

EXPLORING MIGRANT COSMOPOLITANISMS
Migrants, Belonging and Cultural Difference in Johannesburg

Work-in-Progress Paper

Paper prepared for the African Migrations Workshop,
hosted by the University of Ghana and the University of Oxford,
September 18-21 2007, Accra, Ghana.

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Abstract: This paper aims at opening a discussion about the possibility of using a re-conceptualised cosmopolitan paradigm for understanding new forms of belonging, as well as the various types and natures of intercultural relations and practices amongst the diverse populations in Johannesburg and other major African cities. After briefly reviewing the notion of cosmopolitanism as well as giving a cursory overview on different forms of belonging in Africa and African cities, the paper will outline the concepts of 'practical cosmopolitanism' and of moral, inclusive 'cosmopolitan consciousness'. Finally, it will pose a set of future research questions, and emphasise the need for empirical research in order to apply the cosmopolitan paradigm in a more critical and productive way - in the academic and possibly even social realm - than is currently possible.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, Africa, African City, Johannesburg, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

As migrants come to South Africa from virtually all countries across and beyond the continent, it is now 'host to a truly pan African and global constituency of legal and undocumented migrants' (Crush 2000: 4). Johannesburg is regarded as the only 'world city' on the continent (cf. Simone 2001) and is a place that has long been shaped by intersecting continental and global flows of people, (cultural) products, images and ideas (cf. Mbembe 2004:378). Migrants make up approximately 6% of Johannesburg's population (Balbo and Marconi 2005:3) and confront their host society with different cultures and lifestyles, languages and attitudes, ideologies and beliefs.

At the opening of the 'migrant help desk'¹ in the inner city of Johannesburg in April 2007, executive mayor Amos Masondo described the city as a place with a historically developed 'broad cosmopolitan character'². Throughout his speech, he characterized the help desk for migrants as an expression of the city's commitment to equality, the acknowledgment of universal human rights, and appreciation for the enriching aspects of diversity. However, given South Africa's firm immigration policy and well documented high levels of xenophobia throughout virtually all social strata (cf. Landau 2005, 2006; Crush 2000, Peperdy et al 2005), those familiar with issues of migration remain highly skeptical about such political commitments to an inclusive, 'cosmopolitan' Johannesburg.

¹ A service set up to address the specific needs of migrants and asylum seekers in Johannesburg

² Speech of Amos Masondo at the launch of the migrant help desk accessed May 2007 at http://www.joburg.org.za/mayor/mayor_speech.stm

Yet, despite the absence of moral cosmopolitan ideals in South African immigration politics and policies, Johannesburg is still a place of many cosmopolitanisms: the practical and the moral, the aesthetic and the vernacular, the documented and the yet unrevealed. This paper will illustrate with early empirical evidence of forms of cosmopolitanism found amongst urban migrants in Johannesburg. It will argue that there is a need to analytically distinguish *practical cosmopolitanism* from forms of a moral, inclusive *cosmopolitan consciousness*. It also aims at opening a discussion about the possibility of using a re-conceptualised cosmopolitan paradigm to understand new forms of belonging, as well as the various types and natures of intercultural networks, relations and practices amongst the diverse populations in Johannesburg and other major cities across the continent.

The scarce existing literature characterizes the African city as the focal point of a shift towards more individualistic modes of social organisation, and highlights that urban 'residents increasingly seek out and manage a wide diversity of engagements within the city without long-term or clearly defined commitments' (Simone 2006:357). The relative insignificance of the African nation-state in providing a sense of community, the high socio-cultural, political and economic fragmentation of African societies as well as migrants' decreasing reliance on exclusively familial or ethno-national networks in the urban context gives rise to the question whether there is a need for a paradigm that moves beyond the ethnic and the national to make sense of emerging forms of belonging and urban social dynamics in Africa.

African migrants are familiar with integrating a variety of differences: the translocal and the transnational, the modern and the traditional. They are also accustomed to relativising the role of the nation-state 'among the many multiple alternative mechanisms, configurations, and conflicts for determining inclusion, exclusion, and the nature thereof' (Landau 2007:7). In light of this and the research that will be presented in this paper, African migrants might pose a serious challenge to the claim that only those that can take a secure nation state for granted can be cosmopolitan (cf. Ignatieff 1993:9).

Before outlining the notions of *practical cosmopolitanism* and *cosmopolitan consciousness*, I will now outline the broader theoretical context this paper is situated

within by briefly discussing the literature on cosmopolitanism and forms of belonging in Africa and African cities.

COSMOPOLITANISM

Ever since being first articulated in ancient Greece, the notion of cosmopolitanism has been, and continues to be, associated with a considerable array of different meanings in academic literature, intellectual discourse and everyday language. Whereas Beck's comparison of defining cosmopolitanism to the attempt of 'nailing a pudding to the wall' (Beck 2002:17) remains apt, one can however broadly distinguish between political, moral and socio-cultural conceptualisations.

Political cosmopolitanism 'focuses on the development of world government or at least global political institutions...in a world where nation-states are challenged by global capitalism, cross-border flows and international media, and accordingly less able to manage collective affairs' (Calhoun 2002:873; cf. Bauböck 2002; Tomlinson 2002; Pogge 1992 or Beck 2006). Moral cosmopolitanism 'refers to a philosophy that urges us all to be citizens of the world, creating a world-wide moral community of humanity committed to universal values' (Vertovec 2006: 4). Lastly, socio-cultural cosmopolitanism refers to the mixing of cultural practices, tastes, images and ideas in an interconnected, globalising world (see for example Szerszynski and Urry 2000; Nava 2002; Tomlinson 1999 or Hannerz 2003).

Cosmopolitanism emphasises individualism, universality (the attribution of 'the primacy of the individual as the central unit of ...to all human individuals without exception) and generality (the extension of the 'primary concern for the individual... to all humanity' (Pogge 1992:48).

