

Xenophobic citizenship, unsettling space, and constraining
borders: Assembling refugee exclusion in South Africa's everyday

by

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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Global Governance

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2022
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how myriad actors, including the state, citizens, civil society, refugees, and the media, intersect to shape refugee experiences in urban centers in South Africa. Building on six months of ethnographic fieldwork, it focuses on refugee lived experiences in this context to determine the actors, their relations, processes, and factors that condition refugees' everyday existence. This dissertation argues that we cannot understand refugee experiences in the urban context without attending to the relations among a multiplicity of actors, their interpretations of social phenomena related to refugees, and the meanings that emanate from these different actors as they forge to condition the day-to-day living of refugees. Furthermore, it argues that situating refugees' everyday lives as the object of the study reveals how exclusionary practices are constructed, enacted, tolerated, reinforced, and challenged in contingent moments. In this mundanity where daily life is constituted and experienced, we see how collectives of various actors, imbued with multiple rationalities and enacting distinct yet intersecting processes, induce outcomes greater than the sum of their individual parts. Indeed, when refugees manage to escape the gaze of the state, they fall prey to that of citizens—whose aggressive actions are tolerated and emboldened by the state. Furthermore, the media mediates these state-citizen, citizen-refugee, and refugee-state connections, framing them and the attendant discourses that form social attitudes. The convergence of all these actors' interests, perspectives, actions, and processes has devastating consequences for refugees' everyday acts of shopping, walking, studying, or simply living. Notwithstanding these compounding acts of exclusion from access to rights, services such as healthcare and education, and physical space, refugees exhibit herculean acts of agency and resistance when navigating local and national refugee regimes and traversing everyday space. These heroic ways of being include strategies to claim asylum, obtain refugee status and documentation, secure economic and other resources, negotiate social services, escape police and citizen brutality, and avoid expulsion. By expulsion, I mean the multiple ways that myriad actors seek to force out refugees from territorial geography. These include, but are not limited to, deportation by the government, violent xenophobic

force by locals, and institutional extra-legal processes for determining refugee status.

This dissertation combines assemblage thinking and critical citizenship and migration scholarship concepts of citizenship, space, and borders to analyze the experiences of people who are pushed to the edges of society and live in constant fear of violence and spatial expulsion. It contributes to critical citizenship and migration scholarship in three ways. First, it demonstrates that conditions of uncertainty, precarity, and vulnerability result from the confluence of multiple actors who enact processes that reinforce each other in cyclical ways, rather than just being a product of institutional actors (such as the state). This means that refugees and other non-citizens are made to seem like "immanent others" not only by the state but also by ordinary citizens and the media. In what I call "assembling refugee exclusion," I show how a collective of actors portray refugees as burdens and threats—individuals who are undeserving of rights but should be exorcised from the nation's imagination and physical location—regardless of their legal status and formal documentation. Assembling refugee exclusion reveals how the confluence of multiple actors, as opposed to a single actor, induces overburdening pressure on the wellbeing of refugees, resulting in more negative health and socioeconomic effects.

Second, it exposes how nation-building and identity formation, constructed at the expense of individuals on the fringe of society, such as refugees and excluded others, can be more than acts of state practice. State and non-state actors unite behind citizenship ideas to exclude and expel the imagined other. Thus, refugees' identity and physical presence in urban areas are inextricably tied to nation-building, belonging, citizenship, and entitlement to rights and services. By jettisoning refugee protection under national and international refugee law, the state panders to citizens' exclusionary interests and discriminatory feelings to foster collective national identity and pride. Simultaneously, with collective values regarding citizenship, I argue that non-state actors are emboldened to use language to distinguish themselves from the other, establishing hierarchical relationships and moral categories that lead to modes of bordering action and xenophobic violence against the other. Furthermore, this form of

exclusionary language is reinforced through media discourse and public communication creating a continuous loop of difference. While this qualitative case study uncovers a slew of discrimination against refugees stemming from the attitudes of multiple actors accumulating in everyday space, I find that exclusionary practices coexist with powerful forms of refugee agency that are both enabled and restricted in specific moments and spaces. Therefore, third and finally, the dissertation contributes to citizenship and migration scholarship by delving into how agency emerges from complex relationships of micro and macro politics, demonstrating how refugees leverage support from non-government organizations (NGOs), their communities, and allies not only to challenge exclusionary state discourses and actions but also to enact strategies and navigate spaces constructed and populated by a variety of relational actors. Overall, the dissertation asks us to consider how a myriad of actors, both state and non-state, and meanings derived from their perceptions and interpretations of citizenship, space, and borders intersect to shape the lived experiences of refugees. This question prompts policymakers, scholars, and practitioners to consider the implications of this convergence of players for refugee governance and refugee protection in the twenty-first century.

Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by saying that this project would not have been possible without the study participants who shared their invaluable time, trials, and triumphs with me. You have helped me comprehend refugee experiences in urban settings in ways I could not have predicted at the start of the study. Furthermore, this project would not have been possible without the scholarly guidance and support provided to me by my supervisor, Dr. Suzan Ilcan. Words cannot express how grateful I am for your assistance along this long journey. I am grateful for the years of support, patience, and guidance.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Margaret Walton-Roberts and Dr. Jonathan Crush, who played important roles in the development of this dissertation through their imaginative and thoughtful questions and comments. And I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Andrew Thompson, the Governance Programs (MA and PhD) and Partnership Manager at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, and Dr. Jasmin Habib, the former Director of the PhD Global Governance Program at the Balsillie School of International Affairs (2019-2022), who were always ready to answer my many questions, provide guidance and support, and ease my concerns. I would also like to express gratitude to the staff at the UNHCR's regional office in Pretoria and the Cape Town office, who graciously hosted me and assisted with accessing relevant government and NGO officials and refugee leaders. This dissertation would not have been possible without funding from the University of Waterloo, the Balsillie School of International Affairs, the Ontario Trillium Scholarships, and the Queen Elizabeth Advanced Scholarship, and without sponsorship through research assistance with Dr. Andrew Thompson. This funding enabled me to devote more time and energy to research, writing, and the dissemination of my research in scholarly settings.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. To my fellow graduate students, your collegiality and support throughout the years have meant a great deal to me. To my father, Albert Kandjii, my papa, Dr. Goody Nwangboso, and my mama, Ngozi Ngwagboso, my grandmother, Nakuru, all my uncles, especially Seuakouje and Beliud, and my aunts, Iiue, Jackie, and Isabella, I thank you for believing in me and praying with me. Enthia, Grace, Punaete, Undjizuva, and Unomasa, my dear siblings, thank you for keeping me grounded and having faith in me. To my friends, Ngaijake, Rapi, Mary, Marcia, Johanna, Helena, Roxanne, Akash, Lisa, and Obinna, I thank you for bringing levity to my life, especially in moments when the going was tough. Finally, to my dear nieces, Otja and Precious-Queen, and my little nephew Zikamee, I say, "I love you little ones." May this serve as a reminder that you all can do anything. In memory of my dear late aunt Kariyandjua Kandjii, my beloved dear mother Tjiuamana Mbunga, and my late grandfather Petrus Kandjii.

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ANC	African National Congress
APC	Asylum Seeker Processing Centre
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
LHR	Lawyers for Human Rights
RAB	Refugee Appeal Board
RRO	Refugee Reception Office
RSDO	Refugee Status Determination Officer
SASA	Somali Association of South Africa
SCRA	Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Context and Problem Rationale

There is a general acceptance that states shape the lived experiences of refugees and other displaced persons within and, at times, beyond the domains of their territorial geography. Debates around the role of the state in refugee and migration governance have emphasized the various securitization, externalization, and nationalism practices that produce exclusionary outcomes and, at best, gradient forms of inclusion for refugees and asylum-seeking individuals and communities. The term "refugee" in this dissertation refers to people forced to flee their home country due to war or conflict and come to South Africa to seek asylum and international protection, regardless of their official status, except for a few instances in the dissertation where I differentiate how status as a refugee or asylum seeker affects protection and services. Indeed, in an era of increasing right-wing populism, spreading vigilantism, and xenophobic nationalism, exclusionary discourses and practices directed at refugees and other migrants reveal the multiplicity of actors involved. These actors, which include the state, the media, and ordinary citizens, engage in intersecting and reinforcing exclusionary practices against refugees like Ngalula.

Ngalula, a young man who fled his conflict-torn home country of the Democratic Republic of the Congo ten years ago, came to South Africa with the hope of seeking refuge and finding peace. Unfortunately, his lived experience in Cape Town, South Africa, is far removed from these hopes and dreams. Ngalula's living conditions are marked by adverse insecurity, vulnerability, and uncertainty due to the actions and inactions of disparate actors. Actors like state bureaucrats in the DHA treated his claims to asylum with cynicism and skepticism, resulting in a state of limbo and waiting in which he constantly navigates life with a precarious asylum status and documentation that is barely valued but requires constant renewal. Moreover, citizens in urban areas have shown a willingness and ability to perpetuate targeted violence against refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants. Ngalula's urban residence in Philippi, a township on the outskirts of Cape Town, brings him into direct contact with pugnacious citizens, who detest his presence and regard it as a threat to their economic survival and

wellbeing. This consort of actors produces a pernicious existence by employing violent rhetoric, creating conditions of criminality, and violently targeting the personhood and property of refugees and migrants. Refugees like Ngalula, according to antagonistic citizens, are not native to the land and thus should not benefit from its fruits. To ensure this outcome, these everyday actors argue that refugees and migrants need to be mangled before they blossom numerically, economically, and spatially. As a result, citizens barricade refugees and obstruct their social, economic, and physical movement in ways similar to state bordering practices. These xenophobic attitudes and behaviours are tolerated by a government that inadequately prevents its own citizens from being violent and from employing xenophobic language, creating a vicious circle in which justice is denied and violence against refugees and migrants spreads. Instead, the government promotes its own discriminatory policies and practices and often responds to xenophobic attacks with indifference and inadequate remedies.

Indeed, refugee exclusion becomes a cyclically self-reinforcing process. Citizens who believe in closed borders elect political leaders who advocate for and try to implement their policy preferences. To maximize their prospects of election or re-election, politicians politicize migration, tailoring their campaign messaging to popular concerns to mobilize support by appealing to prevailing concerns to attract new voters while avoiding alienating existing supporters. In turn, callous citizens carry out violent attacks on mosques and other gathering spaces without fear of punishment, inspired by politicians' anti-immigrant rhetoric. Meanwhile, to broaden its reach and influence, the media panders to its audience, which bases decisions on the perceived veracity of the news.

To address this complex social phenomenon, in which refugees such as Ngalula are embedded, this dissertation employs assemblage thinking and critical citizenship scholarship concepts of citizenship, space, and borders to contextualize refugee lived experiences and identify the actors, their relationships, processes, and factors that shape their daily lives. This dissertation examines how the outcomes of multiple actions and processes by numerous actors in South Africa influence the lived

experiences of Congolese, Burundian, and Somali refugees. Simultaneously, the analysis explores the various social, legal, economic, and cultural resources and networks upon which refugees draw to navigate a society that shuns their presence. I selected to investigate the experiences of refugees from these three countries because they continue to be among the most complicated, conflict-prone nations feeding protracted humanitarian crises in Africa and producing large numbers of refugees in neighbouring nations and across the continent. In the pages that follow, I will situate forced migration in South Africa in the context of its recent history, discussing how political and economic changes over time have shaped the current climate of xenophobic rhetoric and violence, produced exclusionary policies and practices that try to keep people out, and cultivated forms of agency and resistance among refugees and their allies.

Even though South Africa's state response to migrants and refugees is not significantly different from that of other restrictive migrant-receiving countries, the combination of the country's violent xenophobic response to the presence of refugees and migrants, its paradox as the second largest economy in Africa yet the most unequal society in the world (World Bank, 2022a), its political history and contemporary governance crises, and the disjunction between migration policy and practice make it a valuable case study. This rich and complicated mix of many factors makes modern South Africa an instructive case study at the intersection of refugee experiences, hostile host communities, and state failures, which have been shaped by larger historical and modern dynamics of governance, economic and racial inequality, and urbanization.

