyond an income, the salon is multi-functional in what it hosts, providing accommodation in backrooms for some workers, a social gathering, opportunities for business growth and mobility.

DEPARTURES

Landing: “the act of taking goods off an aircraft or boat, or the amounts that are taken off
Departure: the act of leaving a place, or a flight, train, etc. that is leaving a place at
a particular time.”

— Cambridge Dictionary Online

In this chapter, the aim of the dissertation that looks at the structural and socio-economic conditions encountered and experienced by hair stylists in Mowbray is addressed. Through engaging with the hair salon space, an undertaking of critically tracing the ways in which market-driven mechanisms, urban development, displacement, and anti-migration sentiments and policies affect the respondents emerged. Hairstylists actively respond to these systemic conditions when they enter the hair salon market. During site visits — rising rent, inflation, competition, disappearance of essential services such as banks and affordable shops, and immigration policy failure were discussed in length. As both physical and social architecture, hair salons constitute part of the urban infrastructure that face precarious conditions that threaten to displace both workers and hair salons. These findings prompt us to contend with questions of urban residency, where migrants and refugees’ access to the city is highly contested, for example through legally binding documents such as leases, employment exclusion and public services that require proof of citizenship.

The following findings discuss the socio-economic conditions starting with the most visible spatial changes such as the demolition of a major grocery shop, to the shutdown of banks, to rising inflation costs, and the chapter ends with the impacts that anti-migration and xenophobic policies has on hairstylists. Still within the framework of landing, where the ground/landing/breathing space for establishing stable roots becomes inhospitable — in this section, I contend with the challenges of setting ground for African migrant hairstylists. Regarding marginalized African migrants, landing is seldom smooth; there are various trajectories, red tape, and border discrimination that are entangled in their movement and making of a home within the city. Reading with Tayob, “to maintain home in the context of South African cities requires a reading across registers and sites” (Tayob, 2023).

Landing: I have taken several taxi rides on Main Road and for this fieldwork, I got off at an unmarked "Shoprite" taxi stop in Mowbray. A year before when I lived in Mowbray, I quickly learned to call the stop by this name of Shoprite after repeated trips and overhearing fellow passengers. The irony of this name is that there is not a single Shoprite store in sight and on site, and yet, this is a taxi stop I continued to land at. I did not ask any questions regarding the origins of this particular name. I encounter the name Shoprite several times during the conversations I have with the hairstylists, and this is where I begin.

Shoprite

Most respondents spoke at length about the changes that have had an impact on their businesses, and here I start with one of them —the demolition of a significant shopping corner that hosted Shoprite, one of South Africa's largest retailer and grocery store. This once busy corner is now a large 'empty' construction site fenced with corrugated iron by Rhodes Avenue and Main Road, where most of the hair salons are located opposite to this site. The name and disappearance of Shoprite came up frequently during fieldwork to what I quickly understood as a lamentation to the significant socio-spatial changes and their undesired effects in Mowbray, particularly to hairstylists and their salons. Shoprite had been operating at this corner by Rhodes Avenue, which is a two-minute walk to the public transportation station and had been demolished in early 2020, just before COVID-19. In addition, a PEP store in the same building as Shoprite was also closed when the building was demolished. In Southern Africa, Shoprite and PEP stores are regarded as the more 'affordable' retail stores and are strategically located where mass working class can access their stores (Gifford, 2022).

Regarding the demolition of Shoprite, the respondents noted that, with the disappearance of Shoprite, they lost access to a significant customer base that frequented these stores and would visit the salon as part of their shopping excursions. They explained that customers would visit Mowbray to do their weekly or monthly grocery shopping, and while they were in the area, they would use the opportunity to visit the hair salon to get their hair done. Below are some of the comments made regarding Shoprite:

"When Shoprite left Mowbray, that brought a whole change in Mowbray, especially in our business. Because there was Shoprite there, so most senior people that take SASA (pension)

would come to Shoprite to take their SASA, they do their shopping, they come to the salon, and we take care of their hair, and they go. So, since Shoprite stopped, most of that was cut off. It affected our business a lot, and it just brought everything down." (Margaret, interview, October 2022)