Critics have argued that cosmopolitanism is a phenomenon that only relates to 'the values and tastes of a cultural and economic elite' (Söderström 2006:557) and to privileged societies, individuals or enthusiastic social scientists (cf. Furia 2005:331). Within the debate around the nature of cosmopolitans, the 'cosmopolitan potential' of migrants has been subject to much debate. Whereas some argue that migrants due to their experience with hybridity and everyday practices of managing difference are indeed typical cases of it (cf. Beck 2002:21), others disagree by pointing out the supposed lack of an 'inclusive, normative consciousness of the cultural other' (Werbner

2006: 497), arguing that migrants' 'involvement with another culture is not a fringe benefit but a necessary cost, to be kept as low as possible' (Hannerz 1990: 243). Whereas there is no shortage of theoretical explorations of cosmopolitanism, we still lack an adequate number of empirically based accounts to proficiently discuss the alleged elitism of cosmopolitanism³ and the debates around defining who is - and who is not cosmopolitan - remain empirically under-informed.

Another critique of cosmopolitanism as a moral or political ideal is closely related to the 'clash' between liberalism and communitarism (Bowden, 2003: 236). Cosmopolitanism has been criticized as the embodiment of 'all the worst aspects of classical liberalism – atomism, abstraction, alienation from one's roots, vacuity of commitment, and indeterminacy of character' (Waldron 1992: 764- 765).

However, cosmopolitanism 'does not necessarily imply an absence of belonging, but the possibility of belonging to more than one ethnic and cultural localism simultaneously' (Werbner 1999: 34). Thin forms of cosmopolitanism are characterised by a high level of detachment which 'allows for transcending the boundaries of one's culture or locale' and can be characterised by an 'ironic form of distance from current cultural attachments'(Roudometof 2005: 113). Thick or rooted forms, sometimes referred to as 'liberal nationalism' (Bowden 2003: 240) or 'cosmopolitan patriotism' (Appiah 1997), bring together loyalty to the nation or specific local cultures and an 'openness towards difference and otherness' (Roudometof 2005: 122).

BELONGING IN AFRICA

Looking at the literature on African nation-states, societies and identities, notions like *crisis*, *fragmentation* or *uncertainty* have particularly high currency. In fact, African societies continue to go through a challenging process of social transformation since the end of colonial domination. This process is shaped by the politically and geographically rooted (cf. Herbst 2000) 'incapacity of postcolonial states to bind the citizens into the vision of the nation (Meyer 2004:466) and to provide social security, by the disintegration of traditional systems of support and socialisation - and the inability of

³ Some of the few exceptions are Lamont 2000; Werbner 2006 or Furia 2005.

the new socio-political institutions to adequately replace those former systems, and by rapid urbanisation, widespread poverty and migration.

The African state, characterized by disengagement more often than by stability and functionality is 'relativised among the many multiple alternative mechanisms, configurations, and conflicts for determining inclusion, exclusion, and the nature thereof' (Landau 2007:7). Many Southern Africans 'have lost faith in, and increasingly bypass, a state system that neither delivers security nor satisfies a desire for community and...instead...have engaged in alternative forms of social intercourse...all of which show little respect for the political borders erected by southern Africa's states (Williams 2007:5).

The role family and community networks as traditional key agents of socialization and providers of reciprocal structures of various types of support has decreased in face of economic disintegration and rapid urbanisation across the continent (cf. Akuffo 2001; Bennell, 2000; Mkandawire, 1996; Mlana, 1999). Many socio-political institutions introduced by the colonial powers appear to have failed to offer adequate alternative. Schools, intended to play a primary role in the socialization of children and young adults, are largely incapable of sufficiently accomplishing this role. Widespread poverty not only negatively affects the quality of schools and but also limits their accessibility for many children. Furthermore, as the schools often fail to transfer actually required skills and knowledge, and even having an education is not a guarantee for finding employment in times of economic crisis, many young people regard school as 'unnecessary' and rather engage in other occupations to earn a living (cf. Brenner 1999).

In face of disintegrating traditional structures of support, the scarcity of functioning socio-political institutional alternatives able to assert themselves in the role of primary agents of socialization as well as the relative insignificance of the nation-state in providing a sense of community, Africans have reacted in various ways of re-creating or establishing alternative forms of belonging and sources of identification.

An emphasis on *autochtony* constitutes one of those alternatives. In the course of the last two decades, the crisis of identities as outlined before, combined with economic disintegration and 'the cultural threat perceived in the globalizing moment' (Jackson

2006: 117) has led to an 'upsurge of autochtony' (Geschiere and Ceuppens 2005:358) throughout the continent. An emphasis on belonging, on being 'of the soil itself', at first glance suggests providing a certain degree of 'safety, but in practice ... raises fierce disagreement over who really belongs, over whose claims are authentic and whose are not (Geschiere and Ceupens: 387). In fact, as autochtony has an inherently unstable and relational character (cf. Jackson 2006) its 'nervous discourse' (SSRC 2005) inevitably implies a process of constant reconfiguration of the foreign allochton (cf. Jackson 2006). Studies that adopt a longer historical perspective show that 'autochthony discourses can easily switch from one Other to the next one, without losing their credibility' (Geschiere and Ceuppens: 387, cf. Arnaut 2004 or Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000) This 'may explain their great resilience in the face of modern changes, easily adapting to the constant redrawing of borders that seem to be inherent to processes of globalization' (Geschiere and Ceuppens 2005:387). Autochtony is de facto an empty concept, 'an identity with no particular name and no specified history, only expressing the claim to have come first, which is always open to contest' (Geschiere and Ceupens:387).

However, despite the violent wars and conflicts that are continuing to be carried out in the name of autochtony, the high degree of ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic fragmentation in Africa has not always led to conflict. King (2001) for example, in his historical analysis of the multi-ethnic state of Katsina (pre-colonial Nigeria), opposes simplified views of 'primordial ethnic animosity' in Africa. He highlights the complexity of ethnic, religious, national and territorial attachments within the Katsina state and emphasises the *historical multiplicity and fluidity of identity in Africa* (emphasis mine) (2001:4).