South Africa has long been entangled in a governance crisis. The worst of it occurred during the Jacob Zuma era, between 2009 and 2018, when the presidency, embroiled in allegations of racketeering, corruption, and fraud, failed to serve the populace adequately (R.W. Johnson 2015). Implicated in state capture through public perception, and more recently in the six volume reports of the *Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption, and Fraud in the Public Sector*,

including Organs of State, commonly known as the Zondo Commission (Zondo, 2022), it was ascertained that the president and the Gupta family's private interests influenced state decision-making processes to their advantage. The presidency and, by extension, the government bred chaos. Facing significant legal challenges, growing public dissatisfaction and outcry, and votes of no-confidence in parliament and within his African National Congress (ANC) party, Zuma resigned in February 2018. At the time of his resignation, Zuma's presidency is said to have cost the country's economy one trillion rands (about 87 billion CAD), leaving a messy and costly legacy (see Wilson 2019). By June 2022, the Commission of Inquiry had completed its six-volume reports into state capture, documenting the extent of corruption, state capture, and the complicity of national and international actors (Zondo 2022).

Beyond the economic cost and the gross maladministration of President Zuma created a governance vacuum, resulting in chaos in the political domain and the social and administrative governance arenas. For instance, the constant reshuffling of key ministerial positions, such as finance and home affairs, has hampered stability, consistency, and continuity and created conditions that foster contradictory policies and practices. Between 2009 and 2018, five different people held the post of Minister of Home Affairs, a far cry from the low turnover rate in the Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki eras. Similarly, Zuma frequently replaced finance ministers; the president shuffled this portfolio five times compared to the two changes under the Mandela, Mbeki, and Kgalema Motlanthe presidencies combined. During the Zuma presidency, multiple, significant ministerial scandals (Onishi and Chan 2017, Schwikowski 2018) further undermined the government's reputation, functioning, and effectiveness, especially in the area of physical security.

Zuma and his predecessors created a security system that is broken, overburdened, and struggles to prevent and combat violent crimes, producing conditions in which criminality continues unchecked and generalized insecurity becomes normalized. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, year), South Africa is reported to have the fifth-highest murder rate in the world—after

Belize, Honduras, Jamaica, and El Salvador. The country also has a murder rate comparable to the conflict zones of Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The South African Police Service (SAPS) reports that murder increased by 3.4 percent from 2018 to 2019, going from 20,336 to 21,022. SAPS notes that most murders across the country occur on the weekend, between 9:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. Most of these murders, SAPS suggests, are associated with significant alcohol and drug abuse. Similarly, overall sexual offence rates increased by 4.6 percent from 2018 to 2019, going from 50,108 to 52,420. Those sexual offences detected by the police through active investigation increased by 19 percent during the same period, going from 6,701 to 7,976. Other crimes also witnessed a turn for the worse: common assault increased by 3.7 percent (from 156,243 to 162,012), assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm increased by 2.2 percent (from 167,352 to 170,979), and robbery with aggravating circumstances increased by 1.2 percent (from 138,364 to 140,032). Overall, the general security of most South Africans is in crisis, with those at the margins of society—refugees and asylum seekers—experiencing a double marginalization through both generalized insecurity pervasive in the country and xenophobic targeting because of their foreign status, regardless of the president in office.

Even after leaving office, Zuma remains a key figure in South Africa's political imagination and can influence how everyday life on the streets of South Africa is symbolically and practically experienced and mobilized by his supporters, as the July 2021 South Africa unrest, also commonly known as the Zuma unrest or Zuma riots, demonstrated (Visagie, Turok, and Swartz, 2021). Disturbingly, there are serious fears that these violent events will reoccur (Africa 2022). In this chaotic environment, one must consider how the intersection of governance, everyday actors, the media, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the UNHCR shapes refugee experiences. To understand contemporary South Africa, however, we must first place it in its recent history.

Indeed, South Africa's history of apartheid is crucial to understanding contemporary social, racial, political, and xenophobic dynamics. Violence based on racial differences, such as the March 1960

Sharpeville massacre, which saw the racist police kill 67 protesters and injure 186, exposed the Apartheid system's violence. While the March 1960 event sparked a flurry of activity at the UN, leading to increased calls for decolonization and the abolition of racial inequality, it was too late. Discriminatory discourses, discord, and practices based on differences have long been entrenched and normalized. The apartheid system spatially planned and regulated city spaces to protect privileged white insiders and alienate and exclude black South Africans. Under this system, black South Africans were what Landau calls "foreign natives," whose utility was regulated in temporal and spatial terms (2010a, 2010b). Black South Africans were considered "aliens whose usefulness lasted only for as long as they could build the city, care for gardens and pools, or nurture white children" (Landau 2011, p. 9) -- a segregatory system based on racial ideology and practice that served to benefit a white minority economically, socially, and politically. However, change was imminent.

With Nelson Mandela's release on February 11, 1990, the world witnessed a political change in the country. Mandela, the people's hero, was free. The mood on the streets of Soweto and in other parts of the country swelled with raptures of joy. South Africans celebrated the sweet victory with music, dance, and food. Residents spoke of a free, prosperous, and equitable South Africa. Leading negotiations with the white minority government, Mandela got the wheels rolling to abolish apartheid and establish a multiracial government. In 1994, the ANC won an electoral majority in South Africa's first free elections, and Nelson Mandela became the country's first president of the independent era. The political transformation ruptured the policy of racial segregation across cities and towns established under the apartheid regime. Post-independence, the country, still an inchoate democracy, imagined itself through the slogans "Ubuntu" ("I am because you are") and "Rainbow Nation" as a multicultural African renaissance. This celebration of South Africa's multiculturalism and Pan-Africanism created a conducive environment for migration, absent in the apartheid era.

With political independence, the people's aspirations shifted to economic liberation, land ownership, and equitable access to opportunities and resources. However, progress was not straightforward. While independence in 1994 ended racial segregation, it has not adequately addressed the socio-economic inequality entrenched during the apartheid era (Baker, 2019). Post-apartheid economic growth focused on targeted programs for previously disadvantaged people and social services for all citizens, which improved the lives of many South Africans. Indeed, formerly disadvantaged South Africans are more educated, have better health care, benefit from social welfare and economically targeted programs, can reside anywhere in the country, and have enjoyed many tangible economic gains in the years after independence (see Baker 2019). Nevertheless, this progress has not adequately reversed the significant socio-economic inequality that is both a legacy of apartheid and a product of globalization. Poverty and social inequality prevail. White South Africans retained economic hegemony, owning and transferring wealth and vast fertile lands from one generation to the next, and controlling businesses in mining, agriculture, food, and other major sectors. This economic reality perpetuated the existence of a racial economic elite despite the end of apartheid (see Swartz et al., 2020) and created a new political elite.

Poor citizens—particularly during President Thabo Mbeki's second term (2004–2008)—increasingly saw the political elite as removed from their concerns about jobs, services, and security. These frustrations fed the ruling African National Congress's internal coup at the conference in Polokwane in April 2008, which replaced the "elitist" Thabo Mbeki with the more populist Jacob Zuma. With Zuma's ascendance came the sense that South Africa's wealth would finally be redistributed to disadvantaged citizens rather than dedicated to continental, pan-Africanist fantasies. In the streets, refugees were told that they would soon need to trade in their "Mbeki papers" for an unspecified something else or, better yet simply leave the country (Steinberg, 2008). While Zuma's populist message about redistribution appealed to the masses and rhetorically printed an image of government promoting the interests of its citizens, in practice the situation was more complex. Zuma turned out to be

a corrupt leader who prioritized his economic interests and those of his cronies, the Gupta family, above those of the masses, leaving a legacy that is marred with corruption, mismanagement, and scandal.

Even before the Zuma and Mbeki eras, international migration to South Africa was a defining phenomenon of the country's political debate. Political elites used migration rhetoric to advance their interests, whether it was to build national identity or to achieve political expediency. Since the 1990s, the executive and legislative branches of government, as well as police and other service providers, have regarded migrants as a threat to the survival of the state (Neocosmos 2008). Similarly, in her book, *Migration and National Identity in South Africa, 1860–2010*, Klotz (2013), cites records from early discussions of policy reform in 1994, showing how politicians, such as Desmond Lockey, the then ANC parliamentary portfolio committee chair, argued that "foreign nationals put an enormous strain on our social services at the expense of our own citizens" and legislative review must "ensure that more effective measures are introduced to curtail this influx," a position that was shared by some officials. Another notable example is Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the first post-apartheid Home Affairs Minister, who stated in August 1994, "If we as South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with millions of aliens pouring into South Africa, we can say goodbye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme" (Klotz, 2013, p. 215). While Buthelezi and Lockey were outliers with such views in the early 1990s, this rhetoric has gained traction in recent years and has become a topic of central debate in South African migration scholarship. Tracing migration and national identity from the 1860s through 2010, Klotz provides context to understand the puzzle of violent xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa, asking why South Africa has such a distinctive immigration policy that includes robust rights for migrants at the same time as it implements exclusionary immigration policies accompanied by xenophobia and economic nationalism? Klotz makes two significant contributions to answering this question. First, she carefully traces South African history for precedents and describes how those precedents are carried forward, adapted, and challenged. Second, she responds to South African literature and claims of South African exceptionalism by comparing the country to Canada and

Australia. According to Klotz, "political dynamics involving courts and coalitions explain this contradictory mix of post-apartheid immigration policies" (7). The scholar demonstrates how, since 1960, immigration policy has been exclusionary, and how that longstanding exclusionary preoccupation was embodied in the 1991 Aliens Control Act, which governed migration.

A considerable amount of recent literature on migration in South Africa has advanced various explanations for the country's cause of anti-immigrant prejudice and xenophobic violence, ranging from those who hold the government responsible to those who blame prevailing economic factors. Akinola, for example, argues that "state actors are the major drivers of xenophobic attacks." Similarly, Steinberg (2018) claimed that violence against asylum seekers is evidence of declining sovereign power, where "theatrical displays of force against enemies within [are] attempts at retrieval of that power" (p. 119). Local political and economic leaders, according to Landau (2011), exploit any "window of opportunity" of tensions to mobilize the poor against asylum seekers for their own political or economic gain. Even scarier, there is evidence that when politicians blame asylum seekers for crime and unemployment, police brutality and harassment of foreigners tend to go up (Neocosmos 2008; Landau 2011). Some have identified economic disparities and scapegoating as causes of violence (Harris, Findley, & Nielson 2018, Lamb 2019, Morris 1998). Lamb (2019), for example, contended that a lack of cohesion among economically depressed poor communities is a significant predictor of interpersonal violence. Morris (1998) similarly asserted "that if a majority group is in a perilous economic position, they are more likely to feel threatened by minorities, especially if they are foreign" (p. 1125). Critics of this line of argument maintained that these arguments appeal to apologist notions that utilize economic reasons as justification for xenophobia but fail to fully capture the nuances of xenophobia in South Africa (Akinola, 2018). I argue that global economic factors matter.

Indeed, the global dynamics of neo-liberal economic policies have played and continue to play a pivotal role in rising poverty rates and social inequality in developing countries, including South Africa

(see Jenkins 2006, 2008). A sluggish economy, coupled with rapid urbanization, has produced significant unemployment, especially among the youth. These young people, residing in squalor conditions of abysmal housing, poor sanitation, limited access to water (see Campbell 2016), and inadequate job prospects, are increasingly frustrated with their lived experiences. Concurrently, high unemployment and poverty rates also mean significant numbers of refugees live in the same informal settlements and other areas of geographic proximity to poor citizens. As a result, stymied by rising social inequality, high unemployment rates, and limited prospects for upward economic mobility, frustrated citizens have turned to crime and to channelling their frustrations onto refugees and migrants (see Kalitanyi and Visser 2010). Far removed from the hopes of economic liberation and social equality that independence would bring, post-independence South Africa has in some ways increased the disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

Amid these prevailing socioeconomic realities, it is no surprise that a third line of argument position economic conditions and state scapegoating hand in hand. This economic state scapegoating position argued that, to divert national attention away from its shortcomings and failures, the state attempts to portray asylum seekers as exploiters of a generous asylum system, enacting restrictive policies and implementing extra-legal practices (Desai 2008, Amit 2011a). Regardless of where one falls on these debates, xenophobic rhetoric and violence have grave consequences for refugees and asylum seekers, as they exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and reinforce forms of economic and social precarity. By "social precarity," I mean the social factors associated with an increased risk of social exclusion (Gallie and Paugam, 2002).