"Since they decided to close Shoprite, it was like a downfall for most salons, it was a good spot. It catered to most people, even that come from the location (townships), they would come here and do their groceries at Shoprite and the moment they pass here, and they will see the salons, and they easily come. They do their shopping; they do their hair and then they go home. So, Shoprite was a good spot for business, even if they try to open a shop here, like Pick'n'Pay, something like the way Shoprite was, just to create that busy environment you know." (Lydia, interview, October 2022)

In the conversations above, hairstylists contextualise the physical infrastructural changes in Mowbray in relation to how their businesses have been impacted due to the social landscape also shifting. While the hairstylists wait for the new development to be approved and constructed, most of the respondents acknowledge the current loss in clientele, particularly some senior citizens who receive pension funds from Shoprite and clients from outside Mowbray who are not necessarily students. Additionally, there is a general sense of Mowbray being less busy than it used to be after the Shoprite, banks, and PEP stores closure. This affects the demographic dynamics of who spends time in Mowbray when such construction demolitions take place as according to the hairstylists there is now less foot traffic and presence of people from outside the suburb. Although some hairstylists share that they still have some long-standing clients who come from far as they need hairstylists that they can *trust with their hair*— they still stress the loss of clients who would visit Mowbray for some shopping or banking.

The ground where the demolition is located is projected to be turned into a mixed-use development building where a proposed "commercial upgrading" project intends to substitute "an old brick store with apartments for students and a shopping mall in the base" (Snelling, 2013). It seems that some hairstylists already knew of these proposed mixed-use development plan, for example, Karine (2022) tells me "*they removed the Shoprite so that they could actually get a Checkers with student accommodation".* Whereas two different respondents both understood the new development to be a UCT student residence — "*we just heard that*

UCT is taking over", said Patience. Another respondent shared that they hope that the projected influx of students and shopping will turn into more business for them in the future, but for now they perceived it as a significant loss. Such projects tend to take a long time to be completed. As of August 2023, construction had not begun, three years after it was demolished.

The proposed building also coincides with another significant finding that situates the popularity of hair salons in Mowbray due to the student population in the area. Almost all respondents alluded to setting shop in Mowbray due to its strategic placement of students – where students formed a large base of their clients. The inclusion of student housing in the new proposed building is also on trend with other high-rise student buildings that are developing in other suburbs close by. There are various entry points to which a critical analysis of the spatial changes that are happening in Mowbray can be attributed to. One examines the construction of mixed-use developments through the lens of the economy and built environment revitalisation where the commercial upgrading is meant to benefit the local economy through increased activity. Another entry point is the term "studentification" which is a process used by several scholars such as (Visser & Kisting, 2019) to quantify campus expansions through the "increase in student populations near universities", where studentification and gentrification share similarities when they result in displacement of working class or other marginalised groups (Revington, Zwick, Hartt, & Schlosser, 2023). Although the term studentification puts an emphasis on students, it is important to distinguish the corporations or institutions that own the means of production to construct such buildings from students who "occupy a somewhat ambiguous class position" (Revington, Zwick, Hartt, & Schlosser, 2023).

"There is a lot of students, I chose Mowbray because of the students." (Lydia, interview, October 2022)

"There was Shoprite and now there is no longer Shoprite, there was FnB, it is no longer there, there was Standard Bank, it is no longer there. So, it is a challenge. There are no more banks now, we are only left with Capitec." (Patience, interview, October 2022)