A contemporary example for a 'formulation of alternative imaginations of community' (Meyer 2004:466) that is indeed completely opposed to national or autochthon conceptualisations of belonging is the Christian-Evangelical movement of Pentecostalism. Having virtually 'crisscrossed the continent' (Hunt 2002: 187), Pentecostalismⁱ has witnessed a rapid rise during the 1970s and 1980s in Africa (cf. Larbi 2002). These African (often Nigerian) churches 'provide new strategies of survival and the restructuring of personal and collective relationships against a backdrop of severe economic decline...frequently offer symbolic and material resources to a number of distinct social groups...and, at a practical level, establish new forms of social

organization (Hunt 2002: 188). Pentecostal churches are strongly oriented towards egalitarianism and are able to transcend 'national, ethnic, and tribal boundaries' (Hunt 2002: 187, Meyer 2004:461). In fact, many churches 'preach strongly against an unhealthy loyalty to the tribe' (Hunt 2002:187). Being internationally oriented - and often internationally funded – the churches are part of a global network (cf. van Middendorp 2002). Global and 'modern-style gospel music such as rap, house and raga are suitably adopted to Pentecostal themes' (Hunt 2002:192) and the churches generally 'deploy notions of identity and belonging that deliberately reach beyond Africa' (Meyer 2004:453).

Transnationalism is another form of belonging that, worldwide, can be found amongst migrants. The status of 'permanent dislocation' of migrants 'generates its own deficit of belonging' (Landau 2006). Especially first generation migrants often maintain strong socio-cultural, economic or political links to family members, friends and institutions in their home countries. Migrant transnationalism has been much discussed, not only with regard to its political and economic implications, but also in relation to a growing understanding that migrant identities have and will be characterised by hybridity and multiple orientations. In fact, acknowledging that 'migrants are embedded in multi-layered transnational social fields and that, to truly understand migrants' activities and experiences, their lives must be studied within the context of these multiple strata' (Levitt and Vertovec 2003: 567) has initiated a long-due paradigm shift within the studies of international migration.

Migration is increasing in volume and diversity and Southern Africa is literally 'a region on the move' (Peperdy *et al* 2005:1). Whereas the emergence of transnational social fields, particularly amongst the more settled African migrant populations in South Africa has been observed (cf. Lubkemann 2000, Crush and McDonald 2000), the general premise that transnational immigrants 'preserve their original cultural endowment, while adapting instrumentally to a second' (Portes *et al* 1999:229) has to be carefully evaluated in the case of (South) African societies. In the context of extremely unfixed, *transient* migrant populations (Landau 2006), of home and host societies that are internally highly fragmented (Brown 2001, Bekker *et al* 2000) and are characterised by the simultaneous operation of various cultural systems of meaning, it seems more likely that urban migrants combine, are challenged by and - at least instrumentally - adapt to,

a complex, intertwined multiplicity of African and global cultures all circulating in the social, economic and cultural spaces of major cities.

After all, despite high levels of individual bricolage, hybridity and re-configuration of the meaning of territories and borders, the transnational paradigm still links forms of belonging to particular nation-states and presupposes relatively bounded social spaces spanning home and host country. Given the specificities of African nations and states, societies and identities, it remains questionable whether the concept of transnationalism is able to capture the specific dynamics of migration of Africans within Africa. We might have to look for a paradigm that fully reaches beyond the national, such as cosmopolitanism, to make sense of contemporary processes related to globalisation, migration, social transformation and new forms of belonging in the continent's cities.

BELONGING IN AFRICA'S CITIES

In the context of the continent's urban spaces, Simone writes that 'cities operate as a platform for people to engage in processes and territories elsewhere' and 'not only straddle internal and external divides, national and regional boundaries, but also a wide range of terrain and geographies, both real and imaginary (2001:18, 25; cf. Landau 2006). Africa's cities are the locations of shifting social dynamics, as especially young people distance themselves from 'rural customs, knowledge, know-how, and wills', and become increasingly 'disconnected from their rural cultural background' and from traditional networks of family and kin (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1991: 73-74). Furthermore, the cities are places where 'ethnic heterogeneity, economic marginalisation, and pastiche are the empirical norms, not the exception (Landau 2007:5, cf. Mbembe 2004; Simone 2004). Simone writes that 'vacuums of authority or excessive expressions of it are unable to consolidate strong overarching perspectives capable of putting bodies and objects in 'their' place (Simone 2006: 358). Urban 'residents increasingly seek out and manage a wide diversity of engagements within the city without long-term or clearly defined commitments' (Simone 2006:357).

Yet, we know very little about forms of belonging that are developing within those urban spaces undergoing processes of 'worlding' (Simone 2001). However, the few authors that have worked on these issues describe alternative forms of belonging clearly

formulated *outside* of the frameworks of the nation-state. They also point out the emergence of at least partially more inclusive forms of belonging. In an urban environment where one can not rely on the safety of familial, ethnic or institutional networks alone, residents have found practices and strategies of adapting to the challenges of this particular urban environment in resourceful ways, and have found new sources of identification.

Abdullah (1999) for example describes how African youth finds ways out of the economic and social crisis by identifying and linking up with urban sub-cultures, emphasizing their marginal status in society and thus asserting themselves as their own agents of socialization on the streets of Africa's urban centers. These urban youth identities and cultures often transcend ethnic or national boundaries and also create real or symbolic references to global (youth) cultures (cf. Sommers 2001).

Even if ethnicity and traditional concepts of family and community remain important features of African society, rapid urbanisation has initiated a 'new social dynamic (that) appears to be replacing the family's centrality both for reciprocity issues and status building.' (Rodrigues 2007:250). Rodrigues describes in the context of urban Angola that 'the growth of individualism and the possibilities of individual social mobility brought about by modernisation, by capitalism and by new social references, tend to build a new society in which values and ideological references are now more urban and cosmopolitan, part of an ongoing process of globalisation (2007:250).