Aside from the role played by official authorities and ordinary citizens in refugee exclusion, the media, aware of its economically disgruntled and migration-averse readership, parrots the state-informed position that claims for asylum and international protection are bogus. While the media's intention may be to depict social reality informed by its audience's ideals, the implication may be additional

dehumanization of those who have already experienced substantial physical, social, psychological, economic, and emotional violence. Incidentally, international organizations, constrained by their operational mandates and insufficient resources, are ineffective in safeguarding the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees and asylum seekers must survive in a world with numerous actors, factors, and processes that work to keep people out. Therefore, understanding the intricacies, nuances, and subtleties involved in how these combinations of actors and factors influence how refugees experience daily life in South Africa is crucial. I call these processes, enacted by a multiplicity of actors and conditioned by multiple factors, "assembling refugee exclusion."

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

The central question is how assembling refugee exclusion—constructed through rhetorics of difference and operating through practices of citizenship, spatiality, and borders—shapes refugee experiences in South Africa. In other words, how do the intersecting relationships and processes of disparate actors, such as the state, NGOs, citizens, and the media, construct and reinforce the existence of refugees and asylum seekers? The dissertation analyzes how the intersections of competing notions of citizenship play out in everyday spaces and on the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those of Congolese, Burundian, and Somali origins. Further, how do refugees challenge the conditions in which they find themselves? Drawing on assemblage thinking and critical citizenship and migration traditions, I explore how the interrelationship between the state, citizens, and the media conditions the lived experiences of refugees. In doing so, I demonstrate how concepts of illegality, precarious migratory status, spaces of non-existence, and acts of citizenship are useful to explain some components of the refugee experience but do not fully reflect the multiple and interactive effects of these experiences in South Africa. So, I use assemblage thinking to argue for a wider look at the many actors (state and non-state), factors, and processes (legal to illegal) that shape the lives of refugees and asylum seekers at the same time.

I designed three ways to achieve this objective. First, I undertake an extensive analysis of the practices of refugee policy implementation and operational practices of the UNHCR, national NGOs, and the government of South Africa as they relate to refugees (see Chapter 3). Specifically, I explore how migration policy reform and the implementation of refugee policies affect refugees' access to status, documentation, services, and livelihoods. Second, I situate the experiences of refugees within broader socio-economic dynamics of xenophobia, social inequality, and criminality in everyday spaces, investigating how and why rhetoric of difference is constructed to create the "unwanted other" in everyday spaces (Chapters 4) and the myriad of strategies used to exclude and expel this other (Chapter 5). By situating these refugee experiences in this way, I provide context for and insight into the tensions and contractions that exist within and among the diverse actors attempting to pursue their interests in the refugee environment. In all these chapters, I acknowledge and discuss the courage and fortitude that refugees espouse in quagmire conditions, showcasing their acts of agency, resistance, and bravery in specific moments as they navigate the complexity of life in urban South Africa.

1.3 Thesis Statement

The dissertation seeks to understand how the combination of historical apartheid, contemporary dynamics, and the changing landscape of migration in South Africa impact the lives of refugees. In the study, I situate everyday refugee experiences within the political economy of South Africa, linking these experiences to broader shifts in global governance, globalization, and development. I argue that these struggles are best illuminated through the discourse and rhetoric produced about refugees and their presence in everyday spaces. Moreover, I reveal how citizens and the state employ their ideation of citizenship to enforce exclusion in everyday spaces, implicating them in bordering practices. I argue that bordering practices are a product of both state and non-state actors, where citizens have become critical agents in bordering violence. In all these discussions, I explore the ways refugee populations engage with these actors.

Some urban refugees' experiences are shaped by and entangled with geographic drivers such as transnational migration, the post-colonial nation-states, laws, and borders while being part of a broader array of intimate spaces such as cities, townships, and migrant and refugee communities. As Butler (2006) argues, host nations often use precarity to justify a defensive, self-protectionist response. This response involves the closing of borders, violence toward others, and the production of the flexible discourse of othering, where such processes place responsibility for socio-economic, national, and international problems on these shifting categories of the imagined "Other." I am particularly interested in how the erosion of rights and practices plays out spatially. In this regard, I focus on the changes in migration management, border enforcement, administrative refugee reception and processes, and policing practices that produce precariously document people and facilitate status gradations, all of which intensify vulnerability.

Refugee precarity and exclusion is a product of a multiplicity of actors, including the state. The dissertation asks why and how these actors converge and diverge to yield precarious and exclusionary outcomes. It answers that citizenship is the main reason for these outcomes, and space and borders are the mechanisms. It also engages with how refugees, through their shared precarity, organize themselves to challenge exclusion. I argue that state and non-state entities employ notions of citizenship, identity, and legality to produce cumulative effects that engender precarity, insecurity, exclusion, and expulsion. These outcomes may be intended or unintended, contradictory, and complex. Forcibly displaced populations and their allies, at the same time, challenge these exclusionary practices with varying results. For this dissertation, "forcibly displaced populations" refers to those with experience of displacement due to conflict, war, or related instability, originating from the DRC, Burundi, and Somalia, and who have sought asylum in South Africa regardless of their current legal status there. Forcibly displaced populations will be used interchangeably with the term refugees.

This dissertation contributes to scholars such as Koster 2015; Gordon & Stack, 2007; Jaffe, 2013a; and Ong 2006, who have questioned the sole centrality of the state in refugee governance and migration management. It argues that while the state is significant in producing illegality through legal processes and practices (De Genova 2002, 2005, 2013, Burciaga, Martinez, et al. 2019) and hierarchies of categorization through policies and practices (Goldring, Bernstein, and Bernhard 2009), it is not the only actor. Building on the work of scholars such as Koster (2015), I consider how interactive relations of interests, rationalities, meanings, and motivations between state and non-state actors converge as an assemblage with provisional unity in specific moments to shape the experiences of refugees.

What makes this approach unique from others is the emphasis placed upon the heterogenous multiplicity—be it actors, processes, or materials that interact in a contingent and provisional way. My dissertation focuses on exploring how and why these heterogenous elements converge to produce exclusion—what I term the assembling of refugee exclusion. I argue that the processes of assembling refugee exclusion, more specifically the actors, utilize citizenship agendas to produce new and unexpected outcomes for refugees and migrants, construct a language that enables the assembling process to claim physical space, induce exclusion through bordering practices. In this regard, this dissertation both complements and expands upon existing critical migration scholarship through a conceptual formulation and expansion of key terms of citizenship, space, and borders utilizing the theoretical purchase of assemblage thinking. The assemblage lens offers critical insight into refugee experiences in South Africa and the actors who shape those experiences. Furthermore, the assembling refugee exclusion lens highlights how and why exercises of power— which are a product of multiple actors— emerge in particular ways, how they are based on collective citizenship ideation, how they shape language and space, and how they enact exclusion, and how they are resisted. It conceptualizes refugee precarity and exclusion as the product of multiple actors. These actors create contradictory, unpredictable, and uncertain conditions for the displaced. The usefulness of assemblage in scholarship beyond the state has been noted by scholars in their analysis of disparate entities such as "regional

assemblages" (Allen & Cochrane, 2007), "global assemblages" (Sassen, 2006; Ong and Collier, 2005; Olds, 2007), and the "assemblage of the geopolitical social" (Cowen & Smith, 2009). However, as Ilcan (2013) points out, friction is constitutive of spaces of convergence. This means that any move toward convergence comes at a cost in the form of opposition or struggle against that specific action. I approach such struggles through the concept of acts of contesting refugee exclusion.

Acts of contesting refugee exclusion draw and build on the literature of acts of citizenship (Isin 2008; Isin and Neilson 2008) and "contesting citizenship" (McNevin 2009: 165) literature to speak to the various visible and invisible performances and tactics that refugees employ as individuals, in communities with others precarious groups, and in formations of solidarity citizen populations. I argue that refugees resist exclusion and forms of discrimination in three ways. First, I examine how refugees contest identity politics and the notions of citizenship produced by state policies and practices and reinforced by social actors. The types of actions that define acts of contesting refugee exclusion are reminiscent of Connoy's (2018) "acts of liberating irregularity" and H. Johnson's (2015:958) concept of "re-taking presence," which focuses on how subjects enact themselves as political subjects to reject discrimination, denounce exclusion, and occupy space in society. Through acts of contesting refugee exclusion, I focus on the embodied, performative language and tactics refugees and asylum seekers use to challenge discrimination, exclusion, and expulsion. These acts can be a combination of their political and legal agency.

Second, acts of contesting refugee exclusion further attend to those quiet acts and tactics that refugee communities, in a shared sense of loss and uncertainty, perform and enact to manage their everyday precarity and confront exclusion. Building on the work of Pascucci 2016, van Kooy and Bowman 2019, Kallio, Meier and Häkli 2020, it attends to the multi-faceted ways refugees and asylum seekers reclaim waiting in everyday life and draws our attention to the complexity embedded in these "temporal" liveable spaces (Griths 2014). These acts are predominantly economic but also focus on

social forms of agency. The third component of acts of contesting refugee exclusion builds on the scholarship of "bordering solidarities" (Rygiel 2011) to consider how refugees with South African citizens and civil society organizations challenge the assemblage of actors consisting of state and non-state actors. *Bordering Solidarities* looks at the different ways migrants and people who support them use resources and other forms of social capital to negotiate border controls, rethink political community and subjectivities, and take part in citizenship practices (Rygiel 2011). Through this formation of solidarity, refugees are further empowered to claim rights more aggressively, exert their presence more confidently, and make social justice demands on those who might be unaware of or ambivalent about their presence.

This concept of acts of contesting refugee exclusion offers numerous contributions to the literature. It acknowledges the various ways in which refugees—as individuals, communities, and allies—espouse agency in political, social, and economic spheres without romanticizing precariousness (H. Johnson 2012; Landolt and Goldring 2015) or elevating one component of agency while diminishing others. It further echoes calls to prioritize less visible and more quiet everyday acts (Rygiel et al. 2015; Connoy 2018) and attends to the significance of “bordering solidarities” (Rygiel, 2011) in everyday spaces. Most significantly, the concept of acts of contesting refugee exclusion draws attention to the multiplicity of acts that refugees espouse to challenge exclusionary acts by the state and non-state actors. It calls attention to the myriad ways refugees confront and resist processes of assembling refugee exclusion.

To better understand how the assemblages of refugee exclusion form and function, I engage with the concepts of a citizenship agenda (Koster 2015), borders (Johnson & Jones et al. 2011, Rumford 2011, Mezzadra & Neilson 2013), and space (Trimikloniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos 2016, Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith 1991, Massey 2005), to which I dedicate three empirical chapters (chapters 3-5). These concepts lay a foundation for how the state governs refugee populations, how it constructs

difference through language and everyday space, and how it borders. This dissertation builds on these existing frameworks to demonstrate how the relations among the multiplicity of actors' shape refugee experiences. In brief, citizenship as an identity emerges in relation to otherness, and it is instrumentalized by the assemblage to create categories of others whose rights are compromised upon in formal and informal processes; the assemblage uses derogatory and exclusionary language to target those deemed as others to render them visible for exclusion and expulsion; and borders co-opt non-citizens in the bordering logic of the state, whose actions are emboldened by the state, creating hierarchies of legitimacy, deservingness, and belonging.

Each empirical chapter builds on the preceding one and responds to the overall research question guiding this dissertation project: how do assemblages of refugee exclusion—constructed and functioning through practices of citizenship, space, and borders—shape refugee experiences in South Africa? How do the intersecting relations between the state, NGOs, citizens, and the media construct the existence of refugees and asylum seekers? The dissertation analyzes how competing notions of citizenship intersect and manifest in everyday spaces and on the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, and Somali.