The nexus for this section on spatial changes is in the ways that such urban development projects affect migrant African hairdressers' mobility, access to space and the adaptations that

are possible when such developments happen. The continued decentralisation and streamlining of social use of space by different demographics cannot be overlooked. One respondent shared that when lockdown was lifted, they had fewer students coming in the salons as studies had moved online and some of their customers were not physically present in Mowbray. This exemplifies some of the overlooked consequences of homogenising the demographics of such an area that has an extensive textured history and presence such as Mowbray. Moreover, universities' influence on immediate surroundings cannot be understated here as the "the role that universities as urban developers within a neoliberal spatial economy play also introduces a sensitivity to questions of scale and social diversity" (Addie, 2017), where the capacity for social difference is critical for just cities. As shown in the Mowbray chapter, the University of Cape Town has played a critical role in the landscape of Mowbray, for example through their housing expansion policies where private and public residences were turned into student housing. In a way, the demolition of Shoprite is implicated in those similar frameworks, of availing housing and other facilities for students in the area. To extend the practices of 'urban developers' to the university is to render it complicit and de-neutralise its' impact on the immediate and global geographies.

Additionally, the demolition of Shoprite indicates a loss of affordable food and accessible structures for senior citizen pension management which point to larger policy and structural failures than the capacity of a single store. There are several things happening at the contested site at Rhodes Avenue and Main Road and some of it rests on speculating how the future development will affect dynamics for the local hair salon industry — will such a 'commercial upgrade' push out the hair salons due to rent hikes and displacements? For now, we do not need to go into the future to make such predictions as the next section will explicate how general inflation affects the operation of hair salons. Migrant spaces such as hair salons rest in a flux, and in a continuum, amidst structural changes.

Economics

During field work, market-based economics emerged as a theme primarily as these hair salons are business operations. Generally, the respondents noted that there is an increase in rental prices, product costs and competition in the hair salon industry. Hairstylists noted that although rent and other costs have hiked up over the past ten years, the prices of hairstyles

remain unchanged or lower in some cases. Additionally, some of the respondents shared that hair salons have been mushrooming in Mowbray— "*you find a salon in each and every corner in Mowbray*" (Lydia, interview, October 2022) —, while others noted that this mushrooming is also accompanied by salon closures. Below I will discuss in detail the economic processes that stylists most frequently mentioned as affecting them.

i) Rent Increase and Inflation

"*The rent is a challenge, it is so high, but you just know that wherever you are, you need to pay rent, so you need to be alert."* (Isabel, interview, July 2022)

The increase in rent in Mowbray is a challenge that contributes to closures and exits to some salons and businesses in the area that are not able to compete with the high rent prices. In one of the interviews, someone noted that a historically longstanding salon opposite the road from P/P Braiding salon had closed and been vacant due to failure to pay rent. The space had been vacant beyond the entirety of the fieldwork of over six months. In another example, Imani, another of the longstanding salon owners' third salon on the Main Rd had recently closed during the fieldwork process. Her business was not spared from the high costs of renting, and I had previously interviewed her daughter in August who operated the now closed salon. The salon closed in November 2022, and it is still a vacant space with white walls and a "TO LET" sign with the property's agent contact number, as of August 2023. Her daughter now works with her in her second location, just down the road and the store sells mainly hair products.

Additionally, Miriam shared that Mowbray is now more expensive, noting that before she used to pay around R11 000, and the rent costs have risen to around R20 000 per month. Further, there was an undertone of landlords not taking responsibility of maintenance of the hair salons as Matilda further elaborated that "the owner does not want to fix the place; they just want us to pay rent". Matilda's salon started operation in 2016, and there is a rough estimate of a rental increase of over 10 percent each year. This current rental market is not sustainable, as there is an indication that landlords would rather raise rent and keep vacant spaces for potential high paying clients than keeping rentals affordable for small businesses in the area. The rate at which the rent increases does not correspond to the rate of the hair styling prices. The rent hike also speaks to a larger and more general inflation in South

Africa, where the cost of living and of products is increasing. For example, someone shared that,

"The hair prices are not going up, and you see in the world, cooking oil prices are so expensive, but our prices back then for cornrows were R180 (five to six years ago), are now only R200. It is not that much, compared to our rentals, back then I was paying around R5000, but now I am paying R9000 for rent". (Patience, interview, October 2022)