DEFINING COSMOPOLITANISM, PRACTICAL COSMOPOLITANISM AND COSMOPOLITAN CONCIOUSSNESS

Before I begin with outlining some of the forms of cosmopolitanism found amongst migrants in Johannesburg, I will briefly conceptualise the notions of *cosmopolitanism*, *practical cosmopolitanism* and *cosmopolitan consciousness*.

Cosmopolitanism as it is understood here describes a form of de-territorialized belonging that is characterised by the integration of and symbolic or real involvement with a multiplicity of ethnically or nationally different cultures in one's everyday relationships and practices. It can exist in thickly or thinly rooted forms (Roudometof

2005: 113). It is based on 'a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting' (Hannerz 1990: 239) and emphasizes 'individualism', 'universality', and 'generality' (Pogge 1992:48). Cosmopolitanism can be normatively informed and be based on a *cosmopolitan consciousness*, exist as *practical cosmopolitanism*, or exist in interrelated forms.

For example, the Wits survey on 'Migration and the New African City' has shown that migrants in Johannesburg show a persistent orientation to places outside of their home country as well as South Africa. Whereas this statement indicates a certain cosmopolitanism, it remains unclear whether this orientation is based on purely practical considerations (for example the expectation to earn more money and have a materially better life in a different country) or moral cosmopolitanism (for example the opinion that there are 'friendly 'or 'good' people in any country of the world or being interested in living in and getting to know different places) or – possibly - a mixture of both practical and moral forms.

Practical cosmopolitanism describes behaviour and practices that draw upon knowledge about and familiarity with different cultures and that do not necessarily have to be morally reflected on. It describes ways of utilizing and shifting between multiple ethno-culturally or nationally different networks and integrating ethno-cultural or national differences in one's life for specific practical purposes. Practical cosmopolitanism emphasises individualism, generality and universality, however does so inconsistently and predominantly from the perspective the individual's current personal needs, interests and rights and not from a perspective based on a consistent moral, inclusive consciousness. Part of practical cosmopolitanism is also 'de-facto cosmopolitanism'; describing globally dispersed family networks and the fact that many migrants have lived in and worked in a variety of different countries.

Cosmopolitan consciousness stands for an 'open, experimental, inclusive, normative consciousness of the cultural other' which 'includes elements of self doubt and reflexive self-distantiation. It includes an 'awareness of the existence and equal validity of other cultures, other values, and other mores (Werbner 2006: 497-498) and' openness toward divergent cultural experiences' (Hannerz 1990: 239). It includes a commitment to cultural pluralism, an interest in different cultures, a sense of global awareness or interconnectedness and consistently emphasises individualism, generality and universality.

Lamont shows how North African workers in France draw on principles of solidarity inherent in republicanism, socialism and Catholicism as well as on in the Koran 'to establish equivalence between individuals whom they believe belong to a same universe of reference and can be incorporated in a same community, as children of God, humans, moral beings, people with similar needs' (Lamont 2000:3). He notes that these workers 'view universalistic principles as meaningless ideals that do not mesh with their own everyday experience with racism' (Lamont, 2000: 20) and are 'more concerned with commitment to universal values such as human rights and due process than with beliefs in human equality and solidarity' (Lamont, 2000: 2). In her research amongst Moroccan labour migrants in Germany, Haupt (2006) has also found evidence of a 'rooted' cosmopolitan consciousness such as expressed in the account of Amine, a young labour migrant from Casablanca: 'Arabic culture is to see a human being without limits, you know, people don't fit into categories, a person can be very diverse and have many faces, one has to let people be how they are and accept the diversity of people' (Personal Interview, May 2006).

METHODS

The section on practical cosmopolitanism draws on an ecumenical set of data collected amongst inner-city migrants in Johannesburg. Most of the information reflected here stems from migration-related research undertaken between 2002 and 2007. This includes new survey research complemented by formal and informal interviews with migrants, service providers, advocates, and local government representatives. The 2006 iteration of the migration survey, first undertaken in 2003, is a collaborative project among Wits University (Johannesburg), Tufts University (Boston), the French Institute of South Africa and partners in Maputo, Lubumbashi, and Nairobi. The 2006 Johannesburg sample, from which much of the discussion is drawn here, included 847 respondents in seven central Johannesburg neighbourhoods (Berea; Bertrams, Bezuidenhout Valley, Fordsburg, Mayfair, Rosettenville, and Yeoville). Overall, 59.7 per cent of the respondents were male, generally reflecting official estimates of the inner-cities demographic composition. These data are by no means representative of South Africa's 'migrant stock' or of Johannesburg's population as a whole. They nevertheless provide critical illustrations of trends and the possibility of new forms of socio-political organization and categories of belonging.

The section on cosmopolitan consciousness is based on 12 semi-structured interviews with 9 male and 3 female migrants that have been conducted by the author of this paper as part of pilot-research for a dissertation project on migrant cosmopolitanism in Johannesburg. The (predominantly Zimbabwean) interviewees were between 23 and 47 years old and all were traders on a curios market in a northern suburb of Johannesburg. Due to the non-representativeness and small size of this sample, the intention of this section is not to make any generalisable claims but to illustrate with a few examples of moral cosmopolitanism found amongst migrants working in non-inner city areas of Johannesburg, that certainly demand further empirical investigation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As migrants due to their insecure legal status 'may feel particularly vulnerable and/or powerless in the process of being researched' it is very important to be sensitive to their feelings and traumas they may have suffered from (Hynes 2003: 13). Additionally, as many migrants do not have official documentation and are in permanent danger of being arrested and/or deported, it has been my duty as a researcher to not put interviewees into any potential danger with regard to their staying or well-being in South Africa. Their anonymity has been guaranteed and data has been treated with the absolute confidentiality. The nature of the study has been overt and no other interest than academic has been pursued. With regard to the interviews themselves, the notion of informed consentⁱⁱ has been given the highest concern. Interviewees have been informed that they will not receive payment and can not expect any other benefit from their participation other than their voice being given a 'forum'. Interviews have been recorded on tape only after the interviewees had given permission to this before the interview started.