Finally, how is assembling refugee exclusion resisted and challenged? Simply, how do refugees challenge the conditions in which they find themselves? This dissertation, drawing on critical migration scholarship, offers responses to these questions in ways that provide insights into the tensions and contradictions within and among the multiplicity of actors that struggle to pursue their interests in the refugee environment. Equally, in all these chapters, I acknowledge the courage and fortitude refugees espouse in quagmire conditions.

1.4 Methodology

Research for this dissertation includes semi-structured interviews with forty-five participants in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria, South Africa, from October 2017 to March 2018. Participants

included refugees and asylum seekers (30 individuals) from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Somalia, along with policy specialists, program managers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (5 individuals) working with refugees, ministry officials in health, police, and the department of home affairs (3 individuals), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (5 individuals) officials, and human rights defenders (2 individuals). Most of the participants were contacted through email, via referral from the University of Cape Town, and via the UNHCR offices in Cape Town and Pretoria. As a Queen Elizabeth Advanced Scholar, I visited the University of Cape Town from mid-October to mid-December 2017 as a visiting researcher. I took residence at the UNHCR Cape Town office in February 2018 and the Pretoria office until March 2018. The UNHCR offices in Cape Town and Pretoria facilitated interview opportunities with the government, NGO partners, human rights defenders, and some refugee community members by contacting partners and key officials on my behalf. The University of Cape Town facilitated access to the Cape Town Law Clinic and assisted with obtaining ethical clearance in South Africa. The government of South Africa requires that all researchers in the country obtain clearance from a South African academic institution.

I relied on familiarity and knowledge of refugee operations in the region and contacts within UNHCR to identify key actors and organizations. I also searched online for refugee organizations.

Regarding contacting refugees and asylum seekers, I relied upon two perspicacious research assistants who had experience working with these populations and had a great insight into the context. They guided with accessing refugee businesses predominantly located across Cape Town. Refugee leaders and UNHCR also provided additional contacts and shared the information sheet, which led to a snowballing of more refugee and NGO participants. Most interviews with refugees and refugee communities occurred through "snowball sampling," whereby existing participants recommended future participants from their acquaintances. The sheet detailed the project's goals and provided my contact information so that potential participants could reach me. Refugees from Congolese and Burundian

origins showed significant interest in the study; however, Somalis exhibited slight reluctance. Refugee leaders from the Somali population expressed research fatigue.

Before commencing an interview, I went through an information sheet with each participant so that they understood the nature of the study and what was required of them. In the information sheet discussion, I emphasized the participants' agency in the process, including the need for continuous consent, the choice not to answer a question, and the possibility to halt or discontinue the interview at any time during the process. I provided participants with a consent form, written in clear and straightforward terms. In addition to giving them time to read the consent form, I read the content to them and confirmed that they fully understood and gave consent. The consent form informed them of their rights and the confidentiality and anonymity nature of the research project. Each participant signed or verbally agreed to the consent form. Overall, there were no potential risks or ethical concerns regarding participation in this study, per both the University of Waterloo's and University of Cape Town's Research Ethics Boards. Participants' names were not recorded, as participants selected their pseudonyms, or I selected one for them. They had the opportunity to ask questions about the project before, during, and after the interview. Participants were informed that their choice to participate would not affect their relationship with the UNHCR, the government, or any other organization. Refugee participants were also made aware that interviews were solely for research purposes on issues regarding access to refugee status, documentation, livelihood, and residence and that the discussion would not necessarily lead to policy change, opportunities for resettlement to a third country, or change of status in South Africa, but instead would assist in spreading the word regarding the experiences of refugees in South Africa.

Interviews lasted for sixty to ninety minutes and were conducted in various settings: public business areas, refugee agencies, homes, health centers, UNHCR and government offices, and occasionally over Skype. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy. I read

the transcriptions several times. This meticulous approach, while time-consuming, allowed for detailed analysis that facilitated the capture of emerging themes, commonalities, and conceptual links. The interview aimed to gain a grounded understanding of the factors and actors that shape refugee experiences in South Africa, encompassing an array of aspects as broad as health, education, food security, status, integration, and social cohesion. This interviewing enabled the gathering of incredibly rich, detailed data. It allowed the capturing of participants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of their circumstances in their voices.

Critical in-depth interviews with refugees focused on their stories, focusing on their living conditions; negotiated access to documentation, social and political rights, employment, education, healthcare, food, and humanitarian assistance; and their existence in a climate of violence and xenophobia. I paid attention to refugees' experiences of precarity, how status shaped livelihoods and access to social services, and how inadequate, potentially hostile, social and economic support and administrative bureaucracies cultivated such experiences. Throughout the interviews, I prioritized the individual narratives and experiences of the participants to reveal the consequences of policy and practice on everyday life.

Two focus groups with refugee religious and community leaders provided enriching dialogue among the group participants and an opportunity to learn from each other (see Figure 2). However, like any multi-person setting, some participants, especially women, were initially reluctant to participate in the conversation. I circumvented reluctance by directly engaging with these participants, who became more vocal after the first round of interactions. I established trust with the group both before the discussion and during, deliberately shifting the balance of power away from me as the researcher and towards the research participants (Bouma, Wilkinson, and Carland, 2019). By creating this safe and supportive environment, I accessed significant information from a large group of refugees and asylum seekers in a short period of time. While my position as a researcher and outsider may have created a

barrier, my outsider status as an African in South Africa created rapport among a population that is targeted for this same status.

My interview questions for all the participants focused mainly on their experience with governance and residence in South Africa. This focus allowed for a broader understanding of South Africa's migration governance, emphasizing the refugee system and how the system shapes refugee subjectivities and experiences. As a result, I was able to tease out the challenges asylum seekers experience when accessing status determination processes, documentation, and renewal of status; the challenges refugees and asylum seekers encounter when utilizing state-provided documentation; and the service providers' perception of these documents. I also focused on their experiences of accessing social services such as health, education, security and police, employment, business ventures, and social support. To deepen my understanding of the workings of citizenship and identity politics in South Africa, I also questioned how participants thought of the causes and consequences of xenophobic discrimination and violence, examining how refugees and other actors made sense of, negotiated, or transformed those realities.

Complex questions about subjectivity reveal the disjuncture between expectations and outcomes of migration and settlement. Their stories illustrate that the challenges of accessing refugee status, stable employment, business opportunities, and physical security are not merely unique individual experiences but are systematically shaped by an assemblage of actors who shape policies, practices, and encounters. Refugee stories provide a rich account of the social, economic, and cultural costs of displacement, revealing how people's experiences are framed by systematic processes of privilege, discrimination, and exclusion. Refugee stories are also informative as they reveal the expressions of agency, resistance, and contestation employed in diverse moments, sites, and localities. Data analysis of interviews and field notes was done using the NVivo software, and it took an inductive approach using grounded theory to search for patterns in the gathered information (Blackstone 2012). The first step in the data analysis

involved reading and re-reading the transcripts, noting key characteristics and ideas that emerged. The second step was to categorize or codify the data into themes and subthemes to help draw meaning from underlying trends and patterns. Finally, the codes were organized into a coding structure of themes and subthemes that served to produce a detailed and comprehensive account of the research findings.

While my dissertation heavily relies on these narratives to center refugee voices and let refugees represent their own experiences, I draw from policy documents that include relevant governmental statements, press releases, court rulings, and NGO and government reports, as well as media articles. With this review of policy documents and media articles, I reflect on "the making, mobilization, and implementation of policy" (Baker & McGuirk, 2017, p. 5) and consider "what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time" (McNamara, 2005, p.2). These methodological approaches help to demonstrate the formation and operation of what I call "assemblages of refugee exclusion" and how these assemblages are challenged. As I will explain in further detail in Chapter 2, assembling refugee exclusion refers to the various ways multiple actors and processes converge to produce exclusion for refugees. My approach draws on concepts of citizenship, space, and borders to make sense of how the assemblage problematizes refugee identity, status, and presence within everyday spaces to produce exclusion.

As a result of these methodologies, we can achieve a broader and deeper understanding of refugees and asylum seekers' experiences of precarity, insecurity, and vulnerability across social, economic, political, and spatial domains. Some of the critical findings documenting the obstacles and barriers refugees face in accessing documentation and enjoying social rights parallel other studies conducted in the country (Crush et al., 2017; Amit 2011a, 2011b, 2015; Tawodzera et al., 2015). My study found that restriction and exclusion by host communities resulted in increasing hostility toward migrants from other African countries. The perception positing a large and ever-growing number of migrants and refugees in the state shifted policies towards further restrictions and the implementation of

extra-legal and exclusionary practices. Consequently, the combined impact of policy changes and mounting hostility creates conditions of precarity, vulnerability, and unpredictability for refugees in the country.

1.5 Thesis Outline

Chapter one introduced the thesis argument and its rationale. In chapter two, I develop my conceptual framework of assembling refugee exclusion, which combines assemblage thinking, critical citizenship, and migration scholarship. Engaging with the existing influential concepts of citizenship, space, and borders, I construct a framework for assembling refugee exclusion to explain how multiple actors, such as the state, the media, and citizens, converge to produce perilous, exclusionary outcomes for refugees in South Africa. Through this framework, I argue for a deeper understanding of how numerous actors and processes contribute to the vulnerability, precarity, and exclusion of forcibly displaced groups. To make sense of my broader conceptualization, I raise specific questions in three empirical chapters. In chapter three, I ask how governance actors employing notions of citizenship and utilizing (extra-)legal processes produce conditions of uncertainty, precarity, and vulnerability. In other words, given the state's non-homogeneous nature as a community of people (mainly citizens) with diverse interests and motivations, how do state actors construct refugee exclusion through conceptions of citizenship and legality? I argue that governance shortcomings through the politics of exclusion create vulnerability and exclusion for displaced communities, shape public opinion, and render refugees vulnerable to the exclusion of other (official and non-official) actors.

In chapter four, I ask how assembling refugee exclusion occurs in everyday spaces—cities, social services, transportation. This chapter focuses on the triangular relationship between the state, host citizens, and refugees, exploring how perceptions of forcibly displaced populations are constructed through language. In other words, how do conversations and interactions within society create representations that render refugees susceptible to exclusion and expulsion? I underscore that non-state

entities' aversion to refugee presence creates concurrent processes where their attitude is both a precursor and reinforcer of state behavior, and vice versa, producing a cyclical relationship that reinforces exclusion and constructs the other category. Building on the construction of the other developed in chapter four, chapter five discusses how the logic of exclusion enacts and enforces borders beyond the state in everyday spaces. I stress that the bordering practices that permeate the broader society are enacted by the state, its entities, non-state official actors, and, crucially, ordinary citizens. Significantly, all these chapters consider how these notions of citizenship that induce illegality, linguistic characterization in every space, and violent forms of bordering practices impact refugees' economic, social, and psychological well-being.

In turn, and in each chapter, I move beyond the vulnerability and unpredictability associated with exclusion and precarity to highlight the acts of agency, contestation, and resistance that refugees and their communities enact to challenge exclusion. Thus, I ask how refugee communities resist refugee exclusion perpetuated through state policies and practices (Chapter 3), through discourses and rhetoric of violence in everyday spaces (Chapter 4), and through state and citizenry bordering practices (Chapter 5). In all three empirical chapters (3-5), I acknowledge and attend to the agency and power that refugees exercise despite their circumstances to demonstrate that exclusionary practices coexist with powerful forms of refugee agency that are both enabled and constrained in specific moments and spaces.

The empirical chapters in this dissertation offer important insights into how we can conceive of the politics of exclusion. Regarding chapter 3, which focuses on citizenship ideation, I demonstrate how state actors, as members of society, are influenced by the citizenship agenda to determine the deservedness and belonging of refugees. Focusing on these state actors, in this chapter, I demonstrate that it is critical to deconstruct the state and look at who constitutes it, what these actors' interests are, and how their citizenship ideology and perspective shape their approach to refugee management. Moreover, I argue that it is critical to understand how state actors' behaviour is influenced by their

communities of belonging and societal thinking. In chapter 4, which focuses on space and language, attention is placed on how language is instrumentalized to frame and cultivate an environment where the Other is conjured. This chapter illuminates how multiple actors frame and construct others who need to be exorcized from the everyday space of walking, shopping, residing, and living. The agenda becomes removing non-citizens not only from public space but also from the public imagination and consciousness.