To respond to the general inflation, hairstylists try to compensate by increasing their hair prices, but the rate to which they can do this is limited, as the retention of new customers is difficult and the hair prices in Mowbray should generally be competitive as there is a concentration of salons in the area. In the above example, there was just over 2% annual increase of hair prices, compared to the 12% annual rent increase over the same time span. As consumers in the general market, hair stylists compete with the rising prices of everyday products, and as workers, hair stylists compete with the low hair styling prices which are essentially their takeaway income.

ii) Bargaining Power and Competition

"We make this style for R400, but because of the competition, I tell you that this thing is R400, and if you go to the next salon, and you ask them, the person says it's R400 and if you are about to leave, they will call you by the door and say don't worry I will make it R200. You know that is killing the business". (Margaret, interview, October 2022)

In the face of stagnant hair prices and high rent, the relative volatility of competition in prices highlights the power dynamics, where customers tend to have a higher bargaining power. As in the quote above which was echoed by other stylists, when a customer does not agree to pay a set price, the hairstylist in certain cases reduces the price to retain the customer. They explained that the bargaining that leads to lowering hairstyling prices happens sometimes as customers have the option of using the salon next door or due to the mindset of consumers who treat small business with a bargaining attitude. They further explained bargaining is mostly done by newer or passing customers who do not have an established or longstanding relation to a specific hairstylist or salon. Additionally, hairstylists echoed that the

mushrooming or the abundance of choice that the customers have compels them to have lower prices than they would want or prices that reflect the high cost of living.

"2012 was my best year because I had a lot of money then. Now it is a lot of salons, they put cheap hair, before it was expensive, you know this braid, the longer one, we could charge R800, but now we are charging R500, so there is competition everywhere. The prices are very down. You know R300, was just for short braids and back then if you did not have it, we were not going to do your hair. But now people will run away from you." (Isabel, interview, July 2022)

"Our prices are very cheap, and the competition is a lot as well, but we also need money. If you are very expensive, people run away." (Patience, interview, October 2022)

When discussing the cheap prices of hairstyles in Mowbray, it became apparent that the opposite was happening in other contexts such as hair salons in the global North, specifically in the United States where hair prices are rising. In recent articles and social media posts across the US where "black hair salon experiences have recently come under fire for their outrageous costs, and some stylists impose strict rules for tardiness and charge clients extra for styling "coarse" hair" (McCluney, 2022) showcases where hairstyling is becoming exponentially expensive to the point that the prices set are seen as exploitative. This comparison helps me to understand that price setting is not necessarily a product of the logics of the market. Additionally, market analytics sometimes undermine the nuances, complexities, and power dynamics of price setting in what is often perceived as the "informal economy", for example, particularly in Mowbray where hair styling prices are low. Further studies are needed to analyse global trends and Mowbray trends in terms of price setting ecosystems, however in Mowbray a reading across urban changes point to multiple things happening at once where the precarity Mowbray was perceived to be worsening in recent years. Additionally, this study was undertaken in 2022 where most industries were still recovering from Covid-19 shutdowns, hence there is a possibility that price rigidity was more prominent then, as hairstylists were in the process of retaining customers. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that when such pandemics or changes happen, the type of worker who is left precarious or whose bargaining power is limited, is in this case, the African migrant working class (Nyamnjoh, Hall, & Cirolia, 2021).

Navigating life as a migrant in Cape Town

When I began discussing the findings, I started with the various ways of entry into the hair salon market in Mowbray, where these entries are often preceded by the hairstylists' textured trajectories and arrivals. To come back to the border regime as a function of the state beyond the national border (Lambert, 2024); some of these trajectories include how the hairstylists navigate life in the city where most of them are still on asylum status and are waiting for 'proper' documentation. A discussion on how the respondents contextualised the anti-migration and xenophobic environment that they occupied developed, specifically when the conversations focused on their work histories. To trace where labour lands is to trace movement, it is to contend with the legal frameworks that legitimise and marginalise certain groups over others, and it is to see the connections between capitalism and colonialism. The respondents' work histories were often situated in an environment overdetermined by long periods of waiting. These took the form of years of not hearing back from potential employers after dropping off CVs, to waiting for an immigration status change (e.g., from asylum to a South African identity card), to the lack of recognition of non-South African formal education qualifications. Here on this landing strip, a discussion on navigating daily life with these waiting periods and inhospitable ground is foregrounded.