PRACTICAL COSMOPOLITANISM AMONGST INNER CITY MIGRANTS IN JOHANNESBURG

Reports about native-migrant relations in South Africa are typically characterised by accounts of physical and verbal xenophobic attacks on foreigners and well documented negative attitudes of South Africans and migrants towards each other (cf. Landau 2005, 2006; Crush 200, Peperdy et al 2005, Harris 2001) Irrespectively of the ongoing demand for migrants who are willing to do the 'poorly paid, dirty and dangerous jobs'

(Adepoju 2003:16) and many forms of temporary migration, the South African state assumes that 'most entrants are permanent immigrants, not temporary migrants' (Crush 2000:7).

Immigration policies are designed in this sense and 'mass arrests and deportation' are standard tools of implementation. Migrants are facing xenophobia and exclusion on a daily basis ranging from their South African neighbours on the street up to the department of Home Affairs. In times of high rates of unemployment, crime and poverty migrants are turned into scape-goats for a variety of social ills (cf. Adepoju 2003; Crush 2000; Landau 2005; Taran 2000). The influx of migrants is 'commonly characterized as problematic and threatening, particularly to national identity and security' (Taran 2000:11). Given this 'hostile' environment, many migrants are not interested in staying permanently in South Africa (cf. Crush 2000).

Early research amongst inner-city migrants in Johannesburg appears to constitute a form of *practical* cosmopolitanism, a form of cosmopolitanism which we are only beginning to explore. As non-citizens encounter and attempt to overcome the opposition to their presence, they draw on a variegated language of belonging that makes claims to the city while positioning them in an ephemeral, superior, and unrooted condition where they can escape localised social and political obligations. This section of the paper explores the content of this fragmented and heterogeneous idiom - practical cosmopolitanism - and how it draws on pan-Africanism, South African human rights rhetoric, religion, and language of the global elites. In doing so, it illustrates foreigners' agency in mitigate xenophobia's effects by at once inserting themselves into city life and distancing themselves from it.

It is next to impossible to demonstrate that this is fundamentally different from other forms or conceptualization of cosmopolitanism as the practices observed draw heavily on cosmopolitanisms philosophical foundations. But where cosmopolitanism as a philosophy demands a general, universalised concern for other—even a norm of even limited reciprocity—the use of the language of concern here is of practical nature. Evocations of universalism and efforts—rhetorical, organizational, and through daily practice—help ensure that migrants' various rights are at least occasionally extended to the individual in ways that transcend national or ethnic borders.

What separates practical cosmopolitanism from more coherent universalist philosophies is the absence of a universally understood or articulated framework of recognition: a framework for determining the extent of concern and to whom it should be extended.⁴ Instead, like some other cosmopolitanisms, those migrant cosmopolitans code shift between different alliances and allegiances at a moment notice. This cosmopolitanism- especially in its current form – constitutes a form of ‘experiential culture’ (Lamont 2000:2), but one that has risen from the need to achieve practical goals rather than being the result of an appreciation of cultural diversity or philosophical consideration.

Following de Certeau, this form of cosmopolitanism is not one taken by the powerful or elite—the kind of cosmopolitanism so described by Sassen, Ong, and other global celebrants. Rather, it is a form of constant, and not always conscious, struggle against the harshness of city streets and hostile attitudes. As Beck (2004: 134) suggests, this is in some ways a ‘side effect of unconscious decisions’, but one made up of choices intended to help achieve other goals. As such, this is not a unified, counter-hegemonic movement that seeks to create an alternative, articulated order. Rather, this is a motley collection of actions undertaken by groups that are often fragmented by language, religion, legal status, and mutual enmity. And rarely do they control significant economic resources or organisational capital. They are, however, able to swiftly combine disparate segments of the population according to current necessity and do in ways not premised on their moral worth necessarily being realised through national membership (cf. Bowden 2003: 239).

At the current early stage of research it is only possible to illustrate with signs of cosmopolitanism. Moreover, as this is an ascriptive and inherently flexible category, it is difficult to prove its existence or firmly distinguish it from other forms of membership. Indeed, because of how people flexibly levy cosmopolitanism to resist South African hostility, it must by definition be compromised of multiple bases of belonging. There are four areas in particular where signs of practical cosmopolitanism can be seen; three that demonstrate a form of practical cosmopolitanism.

The first is linked to the composition of the population and their relations to people outside of South Africa. Given the high degree of ‘connectivity’, few can dismiss this

⁴ See Bowden (2003:236) for more on the tensions between individualism and universalism.

group from a form of *de facto*, cosmopolitanism. The second is the rhetoric of self-exclusion and transient superiority that distances this group from a South African national project and cultural assimilation. The third is in the rhetoric they use to claim membership in South Africa – a varied mix of pan-Africanism and other liberation philosophies. The fourth, and most critical to the practical component of our argument, is in how they organise to avoid the ethics of obligation to other migrant groups and their home communities. It is this mix of atomization and fluid association that is unique to this form of life: it is not an alternative way of belonging, but a use of cosmopolitan rhetoric and organisational forms to live outside of belonging while claiming the benefits of it.

Connectivity and de facto Cosmopolitanism

Many of Johannesburg's foreign-born population have spent only a small percentage of their lives in South Africa and remain closely connected, socially if not materially, with family members and friends living outside of the country.

Although they share such translocalism with South Africans—many of whom are also recent migrants to the city—their close family members are spread at locations across the world, mostly in Africa, but also in Europe and North America. Through these connections, they are developing multi-sited families, economies, and categories of belonging that transcend national borders and are, in some cases, so fluid that almost transcend territory all together. The frequency with which people are in contact with relatives and kin elsewhere suggests that these are, in Benedikt's words, nomads 'who are always in touch' (Benedikt in Bauman 2000: 78)

The orientation to yet unknown destinations is critical in establishing the population's cosmopolitanisms. When asked about future plans, just over 13 per cent of foreign respondents thought they were likely to return to their countries or communities of origin within the next two years; 16 per cent were planning onward journeys; and 13.4 per cent did not know. Among the Congolese, however, almost 30 per cent expected to be in a third country. Critically, journeys home or onwards often remain practically elusive for reasons of money, safety, or social status. This leaves large sections of Johannesburg's non-national population effectively marooned in the city, but not necessarily planning to be here.