Finally, the chapter dedicated to borders, Chapter 5, demonstrates how borders are not only barriers that are created by the state to exclude those who do not belong to the nation-state but also how they are barriers that both the state and non-state actors, such as citizens, use to achieve exclusion and expulsion outside the geography of the nation, whether this expulsion results in death or removal from the physical location. This chapter demonstrates how xenophobic violence perpetuated by citizens is a bordering practice that creates and reinforces the bordering practice of the state. In this chapter, I argue that xenophobic discrimination and violence are products of a belligerent society and a systemic factor entrenched through historical apartheid and sustained through poor state governance in post-independence South Africa. All the chapters alert us to the various ways we can imagine acts of contesting refugee exclusion as deliberate, desperate, and desirous ways refugees enact political subjectivity, assert economic agency, and, in some spaces, economic dominance, and use judiciary mechanisms to challenge processes of assembling refugee exclusion. The three empirical chapters, combined, shed critical light on how exclusion is constructed, produced, experienced, reinforced, and challenged. Specifically, these chapters demonstrate how multiple actors are very much involved in the exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in what I understand to be an assembling refugee exclusion. My study expands existing empirical and conceptual understanding of how disparate, multiple actors find that restriction and exclusion by host communities result in increasing hostility toward migrants from other African countries.

Chapter 2: Assembling Refugee Exclusion: Citizenship, Space, and Borders

This chapter outlines a framework for understanding how intersecting relations between different actors and the processes they enact shape the lived experiences of refugees in South Africa. Using the assemblage approach and relying on migration and critical citizenship scholarship concepts of citizenship, space, and borders, I designed an integrated framework for assembling refugee exclusion to explain how multiple, diverse actors co-create conditions of vulnerability, precarity, uncertainty, and exclusion for forcibly displaced people through messy and complex processes of rhetoric of violence, exclusionary politics, constraining policies, and ad hoc practices of policy implementation based on ideas of belonging and identity. I shed light on how, despite the constraining structures in which they live, refugees contest exclusionary interests and pursuits through various forms of organization. I argue that the assemblage approach, with added insights from citizenship and migration scholarship, is useful for the construction of a conceptual framework that appropriately represents the complexity of urban refugee governance and experiences as it attends to the dynamics of agency, politics, and power within a diverse multiplicity, the fragility of relations among actors, the heteronomous meanings that shape (re)actions in specific moments, and the transformative causal effects that emerge from their interactions. Using this assembling refugee exclusion framework, I argue that refugee experiences reveal not only WHO, but also HOW and WHY a diverse set of actors, relationships, and processes produce exclusion and gradient forms of inclusion. Through this holistic lens, we understand how exclusionary practices that generate outcomes that encompass social and economic vulnerability, physical insecurity, precarious existences, and conditions of uncertainty potentially death are not only a product of state practices but are also formed and sustained by broader societal imaginations and practices.

The chapter has five main sections. In the first section (2.1), I introduce the concept of assemblage and discuss how scholars understand and articulate its application across diverse disciplines. I review the literature to illustrate how and why the assemblage approach developed in various bodies of

work, including critical citizenship and migration studies, is critical to achieving a holistic understanding of the actors, factors, and processes that condition refugee experiences in South Africa. To construct a conceptually robust and theoretically grounded framework that provides a comprehensive and nuanced empirically informed understanding of the complexity and intricacy of refugee experiences in this geographical context, I connect assemblage thinking to critical citizenship scholarship concepts of citizenship, space, and borders to develop three subframes: assembling exclusionary citizenship (2.2.1), assembling urban spaces (2.2.2), and assembling bordering practices (2.2.3).

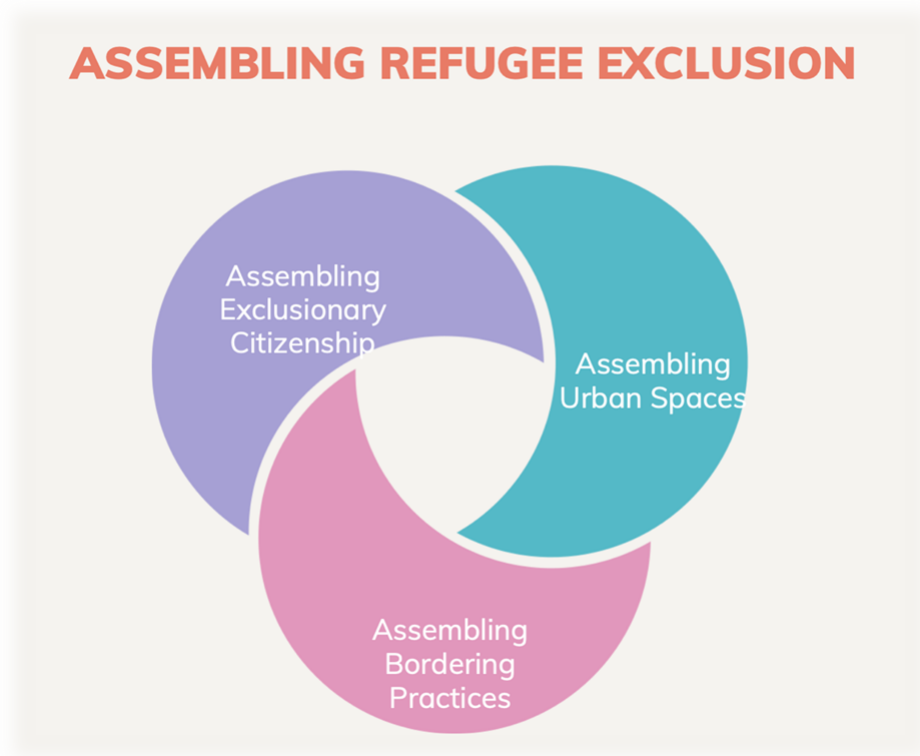


Figure 1. The interlinked framework of assembling refugee exclusion consisting of three subframes.

With these three, intertwined subframes, the assembling refugee exclusion framework provides an analytically robust tool with which to gain an ethnographic understanding of refugee precarity and exclusion at multiple scales, from the personal level of socioeconomically constrained choices, physical

security and immobility, political events, and spatial encounters, to the national level of state enforcement and function, and how these scales interact and intersect (Figure 1). In the last section (2.3), I look beyond the vulnerability and unpredictability of a precarious existence to see how refugees and their allies resist and combat exclusion in specific moments. By fusing assemblage thinking with citizenship and border scholarship concepts of contesting citizenship (McNevin, 2009), acts of citizenship (Isin and Nielson, 2008), and bordering solidarity (Rygiel, 2011), I develop another framework, one of acts of contesting refugee exclusion, to consider how refugees in complex urban environments mobilize within and beyond their communities to navigate a life of precarity, challenge exclusion, and enact change in overlapping social, economic, and political realms. I argue that despite the excruciating multiple forces, systems, and structures that socially, economically, culturally, and politically marginalize and exclude refugees within urban spaces, refugees transform urban spaces, navigate citizenship agendas, disrupt bordering practices, and exercise agency in the everyday. Much of the current literature on migrant agency pays particular attention to political agency with limited consideration to the multiple forms of agency in the socio-economic and cultural dimensions that refugees and other migrants espouse. Acts of contesting refugee exclusions provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multiple ways refugees exercise agency, including political, social, economic, and cultural agency. To conclude (2.4), I will discuss how the assembling refugee exclusion and the acts of contesting refugee exclusion frameworks relate to and contribute to the critical fields of citizenship, borders, integration, and migration.

2.1 The utility of the assemblage approach

The use of the assemblage approach has proliferated across disparate disciplines. Scholars in a wide range of fields have attempted to harness the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological potential of this approach to generate insights into a diverse range of social formations. Conceptually, scholars have used assemblage thinking to make sense of a wide range of phenomena, including the formation of cities

(McCann & Ward, 2013), buildings (Rose, Degen, and Basdas 2010), regions (Allen and Cochrane 2007), the geopolitical social (Cowen and Smith 2009), scales (Legg 2009), territories (Painter 2010), and the global sphere (Ong & Collier 2005). More recent work has employed the concept to investigate research objects and processes such as data networks (Pickren 2018), policymaking (Savage 2020), anti-corruption (Walton 2020), drugs management (Goodhand and Pain 2021), health engagement (Fei 2022), security (Hazbun 2016), astronomy and development (Walter and Chinigo 2018) and infrastructure projects (Han & Webber 2020). Rooted in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, particularly their second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari 1987), the assemblage refers to the relational constructs, comprised of heterogeneous and emergent parts that are arranged together towards certain ends, in particular spaces, moments, and times. In its most basic form, the notion reflects the collection of multiple "things" or fragments of "things" that share links with one another in a specific context.

Assemblage thinking has gained significant traction across disciplines not only because of its capability to include heterogeneous elements from the material to the affective but also by its capacity to show how agency emerges and functions in complex relations. The approach has also received its share of criticism, ranging from those who have questioned the coherency and utility of assemblage (e.g., Brenner, Madden, & Wachsmuth 2011, Peck 2015, Tonkiss 2011, see special sections in *City*, Volume 15, Issues 2–6) to those who defend the concept but argue that contemporary articulations are partially linked to the philosophical apparatus of Deleuze and Guattari (Venn 2006). Notwithstanding these debates, I argue that assemblage thinking is important to understanding refugee governance and experiences because of its commitment to three critical interlinked aspects: (1) heterogeneity, multiplicity, and provisional unity; (2) relationality, contingency, and emergence; and (3) agency, affect, and politics. These complex interlinkages among and across these features that inform an assemblage approach to refugee governance and experiences require careful unpacking.

2.1.1. Heterogeneity, multiplicity, and provisional unity

In contrast to the notion of an organic, coherent whole, which generally implies some homogeneity, relative autonomy, and centralized power, the concept of assemblage suggests the formation of heterogeneous, networked collectives with fragile alliances (Allen 2011, Sohn 2015). Heterogeneity implies that disparate items may have relationships. According to Muller (2015), there is no presumption of what might be related—animals, humans, things, events, and ideas—or an assumption of the dominant entity in the mixture. Similarly, MacLorin and Schall (2018, p. 60) state that these various elements could include non-material things (such as discourse, human perspectives, and agency), material things, and other contextual and non-human factors. For other scholars, such as DeLanda (2006, p. 2), multiplicity includes many social entities and complex associations, such as persons and nation-states, embedded in specific historical processes. Multiplicity entails the "fitting or fixing" of disparate actors and institutions (Phillips 2006).

The focus is on different elements converging to share relations while maintaining their uniqueness. As Latour (2010, p. 3) points out, the emphasis is on how "things have to be together while retaining their heterogeneity." Thus, the assemblage's only unity is a co-functioning symbiosis of multiplicities of difference with unassumed power differentials. It has provisional, temporal unity. The unity can form in specific moments, rapture, reform, and shift. For this dissertation, the assemblage approach's emphasis on heterogeneity, multiplicity, and provisional unity allows us to make sense of the complex relationships between multiple actors such as the state, citizens, the media, international organizations, civil society organizations, and private businesses as they engage and converge, at times provisionally, in shaping refugee experiences. I consider these elements in turn.

2.1.2. *Relationality, contingency, and emergence*

Given the commitment to provisional unity, the assemblage analytic adopts a tenet of "relations of exteriority" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) to reflect on the distinctive relationship between parts and wholes. Engaging with the Deleuzoguattarian concept of relations of exteriority, in his book *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, DeLanda (2006) challenges us to reconsider questions of history, society, and social complexity with a renewed focus on the relations between and among entities and actors. Delanda's basic arguments shift the conversation away from the "methodological individualism" approach commonly adopted in rational choice theory and neoclassical economics that claims that "all that matters are the rational decisions made by individual persons in isolation from one another" (p. 4). He instead asserts that entities are constituted and defined by the relations to which they belong. Basically, "the component parts are constituted by the very relations they have with other parts of the whole" (p.9) --an approach that demands a focus on the relations within wholes.