The experience of migrants working in fields beyond areas where they are formally trained is familiar, where a "form of reverse mobility occurs — for the professional to become the trader" (Hall, 2021, p. 51). For example, Grace moved to Cape Town from Congo to pursue her goal of being a medical doctor after serving as a nurse in Congo, however, her goal was immediately paused upon arrival when she learnt that she had to start all over again as they did not accept her French diploma. She had completed three years of nursing school in Congo and was told that she would have to redo the three years and after discussing with her family she ended up doing a business management course. She found an internship as a café manager in Greenpoint where she worked for over three months and was let go because of her Asylum status. She was told that she can come back when she has "*nice papers"*. This occurrence is not specific to only those who come with non-South African qualification, as Esther* also shared that she studied IT in South Africa but was unsuccessful to land a job in the IT field after completion because *"they always required an ID"*. Esther* continued to explain:

"When your paper is not renewed, they say, stay at home and we will call you and then they do not call you. So, I decided to work with the salon." (Esther*, interview, July 2022)

The salon thus became a breathing space for one to shift courses amidst the systemic realities of deferred aspirations of being a doctor or an IT specialist. As unemployment and job insecurity continues to rise globally, migrants and citizens alike continue to experience the effects of a rapidly changing economy and inflation. The terms waithood (Honwana, 2014) and waiting have been used as a durational tool adapted by urban scholars to analyse urban inequality to examine the prolonged time passage that renders youth vulnerable to precarity and urban structural failure while a desired outcome such as employment, access to health care or housing etc is delayed (Jeffrey, 2008). In Esther*'s case above, waiting takes the form of waiting for updated immigration status and papers and waiting for a call back from potential employers. Another form of waiting that emerged was in the quietness of the salons or the decline of customers coming in to do their hair, as some hairstylists expressed that they could sit for two days without anyone coming in. Waiting allows us to use "time and space as objects of reflection" (Jeffrey, 2008) that eventually call us to contend with the ways that precarity materialises when such delays happen.

"I put my CV, and they did not call me, then I get tired, and I was sleeping like 1 and half years, then I start to work in the salon". (Isabel, interview, July 2022)

Immigration status affects the livelihood of migrants as their mobility is restricted to where they are seeking refuge. Grace shared with me that she could not leave and attend her parents' funeral when they passed on. She explains that she feels like "a prisoner" in her situation as her passport expired a long time ago and she is in the process of updating all her documents with the help of a local NGO that helps migrants in Cape Town. She is also trying to update the documents of her child who was born in South Africa but was given a "foreign child" status on their birth certificate which is different from the South African birth certificate. She further explains that her child does not have a South African ID or any travelling document. Her older son who was born in Congo needs updated papers as well as he is about to write his final Matric grade 12 exams. The horrors that not having "nice papers" run deep in the everyday urban life of migrants beyond the already stressful economy. As Suzanne Hall critically notes:

"What the hostile environment shows us is that borders are not simply national instruments to establish an illegitimate outside and then confront it at a physical demarcation of a border. Borders are also social instruments that establish an illegitimate inside." (Hall, 2021, p. 45)