Rhetoric of Self-Exclusion

In response to the violence, abuse, and discrimination many foreigners experience in Johannesburg, they have developed a rhetoric of self-exclusion that, borrowing from Said, fetishises their position as the permanent outsider or wanderer in such a way that 'distances him or her from all connections and commitments' (Said 2001:183; see also Malauene 2003; Simone 2001). So rather than striving to integrate or assimilate, non-nationals' extended interactions with South Africans is leading, as Barth (1969) predicts, to a reification of differences and a counter-idiom of transience and superiority. Whatever the source of exclusion, only 45 per cent of foreigners we surveyed felt they were part of South African society: 38.6 per cent among Congolese, and 54.1 per cent among the Somali population who South Africans feel are the most self-isolating (95.7 per cent of South Africans felt they were 'in'). One migrant from Lesotho who has lived in Johannesburg for four years reveals many dimensions of a discourse of non-belonging, arguing that he does not think that 'any right thinking person would want to be South African (...) South Africans are very aggressive, even the way they talk. Both black and white. I don't know what's the word, it's a degenerated façade they are putting up'.

Ironically, foreigners often brand South Africans with the same flaws levied against them: dishonesty, violence, and vectors of disease. Few trust South Africans and the minority speaks of close relationships with them. All this is further complemented (and justified) by a sense that South Africans are uneducated or do not appreciate the opportunities they have for education (or other social services); are promiscuous (female promiscuity is particularly jarring); overly tolerant (especially regarding the acceptance of homosexuality); and unreligious.

Clinging to the status afforded those belonging to the 'mobile classes' (see Baumann 2000), migrants hover above the soil by retaining loyalties to their countries of origin and orient themselves towards a future outside of South Africa. This emerges from a combination of both original intent (i.e., why people came to a given city), and a counter response to the hostility or exclusion they face when they arrive.

Whatever its origins, many migrants deny ever having held aspirations of assimilation or permanent settlement (i.e., total inclusion). Others claim they would refuse such opportunities were they available. For them, allochton status is not a scarlet letter, but

instead represents their own form of inclusion. There is little sign of an assimilating agenda. While many more foreigners would like their children to learn English or another South African language, they remain wary of them ever considering themselves South Africa.

Rhetoric of Rights: Inclusion without Membership

Kihato's (2007) work on migrant associations in the inner-city described Awelah, a new group that rose phoenix like from the ashes of an Ivorian association that had collapsed following struggles between two aspirant leaders. Unlike most of the city's previous organisations that are based on ethnic or national foundations, Awelah offers up a new kind of Pan-Africanism. In the words of its founder, quoted at length in the paper: 'We want to shift our patriotism to the continent, not to a country. We Africans share a history together; we are bound together by a neo-colonialism (...) In our day to day living we are all confronted with problems of nationality, ethnicity and so on. But when you have this [broader African] perspective you do not see these problems anymore'.

But there is more to this than a desire to build a community of all Africans as an end itself. Rather, the evocations of Pan-Africanism—drawn both from 1960s liberation philosophy, Mbeki's notion of African Renaissance, and the rhetoric of Africa's World Cup to be played in Johannesburg in 2010—are particularly designed to erode the barriers that separate foreigners from South Africans. In the founder's words, 'South Africans are our brothers and sisters.' By helping South Africans to realise connections to their continental kin they undermine the legitimacy of any barriers to inclusion that South Africans may erect in front of them. Ironically, the foundation for such mobilization remains very much rooted in a transnational articulation of Ivorian identity as most of the new members come from there. Through this rhetoric and practices—practices we are only beginning to explore—migrants adopt a *de facto* cosmopolitanism that demonstrates a willingness to engage a plurality of cultures; openness to hybridity and multiple identities (cf. Hannerz 1990: 239). This is not, however, openness without boundaries: but rather one that draws on multiple identities simultaneously without ever accepting the overarching authority or power of one. Moreover, given that South Africans are seen as a privileged community given their rights to the city, it is the migrants who ultimately have the most to gain from insinuating themselves into citizens' families

Elsewhere, migrant groups have used South Africa's relatively liberally—if inconsistently applied—asylum laws and its Constitution to provide rights of residence and work. However, very few refugees use this language of rights to justify their position in the country. Rather, they call on norms of reciprocity – claiming a right to the city (and the country) based on what their countries did to assist South Africa during the Apartheid period. Nigerians, for example, will often claim (with some substantiation) that ANC activists were given full university scholarships in the 1970s and 1980s, opportunities that were not always available to citizens. Mozambicans, Zimbabweans, and even Namibians claim that they personally suffered from wars tied to South Africa's anti-communist campaign and efforts to destroy ANC or MK strongholds within their countries. If they did not experience the war firsthand, than they were deprived by an economy that had been destroyed by years of fighting. Others plausibly argue that because South African business derives so many profits from investments in their countries—in the past and now—that they have a reciprocal right to South Africa's territory and wealth. In this way, South Africa's own transnationalism—past and present—serves as justification for transcending national residential restrictions.

Organisation and Atomization

Migrants' practices, however well organised, do not represent the formation of a consolidated, subjectively accepted exile/migrant category. Mang'ana (2004) and Misago (2005) both report, for example, that even people from the same country are careful to avoid the mutual obligations and politics that come from close association with other 'exiles.' Although there are instances in which migrant groups assert a collective (usually national) identity, these are often based on instrumental and short-lived associations. Amisi and Ballard's (2005) work on refugee associations throughout South Africa, for example, finds an almost universal tendency towards repeated reconfiguration and fragmentation. As Götz and Simone suggest, 'these formations embody a broad range of practical abilities aimed at maximizing economic opportunities through transversal engagements across territories and separate arrangements of powers' (2003: 125). They are not associations founded on preserving identity, but rather use combinations of national, ethnic, and political affiliations for practical purposes.