An entity is never fully defined by its relations, Delanda argues, as an entity can always be detached from one set of relations and inserted into a different set of relations with different entities. This contingent unity is also stressed by Rabinov (2014, p.204), who argues that an assemblage "brings together entities in the world into a proximity in which they establish relations between and among themselves while remaining external to each other and thereby retaining their original properties." Every entity has certain "properties" that are not defined by the set of relations it is in at any given time; instead of being an empty signifier, the entity can take these intrinsic properties as it leaps from one context (and those relations) to another, with contingent outcomes. In contrast to necessity, which is the condition of a permanent, unchanging being that is not subordinate to antecedent conditions or past causality, contingency can be understood as either actual or potential becoming. In terms of contingent outcomes in an assemblage, contingency reflects the state of essence or nature of outcomes that admit

but do not require actualization; in this sense, contingency and possibility are synonymous. Simultaneously, an entity is never without (some kind of) relations, as no entity can be totally isolated. As Steven Shaviro (2007, n.d) frames it, "the world is a plenum, indeed it is over-full, and solipsism or atomistic isolation is impossible." Indeed, these relationships can both affect the entity and cause it to change. DeLanda distinguishes between the properties of an entity (its intrinsic properties—which are what it takes along to another context) and the capacities of that same entity (its potential to affect, and to be affected by, other entities in the relationship). In his words, "[t]hese capacities do depend on a component's properties but cannot be reduced to them since they involve reference to the properties of other interacting entities." An entity's capacities are as real as its intrinsic properties; however, we cannot deduce the capacities from the properties, nor can we know (completely) what these capacities are, other than how they come into play in specific cases, relations, moments, contexts, and interactions with other specific entities.

Yet, although the parts have intrinsic properties, capacities, and autonomy, the whole has "something more, or something else, than the mere accumulation of these parts" (Sansi 2013, p. 23)—it has emergence. Emergence occurs when an entity is observed to have properties its parts do not have on their own, properties or behaviours that emerge only when the capacities of the components interact, resulting in the broader whole. As Delanda (2006, p. 10) puts it, "the properties of the parts can never explain the relations which constitute a whole." His "reconstructed theory of assemblages" (Delanda, 2006, p.4) provides comprehensive examinations of the relations of exteriority that have served as a source of inspiration in an understanding of the relationship between parts and wholes. This emergence emphasis on novel outcomes that emerge from relations of entities provides avenues with which to consider how relations between state and non-state actors shape refugee experiences. Therefore, a better understanding of this distinction between emergent properties, capacities, and tendencies will help us comprehend and clarify how this multiplicity of actors produces refugee exclusion in South Africa.

An emergent property, according to DeLanda, is simple to grasp because it is usually found in the overall shape of a thing. For example, the sharpness of a knife can be straightforwardly identified by the shape of the blade fixed into a handle (p.3). Emerging properties are "always actual," such as the knife's blade property, DeLanda explains. Unlike the knife's property as a sharp blade, its capacity to "cut" is a different matter. Its ability to cut may not be realized at times. Any meat eater who has struggled to cut a piece of steak with a dull knife will attest to the frustration. However, if the capacity is realized, it is an event, "cutting," rather than a state of being (p.4). An event, in this case "cutting," is "always double; according to DeLanda, "the capacity of x to affect y is always accompanied by the capacity of y to be affected by x (p.4). As such, capabilities necessitate the formation of other capacities. The ability "to cut" necessitates the property "sharpness," which may, in turn, be dependent on another, different capacity on the atomic scale: the ability of metal atoms to form strong bonds and endure a large amount of pressure in a very small area without breaking or deforming (Bennet, 2012). Finally, there are also emergent tendencies. Bennet explains the tendency in this context as "the knife's blade [ability] to be solid at room temperature" (p.11). Tendencies, like capacities, do not need to be actualized to be real, and when they are, it is as events rather than states of being, which are only unique to properties. DeLanda, differentiating the two, explains that whereas tendencies are typically finite, capacities do not have to be.

This ontological nesting of capacities, properties, and tendencies in the relations between parts and their distinctions to wholes is what makes DeLanda's interpretation of relations of exterior particularly useful to this research, as I will demonstrate in subsequent sections. It is therefore not surprising that his insights have been taken up by numerous scholars who engage with the assemblage approach across multiple disciplines, including policy research (Sabchev 2021, Savage 2020, Baker and McGuirk 2017, Gorur 2011), political ethnography (Ghoddousi and Page 2020), borders (Sohn 2016), and social movements (Jerne 2018). This relationship between whole and parts, as well as the emergence that results from interactions of heterogeneous actors, strikes me as critical as we consider

how state and non-state actors converge to shape the everyday lives of refugees and asylum seekers, whether informed by shared ideations of citizenship, constructing otherness in everyday spaces, or converging in bordering practices and violence that transcend state actors. As I will show in the empirical chapters (3,4, and 5), the outcome of this convergence and co-functioning of a multiplicity has ramifications for refugee experiences that are more than the sum of the parts of individual state actors and non-state citizen actors. But first, let us consider why emergence is critical to understanding and interpreting the impact of migration processes, policies, and practices on refugees.

While DeLanda does not focus on refugee governance and migration experiences, his analysis of nations, governments, organizations, and societies translates powerfully into a discussion of how the concept of assemblage can inform an ethnographic focus at the intersection of refugee governance and experiences. DeLanda contends that when trying to understand the relationship between wholes and parts, social scientists make the mistake of treating social formations like biological organisms with internal logic and order. As a result, component parts of social formations are viewed as "bodily organs" that function in a systemic, coherent, predetermined manner. The problem with this reductionist approach, DeLanda argues, lies in the "micro-macro problem" (p. 4). The micro-macro problem is when wholes are perceived and framed as "mere aggregates" of individual component parts. However, understanding the whole as simply the sum of its parts, as Savage (2020) carefully summarizes DeLanda's thinking, obscures the emergent and irreducible properties of the whole, that is, properties that exist only as a result of contingent interactions taking place between component parts (i.e., properties that would be different if the components were arranged differently).

In a manner similar to theories of emergence in the field of complexity theory, social scientists use this understanding of emergence to argue that social phenomena are emergent if they arise from individuals but yet possess additional characteristics that are distinctively novel, irreducible, and unpredictable (Zahle and Kaidesoja 2019). Indeed, as DeLanda writes, the properties of a whole "cannot

be reduced to those of its parts”, because “they are the result not of an aggregation of the components” own properties but of the actual exercise of their capacities (DeLanda 2006). Because of this exercise of capacities, the relations are open and brimming with new possibilities and transformative potential. This emphasis on relationality, contingency, and emergence opens possibilities for using empirical evidence to consider what might emerge from the activities and relationships of disparate actors at multiple levels and in various avenues when employing notions of citizenship, engaging in discourse in everyday spaces, and enacting bordering practices without *a priori* presumed and predicted thinking.

2.1.3. Agency, affect, and politics

The third reason why assemblage thinking clarifies the messiness and complexity of refugee governance is its focus on agency, affect, and power. Significantly, the assemblage construct underpins the ability of several elements to have individual autonomy while acting simultaneously as a collective, showing how agency emerges in complex relations. Through assemblage thinking, scholars explore the sensibilities and associations that collectives exhibit, revealing how these relations emerge and mutate, and importantly for this study, the effects these associations render. As Ureta (2015) argues, assemblages are the result of heterogeneous elements brought together in specific strategic relationships and with desired outcomes. Drawing on Law’s (1994) notion of “modes of governing” to conceptualize an approach to policy assemblages, Ureta (2015, p.12) shows that assemblages “always a search for strategic effects” as “the aim is to transform an existing situation [into] a certain predetermined way through the establishment of particular sets of relations between new and existing entities.” Similarly, Savage (2020) asserts that assemblages represent a gathering of political imaginations, rationalities, technologies, infrastructures, and agents aimed at steering individuals and groups in *specific directions* by strategically harnessing the relational capacities of multiple components (*added emphasis*). However, I argue, that the specific direction the assemblage takes is not always explicitly predetermined, but rather influenced by the prevailing social norms. By social norms, I mean the unwritten, and sometimes unspoken, ideas, attitudes, and behaviours that are accepted in a particular social group or community (McLeod, 2008).

Overall, the creation of links, the epistemological commitment to understanding processes, and the ability of these entities to have different effects while sometimes changing during the process are what make the assemblage a useful way to understand the agency and politics of multiple actors, including refugees, in South Africa.

Tied to agency, part of the assemblage approach's utility stems from recognizing the role of affect in the formation and functioning of assemblages. The assemblage approach is distinguished by the fact that "the concern is no longer with what bodies and things, or social interactions are, but with what the *capacities* for action, feeling, and desire that are produced in bodies or groups of bodies for affective flows," according to Fox and Alldred (2016, p.402, *emphasis in original*). Within this dissertation, the focus on affects achieves two purposes. First, affect within this conceptual toolbox enables us to pay attention to the constitutive relations of affirmative politics in citizenship ideation, which rely on a sense of shared identity to promote political ideologies and orient social and political action through beliefs around group belonging, connection, and distinctiveness. Second, a focus on affect among marginalized groups can also reveal how emotions such as care, empathy, and humour play a role in the formation of new solidarities and collective subjectivities (Ghoddosi and Page 2020). Moreover, affect such as rage, frustration, fear, and the desire for connection can all serve as organizing forces for social contestation and transformation.

The utility of assemblage thinking allows for the holistic examination of the exercise of power, politics, and agency in complex associations. Overall, as McFarlane (2009) has persuasively argued, the assemblage does more than emphasize a set of connections between sites in that it draws attention to history, labour, materiality, affect, and performance. This analytical approach allows us to remain deliberately open and attain a comprehensive understanding of the general constitution of a multiplicity and the types of relations they form: their coherence and provisional unity; the tension, failures, the power relations, and instability within these relations; their resultant effects; and their indeterminacy and potential for re-assembling. An openness that provides an avenue to holistically consider the

entanglements that are constitutive of processes of citizenship ideation, rhetorical constructions, and bordering practices in migration governance's ever-shifting landscape.

2.2 Assembling refugee exclusion

This chapter identified three theoretical foundations central to assembling refugee exclusion by synthesizing core threads from existing assemblage literature: (1) heterogeneity, multiplicity, and provisional unity; (2) relationality, contingency and emergence; and (3) agency, affect, and politics. In conjunction with critical citizenship and migration scholarship concepts of citizenship, space, and borders, these foundations are central to building the framework of assembling refugee exclusion which facilitates a comprehensive understanding of refugee governance and experiences in the context of South Africa through three interlinked subframes: 1) assembling exclusionary citizenship; 2) assembling urban spaces; 3) assembling bordering practices. I develop each of these subframes to consider closely how multiple actors are involved in identity politics, the rhetoric of violence, and bordering actions that shape refugee experiences. These sequential discussions of these three areas reveal how assemblage thinking enriches citizenship and migration scholarship to understand how ideation of citizenship, linguistic processes in everyday spaces, and bordering practices encompass behaviour and action by the broader society. As such this discussion lays a foundation to understand and qualitatively answer the question of *how (as well as who, why, and where)* refugee experiences of precarity, marginalization, and exclusion are constructed, reinforced, and sustained. The assembling refugee exclusion framework provides a robust, holistic understanding of the interplay between the structural and ideological factors that condition refugee lives from the angle of refugee's "subjective positioning" (Lindemann 2007), which recognizes and prioritizes the individual construction and perception of their sense of place and belonging. Figure 2 below demonstrates how assemblage epistemological commitments help explain the who, why, and how assembling refugee exclusion occurs.