It is important to note here that these hairstylists spoke of hair salons as places where they were able to mobilise their labour and earn an income, and how much the salon meant to them. In thinking with Suzanne Hall, these shifts and mobilities in occupancies in migration trajectories helps us to "think more precisely about entrepreneurship not as an emancipation from marginalization but in recognition of the active making of work in persistently precarious conditions" (Hall, 2021, p. 61). This thinking helps us to focus on mobility in terms of work that migrants are able to build and practice, without diminishing the hostile, anti-migration and xenophobic environments that constitute the "illegitimate insides" of cities. Additionally, 'entrepreneurship not as emancipation from marginalization' is critical in engaging such job precarity not as a failure or success that working class migrants are responsible for, but as a structural recognition that purely market-based relations are not sufficient to establish a free and sustainable livelihood for people. In the introductory chapter, I explained how landing as a framework allows me to contend with the multiple landings that consequently happen in the city, and as I read alongside Hall, in this section, the 'illegitimate inside' or marginalised interiors in cities or streets become apparent. To occupy an illegitimate inside is to be born in a country and still be officially stateless, and it is to wait for decades for a change in immigration status.

Conclusion

When I began this dissertation, I wrote about the conceptual framing of *landing* to situate migrant activity and place making in the city beyond national borders, i.e., conceptualising landing as an extension of thinking about the structures of the border regime as it manifests at various levels (national, regional, city, village, personal etc). "To think of the border not as a line on the map, but rather as a system that conditions most aspects of society… spaces of the border regime extend from the cruel cells of the detention centre, to the kitchen at the back of a restaurant; from the office of an abusive public servant who may or may not stamp a paper, to the emergency room that may or may not ask for identification" (Lambert, 2024, p. 18). In the previous chapter of Arrivals, I wrote about the networks built in the hair salon, highlighting the work, labour and meaning making that are fostered by hair stylists and their

communities internally, within themselves. In this Departures chapter, I foregrounded the external forces that constitute the conditions that hairstylists are in, some of which are functions of the border regime, while others point to neo-liberal and capitalist implications of rising rent and inflation, to the demolition of a longstanding shop due to urban upgrade projects. Together, these conditions make it harder to maintain infrastructures that are operated by people who do not own the means of production and contribute to their departures.

CONCLUSION: LANDINGS

The salon is a space of craft, mathematics, precision, domesticity, community, labour, beauty, and pain. As Matsipa (2017) cautions us against the narrative of crisis when writing about the proliferation of black women-owned business in the central city, the existence of the black hair salon is a conglomeration of space where black women make a living for themselves and engage in the social construction of the community at large. This dissertation was an inquiry into the salon as both a physical and social architecture — to encounter the exchanges, networks, joys, and tensions that we embody when we enter the salon. Furthermore, to also contend with this process of entering, arriving, departing, i.e., of landing at hair salons. Situating these architectures and the people who make and maintain them, black African migrant women in the city of Cape Town, in Mowbray and across borders highlights the work of repair, of making and rendering black women as actors of spatial reproduction. If historically, black women and black people's mobility and inscription in the city has been overdetermined by colonial representations of space (such as the border or Cartesian maps), then I think of the hair salon as portal in which black women script themselves and archive their beauty practices.

Throughout the dissertation I explored *landing* in its various forms. I started with the literature review where theoretical frameworks such as people as infrastructure, arrival infrastructures and Critical Spatial Literacy allowed me to be in conversation with other scholars and to build a framework that particularly focused on how marginalised groups, such as African women organise, work, and build networks that sustain them and newcomers. This was an essential exercise that situated hair salons as social structures that are also recognised as a form of public infrastructure. In the methodology, the architectural etymologies of both hair salons and landings provided an experimental way of linking a function of a space by how it is conceptualised as a built infrastructure. The word salon facilitates a gathering space while a landing is a space to rest and change directions. Finally, in the findings chapters, the implication of landing as both an Arrival and Departure provided a framework to structure the discussions in both structural and social contexts, where the networks that are built in hair salons are contextualised in the socio-economic landscape of Cape Town.