In many instances, even people from the same country carefully avoid close association with other 'exiles' or cling to multiple points of loyalty that allow them to shift within multiple networks. These act as resources provide the weak links needed to gather information while allowing them to shift affiliations and practices at a moments notice (cf. Granovetter 1973). In doing so, they avoid capture by friends, relations, and the state while inadvertently reshaping the city's social and political dynamics. This limits these networks ability to foster permanent inclusion, but also allows a flexibility of membership and opportunity, with people shifting alliances and allegiances to the degree that it is tenable given their documentation, language skills, and appearance. Somali traders may be a partial exception, but even among this more insular community, fragmentation, mistrust and other divisions often trump solidary ties.

Rather than integrating or assimilating, the form and rhetoric of organisation exploit their position as the permanent outsiders in ways that 'distances him or her from all connections and commitments' (Said 2001:183). As Simmel notes, these strangers are not fully committed to the peculiar tendencies of the people amongst whom they live. They can, therefore, approach them with a kind of scepticism, 'objectivity', and self-imposed distance. But they are also cosmopolitan for, as Hannerz (1990: 239) suggests they should, many demonstrate a great, personal ability to 'make their way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting' as well as through carefully developed skills for meandering or manoeuvring through systems of meaning and obligation.

COSMOPOLITAN CONSCIOUSNESS AMONGST MIGRANT STREET TRADERS IN A NORTHERN SUBURB OF JOHANNESBURG

We are at a market at the side of William Nicol freeway in the northern suburbs of Johannesburg. Here, similarly to so many other formal and informal markets throughout the city, traders from all over the continent sell furniture, all sorts of art, curios and fruit. As I arrive, a group of South Africans is having breakfast together with a young man from Mozambique. After I asked them for an interview, the older South African cordially pats the shoulder of the young Mozambican next to him and tells me that 'my friend's English isn't very good yet', but recommends to go over to a group of Zimbabweans close by. As I go over and introduce myself to the Zimbabwean traders, the young Mozambican silently joins our group and sits next to the others on one of the wooden

benches they have on display. The next group I am talking to is comprised of a young South African, a young woman from Zimbabwe and another trader from Ivory Coast. In a spontaneous focus group interview we discuss how different people at the market get on with each other, what they think about cultural differences and what their views about people from other countries are.

Given the typically disencouraging news about physical and verbal xenophobic attacks on foreigners and the well documented negative attitudes of South Africans and migrants towards each other (cf. SAMP 1998; 1999), observing the interactions of the people working at this market, and even more hearing about the views they articulate is astonishing. The fact that the relationships between South African and other African traders at this market seem to be respectful and friendly already gives this particular social space a cosmopolitan character. Similarly to their 'practical' counterparts as described earlier, they too have a connection to many other places in the world, as their relatives are not only living in their home countries but have also migrated to Europe. Additionally, tourists from all over the world as well as South African costumers come and interact with the traders.

Many of the traders have lived in several African countries, even at a very young age. A 23 year old female Zimbabwean explains that she has already lived and worked on her own in Botswana and Malawi since she was 17, and speaks respective local languages as well. Although she says she would prefer to go back to Zimbabwe to live with her family again, she explains that she could 'live anywhere in the world, even in Australia', if only there were good business and money to make there. All of the traders explain that learning the local languages is crucial to get along with the natives wherever you are, because otherwise 'you can't connect with them'.

Hannerz describes one of the key features of cosmopolitans as the ability to 'make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting and reflecting' (Hannerz 1990: 239). Whereas he sees this ability as limited to elites, this type of behaviour can be found in the accounts of the migrants at this market as well: Asked about if it is difficult to live in a foreign country, some argued, that they are 'quick learners' and adjust easily to a new environment by observing 'how the locals do things'. Other migrants explain that 'when you come to another country, it's not really easy, you have to get used to it, and see how people live, you know the people here eat

pap, and you want bread, now that I live here I know how things are done. However, in general living in South Africa is something one relatively quickly gets 'used to'.

A de-facto cosmopolitanism and various ways of 'making one's way into other cultures' can be a feature of both cosmopolitanism in purely practical as well as normatively based forms. However, in addition to this, what can be found in the accounts of the traders at this market are themes closely related to *moral* cosmopolitanism which, in fact, hints at the existence of a cosmopolitan consciousness.

The first theme is a belief in the similarity and equality of all human beings. Individuality and individual qualities are emphasized and the moral worth of a person is not related to membership in a specific nation. As one Zimbabwean trader singularly states that 'South Africans have a bad mind', he is quickly opposed by the other Zimbabweans around him: 'You can not say it like that, people are all different'. A young South African trader describes his two friends from Malawi: 'They are fine, they understand, they don't like fighting, we have the same ideas, they have got good ideas'. He also explains that his white friends 'treat me like they are black and I am white'. A trader from Zimbabwe explains that 'it doesn't matter where he comes from, he does have to do right, he can be from anywhere, anyone can be my friend if he's good'. Another Zimbabwean explains that 'a good friend is a type of person, who doesn't like fighting, to my side I don't care, if he is Mozambican, or South African, as long as he is good to me'. A female Zimbabwean fruit seller states simply but meaningfully: 'We are all people'. A frequent opinion expressed by all traders was that 'in my country you have bad people, everywhere you have bad people'. Some state that state that 'black and white are the same, but we are not equal, what makes people different is money', thus emphasizing class as a factor in creating differences and inequalities, rather than culture or nationality.

The second theme is a commitment to cultural pluralism. One trader, who learned Zulu from a South African woman he used to work with when he was still employed as a gardener, explains: 'My culture is for good for me, but other cultures are good too'. The third theme is an interest in and appreciation for different cultures. As Appiah (2006) writes, cosmopolitans are 'humble enough to think that they might learn from strangers'. A Zimbabwean trader with an obvious affiliation to Rastafarian culture explains: 'You can learn a lot of things when you have a friend from another country, you can get new

ideas'. A young trader from Ivory Coast working at the market describes: 'I would like to go to Paris, there is a lot of fun things, I have seen it on TV once, I would like to see that'. Another Zimbabwean explains that he would like to live in Namibia for a while 'to see the different life, how people live there, and see the desert, but because of a lack of money I could never go'.