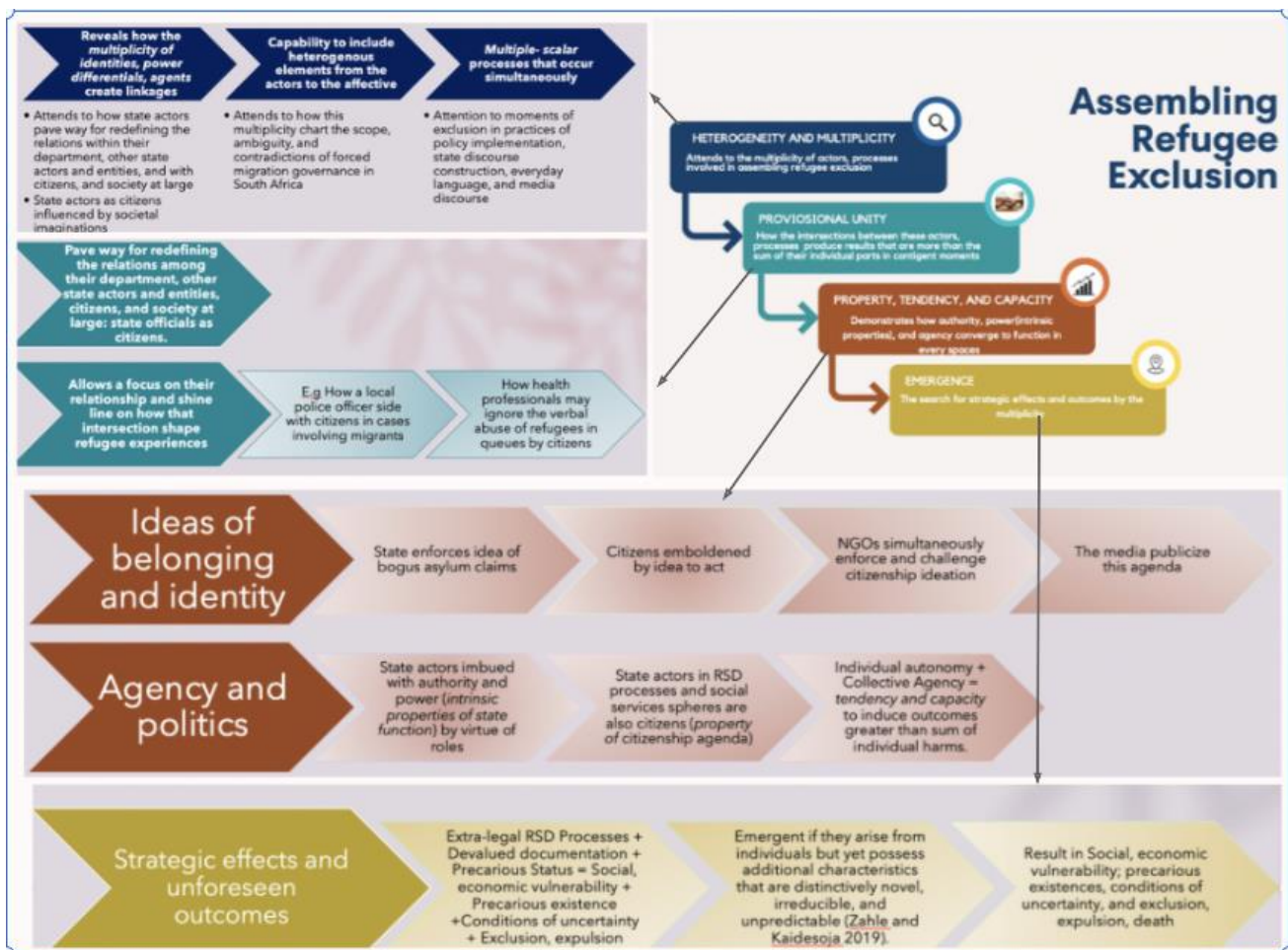


Figure 2: Assemblage thinking and assembling refugee exclusion

2.2.1 Assembling Exclusionary Citizenship

The conventional understanding of citizenship, based on Western tradition, defines it as a legal status with rights-bearing membership in a state that is protected by that polity's bureaucratic, legal, and judicial systems (most commonly the nation-state). Citizens, in this classic view that can be traced back to the enlightenment era and philosophers such as Jacques Rousseau and Thomas Hobbes, are not only subjects of the territorially based state who must pay taxes and can vote to elect official representatives; they are also bearers of some features of civic, political, social, and economic rights (Marshall and Bottomore 1992). Formal citizenship thus encompasses four elements: rights, entitlements, participation, and obligations. Others frame these elements as dimensions of legal status, rights, political participation, and a sense of belonging (Bloemraad 2000; Bosniak 2000) that can stand in tension or complement each

other (Bloemraad, Sarabia, & Fillingim 2016). This notion of citizenship emphasizes political belonging to a geographic community that evokes national identity and state sovereignty. In this classic view, the nation-state remains the locus of citizenship, has power over its parameters and rights, and determines access to participation and belonging (Bloemraad, Sarabia, & Fillingim 2016). As Bosniak (2000) points out, exclusionary tendencies are inherent in notions of belonging to informal citizenship: for the "we" of community to exist, some must fall on the outside.

This understanding of citizenship as legal status is evident in how scholars (see Menjivar 2006; Gonzales 2011) emphasize the sharp legality/illegality division and the citizen/non-citizen binary. Investigation of this form of citizenship tends to focus on legal and political institutions, illuminating aspects of status, duties, legality, and rights within a polity. De Genova (2002, pp. 422-4), investigating the everyday life of undocumented migrants in the US, argues that illegality is not an unlawful violation on the part of migrants but a deliberate, state-calculated process that is "constituted and regimented by the law" (see also De Genova 2013, p. 1180). More recently, Burciaga, Martinez, et al. (2019), drawing on examples in the implementation of immigration law in various states in the United States, demonstrate that the social and legal construction of illegality is not a homogeneously produced process but rather a patchwork of variation subject to the axes of geography. These varied social and legal terrains, they argue, result in a vastly distinctive production and enactment of illegality in policymaking and enforcement. Similarly, Abji and Larious (2021) develop an analytical framework for theorizing how state immigration detention and related practices induce structural violence against migrant women. The scholars use this framework to consider the possibilities for transforming citizenship to ensure migrant women enjoy reproductive rights. However, the common threat across these scholarships is the overemphasis of the state in migration governance.

While this understanding of citizenship, with its emphasis on the duality of legality and illegality, tends to reflect the state-subject relationship and the tension between citizenship dimensions—be it

participation vs. legal status, legal status without rights and entitlements, or belonging with exclusionary aspects centred on the axis of gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, geography, and ethnicity—I agree with scholarship that extends accounts of citizenship beyond the strict state-defined inclusion/exclusion paradigm. This approach moves beyond the strict boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to recognize the blurriness and complexities involved in the production of politicized groups, such as undocumented migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, while recognizing the centrality of the state in migration governance. Goldring, Bernstein, and Bernhard (2009, p. 240), using the concept of "precarious migration status," reveal that the boundaries around the production of illegality are ambiguous and complex. They argue that a dichotomous focus on migrant illegality overlooks the institutionalization processes that create gradations of status lying along a spectrum between legality and illegality. These processes include state policies, regulations, and practices of policy implementation. Equally, Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel (2017a), studying the status of Syrian refugees in Turkey, show how forcibly displaced individuals in this context are caught in an in-between state "as neither refugees nor guests" because of Turkish refugee policies and agreements with the European Union (EU). The scholars demonstrate how this context creates ambiguity and conditions of precarity, differential inclusion, and limited access to citizenship rights that are products of this ambivalent, state-defined status. Similarly, Squire (2011, p. 6) emphasizes the importance of state practices that produce irregularity through securitization and criminalization (see Mountz 2015). She argues that irregularity is "produced through various security and policing practices" (see also Squire, 2021, p. 137). These scholars underline the importance of focusing attention on diverse forms of gradations of status beyond the legal condition of illegality produced by states. Therefore, in addition to legal frameworks, modes of governance and control are necessary to illuminate the complex ways states create sharp and blurry forms of refugee and migrant exclusion while constructing citizen subjectivities that obtain privilege and a sense of superiority in a hierarchy of belonging.

While a focus on the functioning of prescriptive legislation and administrative decision-making processes such as admission and status determination procedures, judicial cases, and policing practices are critical to understanding recondite state practices framed within and beyond legal discourse, I agree that we move beyond the dualities of "citizen/non-citizen" or "illegal/legal" to consider the hierarchy of categorizations that states create through various policies and practices. Indeed, migration scholarship has revealed useful insights into the pernicious complexity of state function as it relates to refugee and migrant populations (Squire 2021; Goldring, Bernstein, and Bernhard 2009). However, the scholarship has often overemphasized the role of the state in refugee governance, attributing exclusion and differential forms of inclusion to administrative state bureaucracies with limited attention paid to the role that identity dimensions among state actors play in creating relational linkages with non-state actors to influence state behavior.

Refugee experiences in urban centres force us to consider not only who defines legal or institutional inclusion that leads to rights and entitlements but also who enacts processes, whether state-sanctioned or not, that result in limited access to or outright exclusion from rights, entitlements, participation, and belonging. Using the assemblage approach at the intersection of citizenship and belonging reveals the ever-changing and evolving nature of social relationships that shape refugee experiences in urban settings. In this conceptual chapter, the concept of "assemblage" is used to develop a framework that engages with how multiple, disparate actors, their identities and relations, and the processes involved in producing a spectrum from gradations of inclusion to exclusion and, in some cases, outright expulsion, through notions of citizenship. I refer to this cumulative process as "assembling exclusionary citizenship." I employ the concept of "citizenship" in the framework for two reasons. First, to demonstrate that asylum and refugee protection are linked to the state's duty to protect human rights, even though the processes of violating those rights involve a multitude of actors. Second, to show that it is the very concept of citizenship that is the organizing force for refugee exclusion, which I refer to as a citizenship agenda. To develop the framework for assembling exclusionary citizenship, I

will carefully unpack the complicated links between heterogeneity, multiplicity, relationality, and emergence, as well as how these characteristics demonstrate the process of assembling exclusionary citizenship within the broader context of assembling refugee exclusion, by considering these four questions: (1) Who assembles exclusionary citizenship? (2) What is the relationship among these actors? (3) Why assemble exclusionary citizenship? (4) How does the assembling of exclusionary citizenship occur? and (5) What is the outcome of assembling exclusionary citizenship?

2.2.1.1. Who assembles exclusionary citizenship?

Building on scholarship that emphasizes the role of entities other than the nation-state that mediate inclusion and exclusion via citizenship, such as regional governmental organizations and other quasi-state structures (Soysal 1994; Fresia and Von Känel 2016), the assembling of exclusionary citizenship centres on how the amalgamation of state and non-state actors employing a shared exclusionary citizenship agenda shapes the experiences of forcibly displaced communities in urban centers. This multiplicity of heterogeneous actors (state actors, citizens, NGOs, and the media) converge in specific moments to enforce exclusion.

Similar research at the intersection of assemblages and citizenship has focused on non-citizen experiences to understand how diverse policies, actors, institutions, and power relations interact to produce varying non-citizen experiences (Landolt and Goldring, 2015). Landolt and Goldring (2015, p. 854) show how individuals and institutions enact conditionality in presence and access based on regulations, policies, and procedures to remain present within Canada and access entitlements and social goods, including the labour market. While this group of scholars focuses on how heterogeneous actors (state and non-state) use regulations to determine who has access to rights and enjoys presence, assembling exclusionary citizenship delves deeper into how norms and identity become determinant factors in accessing rights and enjoying territorial presence.

Scholars such as Ong (2006) have examined how globalization presents new avenues that transcend a simple conceptualization of citizenship based on the nation-state. Ong argues that market flows, technologies, and skilled mobile populations create a new landscape that "challenges the notion of citizenship tied to the terrain and imagination of a nation-state" (2006, pp. 499–501). Drawing on evidence from unregulated markets and migrant flows in the EU zone and transnational networks and new sites of global professionals in Asia as key examples, Ong shows that these configurations engender disarticulation and rearticulation of citizenship dimensions such as rights and entitlements from one formation to another. They, according to Ong, result in the formation of new connections in sites of "global assemblages" linked to neoliberalism, globalization, and human rights. For her, the site of the assemblage, as opposed to the territorial state, becomes a location for political mobilization where heterogeneous populations articulate claims to state and non-state actors based on neoliberal criteria or human rights. While my focus is not on how migrants, including refugees, make claims beyond the confines of the state, Ong's focus on global assemblages reveals how political mobilizations by heterogeneous groups can lead to new formations of moments where disparate actors and institutions create new possibilities for claim bearers.