The networks and relations that are produced in the hair salon constitute a kind of infrastructure that allows workers to find employment when they move into the city or when

they change careers or are facing structural challenges due to un-documentation. In my consolidation site visit in July 2023, seven months after my fieldwork research interviews ended, the landscape of the hair salons had noticeably changed. I visited several salons hoping to locate the previous respondents to give them an update of the research and I found that some of them had moved salons, as some salons had closed down. For Miriam's salon, a new salon in the same building had started operation, while for Isabel, the salon was now vacant as of July 2023. I asked around the other salons and I was finally able to locate Isabel who now worked at a different salon. Through various casual conversations, I learnt that hairstylists had moved around as some were downsizing and sharing resources because of the rent increase and inflation. The mobility of workers was still present and although not under favourable conditions, the network that hairstylists have built amongst themselves was evident. I saw this as a repair ecosystem, where the moving across salons, and further partitioning of the space is a response of the various structural violence that are forcibly displacing populations that cannot keep up with the increasing costs of life. This is not to write from a resilience point of view but rather to highlight spaces where structural conditions by the state and other actors such as capitalism continue to cause disruptions and limitations in how people live and move in the city.

Encountering the hair salon is to locate the labour changes, education, social relations and power dynamics that exist between marginalised communities and other users of space. In this case, we saw the influence that the University of Cape Town, of the state, the 'invisible hand' of Economics and urban developers had on the geographical changes in Mowbray. I used *landing* as both a metaphor and methodology to ground me in tracing the socio-economic fluctuations that are happening in a rapidly changing city such as Cape Town, a city where several landings and arrivals occur every day. At the foreground, the 'quiet making' (Tayob, 2023) and place making of black African migrant women on the streets of Cape Town is a landing that creates various opportunities for earning an income, social gathering spaces, practicing beauty and other exchanges. Further research could engage with both the customers and stylists to gain more of an understanding on the sociability of hair salons from different perspectives. The research and artistic engagement with hair is rich and moving forward, I would like to continue working on more experimental research methodologies that provide a multi-disciplinary lens.

This research provides a base for further research into other “landing sites” beyond the hair salon, it does not in any way try to limit the vastness and richness of migrant African women’s urban configurations to the hair salon. There are many possible avenues of landing such as in the textiles, culinary, engineering, communications, education, finance, trade, and many others. Additionally, further research is needed to inquire about the migratory flows between the various landing sites on the continent. For this research, I tried not to essentialise origin stories, but to forefront the mobility and movement that is made possible through the making and networks cultivated in these communities. Thus, landing became a methodological and epistemological anchor that allowed for discussions that moved beyond stagnancy but rather to observe what is changing, what is being built and what is being destroyed in southern urbanisms.

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APPENDIX

Sample Questions (for semi-structured interviews)

1. What's your name?
2. And how old are you?
3. Nationality?
4. Where do you live now?
5. What is your favourite hairstyle?
6. What is your role in the hair salon?
7. How long has this salon been in business for?
8. What is your history of work and braiding (have you worked at other hair salons in Mowbray, town or your home country)
9. Why did you choose Mowbray to establish the salon? (for owners)
10. What was the process of establishing the salon here? (Acquiring the rental space)
11. What are some of the challenges that you encounter at this salon?
12. What does the salon mean to you? And if you were to change anything about the salon, what would you change?
13. How do you relate to Mowbray?
14. How do you establish your customer base, where do you get your customers?
15. Can you please describe Mowbray to me when you first arrived here and how has the salon changed over the years?
16. How do you relate to your customers? And what are their age ranges?
17. Do you have more regular customers or drop in?
18. What difficulties have you faced since starting here?
19. Lastly, what do you like about the hair salon?

Interviews

Number	Name	Date of Interview
1	Chantal	2022/06/19
2	Miriam	2022/06/30
3	Isabel	2022/07/26
4	Karine	2022/08/11
5	Florence	2022/08/16
6	Drayfus	2022/08/16
7	Angela	2022/08/25
8	Patience	2022/10/10
9	Christelle	2022/10/10

10	Lydia	2022/10/20
11	Margaret	2022/10/20
12	Imani	2022/11/03
13	Patricia	2022/11/03
14	Ma' Ofo	2022/11/03
15	Mary*	2022/10/20
16	Esther*	2022/10/22