The intention of this section was to illustrate with a few examples of moral cosmopolitanism found amongst migrants working outside of the inner city areas in Johannesburg. Although being based on a small sample and only preliminary analysis, these accounts still pose a challenge to the common assumption that a moral cosmopolitan consciousness is restricted to well-educated 'circulating élites' (Söderström 2006:555). However, this certainly needs to be subjected to much deeper empirical investigation.

MIGRANT COSMOPOLITANISM IN AFRICA: SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR A RESEARCH AGENDA

Many questions remain yet unanswered, and I will use this conclusion to outline why the research on forms of cosmopolitanism is important and worthwhile. To understand processes at the micro-level as well as to inform broader debates around the effects of (internal) globalisation, it will be crucial to explore what types and natures of symbolic or real involvement with different cultures can be found in urban migrants' everyday relationships, practices and networks. We need to find out how thinly or thickly rooted belonging is amongst urban migrants in Johannesburg and other African cities, and whether there is something like a form of 'cosmopolitan belonging' existent or emerging. The lack of an adequate number of empirically based accounts limits our ability to proficiently discuss the alleged elitism of cosmopolitanism⁵, and the debates around defining who is (not) cosmopolitan will continue to be under-informed.

A point of concern is the rather indistinctive use of the term 'cosmopolitanism' in the African context. An important characteristic of internal and international migration to the urban centers of Africa is the fact that migrants not only create trans-local or trans-national, but also forms of *trans-temporal* spaces: the link to rural villages of origin is a link to tradition, while at the same time the move to the city is a step into modernity

⁵ Some of the few exceptions are Lamont 2000; Werbner 2006 or Furia 2005.

(Geschiere and Gugler 1998, Englund 2002). Of the few authors (for example Gable 2001, Ferguson 1999) writing about *cosmopolitanism* and cosmopolitan belonging amongst migrants in Africa, many claim that the integration of the modern urban and the traditional rural, or transnationalism, constitute cosmopolitanism in Africa *per se*. However, unless real or symbolic ties to places beyond home and host country are established, this does not constitute cosmopolitanism. Roudometof draws our attention to the fact that 'the presence of a cosmopolitan outlook (...) is conceptually distinct from the transnational experience' (2005: 121). I argue that if the notion of cosmopolitanism becomes used to label such a broad variety of ways in which differences can be integrated, it in fact becomes analytically ineffective.

Apart from academic interest and gaps in the literature, exploring what types of cosmopolitan practices, consciousness and cosmopolitan belonging can be found amongst migrants is also an important task in the social realm. Amisi and Ballard (2005) claim that migrant organisations introduce 'transformative cosmopolitanism' characterized by 'unapologetic otherness' to South Africa's native population (Ibid: 18). According to them, this cosmopolitanism challenges nationalism and 'ethnic chauvinism' by forcing the native population 'to begin engaging with social difference' (Ibid: 18-19).

However, before making the powerful claim that a more 'open and accommodating society' could be created this way, much previous groundwork needs to be done. We need to have an in-depth understanding of what the cosmopolitanism of African migrants in Johannesburg and other African cities entails, of its practices, the moral '(un)consciousness' it is based on and of the social and spatial contexts it is emerging, fostered, non-existent or damaged within, before we can think about the ways it can potentially challenge nativist idioms and 'ethnic chauvinism' as resilient as presently in many host societies such as South Africa. Furthermore, as Sichone claims, 'if we want to understand the cosmopolitanism of global justice we may find the answer not in liberal constitutions or UN conventions but in the real lives of the world's a dollar a day multitudes' (Sichone 2006:31). We need to explore what views about human equality, global interconnectedness, universal rights, cultural pluralism and individualism migrants articulate. It will be crucial to find out whether different forms of cosmopolitanism are related to different social characteristics of migrants or spatial contexts within cities, and how negative or positive encounters with natives or other

migrants might create, damage or sustain particular forms of cosmopolitanism. Importantly, we also need to find out how practical cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan consciousness are interrelated and how they affect each other.

Learning about new forms of cosmopolitan or post-national belonging that are characterized by increased detachment from particular places will be significant not only to inform debates around a re-conceptualisation of membership and the rights and duties of migrants in host societies, but also contribute to our knowledge about processes of negotiating (self) inclusion and (self) exclusion, migrants' inability or unwillingness to become a member in host societies and of their actions and modes of organisation in broader terms.

The fragmentation of African societies and identities as well as the trend towards more individualistic ways of social organisation noted in the context of the continent's urban centres give rise to the question whether there is a need for a paradigm that fully moves beyond the national, such as cosmopolitanism. African migrants might pioneer new forms of belonging and, in fact, pose a considerable challenge to Ignatieff's claim 'that cosmopolitanism is the privilege of those who can take a secure nation state for granted' (Ignatieff 1993:9).

Migrants have to be viewed as the heterogeneous populations that they are, and simplified accounts of whether migrants generally are or are not cosmopolitan can only make very limited contributions to our knowledge. Cosmopolitanism needs to be socially and spatially contextualised, and understood as a form of belonging that exists in a diversity of different forms. Once we have deepened our knowledge based on empirical analysis, we can use and apply the concept in a far more critical and productive way in the academic, and possibly even in the social realm.

ⁱ Pentecostals are a group within evangelical Christianity who 'believe that the characteristics of the first-century Apostolic Church, especially the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit, should be the norm for the church's life' (Larbi 2002:145).

ⁱⁱ The British sociological foundation defines informed consent as a 'responsibility on the sociologist to explain as fully as possible, and in terms as meaningful to participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be disseminated' (Gilbert 1995:63).

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