2.2.1.2. What is the relationship among these actors?

Given the commitment to the rejection of "coherent wholes," the assemblage of state and non-state actors involved in this process is understood to have a contingent rather than necessary relationship. A contingent relationship is one that is not predefined or explicitly defined but emerges in specific moments. Assemblage thinking exhibits sensibilities that emphasize relations and associations, exploring how they emerge and mutate. As McFarlane (2009) has persuasively argued, assemblage does more than emphasize a set of connections between sites in that it draws attention to history, labour, materiality, and performance. "This model is useful for understanding refugee experiences in South Africa because of the creation of connections, morphosis imbued with speed, and the capacity to bring

about effects of various kinds."This analytical approach allows us to remain deliberately open to the general constitution of a multiplicity and the types of relations they form: their coherence and provisional unity; the tension and instability within these relations; the emergence and resultant effects; and their indeterminacy and potential re-assembling. Moreover, assemblage thinking is not just beneficial to explore its application to this empirical case, but, as Muller (2015) strongly argues, it is essential to forge connections with neighbouring social theories.

2.2.1.3 Why assemble exclusionary citizenship?

The commitment to assembling exclusionary citizenship is based on a process in which *heterogeneous* actors, state and non-state, that share a similar conception of citizenship work toward certain outcomes in specific moments. Drawing on Law's (1994) notion of "modes of governing" to conceptualize an approach to policy assemblages, Ureta (2015, p. 12) shows that assemblages are "always a search for strategic effects," as "the aim is to transform an existing situation [into] a certain predetermined way through the establishment of particular sets of relations between new and existing entities." I'm putting together exclusionary citizenship. The purpose of assembling exclusionary citizenship is to produce circumstances in which it will be impossible for refugees to enjoy the economic, social, and political rights and benefits to which they are entitled.

To understand the structure and scope of contemporary politics around citizenship, we need to consider how multi-actor, multi-scalar actors employ citizenship-based ideations, policies, and practices to produce systemic and ad hoc exclusionary outcomes. Assembling exclusionary citizenship draws on studies focusing on how non-state actors, institutions, or movements converge with the state to influence the scope and contents of citizenship (Koster 2015, Fresia and Von Känel 2016). Koster (2015), for example, focuses on the dynamics of social housing in the Netherlands. The scholar combines the conceptualization of citizenship beyond the nation-state with notions of hybrid state and non-state governance assemblages. In so doing, Koster shows how state and non-state actors converge to impose a

citizenship agenda on underprivileged neighborhoods. That agenda distinguishes between "good" and "bad" citizens, making them legible to neoliberal forces that shape socio-economic mobility. He defines the citizenship agenda as "the normative framings of citizenship that prescribe what norms, values, and behaviours are appropriate for particular subjects." Koster sheds light on how the assemblage of the national government, municipalities, and private housing corporations "extends the meaning of membership beyond legal or formal citizenship status" (p. 215). Koster's attention to the impact of diverse actors on particular groups is significant, as it moves the analysis to other subject relations that are not reducible to the strict state-subject relationship. In assembling exclusionary citizenship, I construct Koster's notion of citizenship agenda based on norms, values, and the behaviour of a diverse set of actors in order to expose the more hidden and pernicious background meanings of belonging based on citizenship that can be used to systematically disadvantage, subordinate, and exclude asylum seekers and refugees.

2.2.1.4 How does the assembly of exclusionary citizenship occur?

Fresia and Von Känel (2016), exploring governance in refugee camps in Africa, similarly show how governance does not materialize in a "single humanitarian logic" but as a "polyhierarchical administrative structure, within which state and non-state authorities coexist and overlap with sometimes divergent rationalities" (p. 251). Their focus on schools reveals how these authorities "simultaneously produce the exceptionality of the camp and of its inhabitants, attempt to reincorporate them in a "normal" order of things, and transform them into ideal participating subjects" (p. 251). These multiple rationalities, they argue, render the camp school apparatus both a workshop of "citizenship-making" through normalization and a space of exclusion from the political community of citizens. The assembling exclusionary citizenship framework considers the diverse roles that state actors play, both as powerful officials and service providers and as individuals whose perspectives are influenced by their social group.

By combining perspectives from assemblage thinking and critical migration and citizenship scholarship, I construct a conceptual foundation for approaching exclusionary citizenship as a multi-actor, multi-scalar process characterized by converging identities and an agenda of constantly negotiable relationships that induce at various temporal and spatial scales. These different, heterogeneous entities have relationships that may not make sense or are indirect (Villegas, 2005). However, when they work together, they create complex power configurations and effects that are often unclear, hard to compare, and fragile (Ong and Collier, 2005; Landolt, 2020).

In sum, assemblages can be used to frame social phenomena because they are dynamically composed of heterogeneous entities that are simultaneously collective and individual and consist of material, affective, and discursive components that interact at different temporal and spatial scales to produce complex effects of power (Ong and Collier 2005; Landolt 2022). Exclusionary citizenship can be conceptualized as multi-actor, multi-scalar assemblages of multi-constituted state and non-state actors, institutions, policies, objects, texts, and practices that explicitly and implicitly regulate, condition, and erode the enjoyment of socioeconomic rights and privileges for refugees and asylum seekers. This approach intervenes in naturalized understandings that favour citizenship as formalized processes that are state-directed, and it encourages a deconstruction of the multiple identities of state actors, their situatedness within society, and consideration of the relations among multi-constituted actors with conditional behaviour and specific tendencies who use a citizenship agenda to produce exclusionary outcomes.

2.2.2 Assembling Urban Spaces

This section examines how exclusion, discrimination, and expulsion are rendered active through language at the socio-spatial level. Building on Massey's (2005) idea of space and utilizing the assemblage approach, the notion of assembling urban spaces conceptualizes how different actors collectively use language as a tool for social exclusion to create a deep divide between citizens and non-

citizens of African origin, including refugees and asylum seekers. It also considers how language is employed to make refugees' presence in everyday spaces appear less legitimate, making them susceptible to discriminatory and xenophobic practices. As part of their broader strategy of assembling refugee exclusion, I argue that state and non-state actors employ language as a tool to overemphasize cultural and linguistic differences as well as geographic origin to achieve spatial illegality and illegitimacy for refugees and asylum seekers and legitimize collective exclusionary acts of violence and human rights abuse. Through rabble-rousing language, a multiplicity of actors, including the media, disenchanted citizens, and strategic political elites, construct and instrumentalize categories of difference to conjure up an unwanted other in everyday spaces of walking, shopping, working, and simply living. Using the integrated framework of assembling refugee exclusion, I argue that exclusionary politics can no longer be studied with a narrow focus on the rhetoric, policies, or practices of the state or its institutions without attending to those moments and processes when heterogeneous actors converge to cultivate nationalism, racism, protectionism, and nativism be it through language, discourse, policies, and practices. Hostility towards refugees and migrants and other groups on the margin of society occurs within broader societal imaginations around the difference in identity, language, and culture. In this section, I particularly focus on how heterogeneous actors instrumentalize language to emphasize and enforce difference in everyday spaces. In so doing, I tie scholarships of assemblage thinking, space, and discourse to make sense of how relational actors employ language to create boundaries of difference in everyday spaces. To begin, let us consider how migration scholars have employed the concept of space to understand migrant subjectivities.

Migration scholars (Iltan, Rygiel, and Baban 2018, Trimikloniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos 2016, Banki 2013) have conceptualized and analyzed space to provide essential insights into societal processes, structures, and phenomena that constitute migrants' subjectivities, collectivities, and dependencies across economic, political, social, and cultural dynamics. Specifically, Iltan, Rygiel, and Baban (2018, p. 56), exploring the experiences of Syrian refugees in Turkey, conceptualize the

“precarity of space.” For them, the precarity of space is a “multi-layered notion that refers to those spaces given meaning through the precarious experiences and everyday living of marginal groups such as refugees.” Relying on Massey’s (2005) conception of space, they argue that these sites encompass “squalid accommodations and marginalized neighbourhoods” that are “not discrete and self-enclosed but are...spheres of coexistence comprising diverse trajectories and involving subjects and objects and people and things encountering each other.” It is this space of encounter where multiple, heterogeneous actors with agency and indeterminate power that I find useful in considering refugee governance and experiences in South Africa.

Massey (2005:90) conceives of space as a social construct, arguing that “we make space in the conduct of our lives.” Daily practices become the fabric that holds space together on all scales. Massey develops three propositions to define space. The first concerns space as a social construct, as in it is given meaning through shared societal acceptance. Her second proposition asserts that “space is the dimension of multiplicity.” By multiplicity, she simply means the “existence of more-than-one-thing.” Consequently, this proposition, emphasizing the co-constitutive nature of space and multiplicity, implies that “without multiplicity, there could not be space.” Her third proposition, which follows from the first two, posits that “space is always in process; it is never finished...it is an ongoing production” as connections are continually being made, remade, or “yet to be made, or not made.” Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith’s (1991) developed similar arguments, noting that space is a social construct and product of social, political, and other dynamics whose relations are, in turn, shaped by social processes and phenomena. Similarly, Foucault and Thrift emphasize this multiplicity aspect of space yet highlighting relationality and irreducibility dimensions. Foucault (1967) essay on “Of Other Spaces” evocatively defines space as:

the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occur, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space.... we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.

Thrift (2003) defines space as “the outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that

divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives, which are slowly provided with the meaning that renders them durable and sustainable.” Space to these scholars is as such composed of relationality, heterogeneity, irreducibility, and collectivity among other qualities.

Crucially, Massey’s idea of space as one of multiplicity and continuous production, as well as Foucault’s notion of irreducibility and relationality, tie in perfectly with the nature and function of assemblages, which the assembling urban spaces draws on to theorize how an assemblage of state and non-state actors converge to construct, politicize, and instrumentalize the lives of refugees. Massey (2005, p. 90) argues that space “is always open to the future” and “always open to responsibility and...politics.” As such, the connection between space and assemblage allows for the capacity to analyze the complicated relationships between the triad of refugees, citizens, and state actors, including diverse institutions that emerge around these actors, in a world that is increasingly challenged by threats to health, economics, and security. Recognizing the complex interactions within and across social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental dynamics at diverse scales, from the global to the intimate, I employ the subframe of assembling urban spaces to refer to the different ways discursive and everyday language is deployed to cultivate distinctions between *us* and *them* in everyday urban spaces.

The assembling urban spaces draws on scholarship that ties the dynamics of space with discursive and everyday practices to underpin violent rhetoric in urban spaces. For example, Yacobi (2011, p. 60), through his focus on “racialization of space,” elucidates how Israel’s ethnocratic regime utilizes discursive, normative, and institutional practices embedded in national policies and broader regional geopolitics to target African asylum seekers in urban centers racially. Yacobi’s approach reveals how space is racialized through policies and discourses. Discursive processes in the media and public debates lead to irregularization (Hepworth, 2014) or what Conroy (2018) described as a problematization of migrants’ presence in everyday spaces. Conroy (2018, p. 11) defines this problematization as an irregularization process where migrants are considered “abnormal, out of place, or otherwise irregular, regardless of legal status.” While in Yacobi (2011) and Conroy

(2018) scholarships tend to emphasise the role of state actors in the questioning and targeting of refugee and migrant presence, I argue that this problematization of refugee presence is a co-functioning process that encompasses a multiplicity of actors. In specific moments, heterogeneous actors with diverse properties, capacities, and tendencies converge in this constructive process of labelling and framing refugees in everyday spaces.

The assembling urban spaces stresses that state and nonstate actors converge in specific moments, be it provisionally, to problematize refugees' presence in urban spaces through violent rhetoric, articulated through cognitive and linguistic processes of categorization, disparagement, and objectification using derogatory language, political proclamations, and media discourses. It further contends that "Othering" produced by a convergence of multiple actors requires understanding space as the site of assemblage claims. This approach is consistent with Ong's (2006, p. 499) perspective of the "space of the assemblage." Ong conceptualizes the space of the assemblage as "the site for new political mobilizations and claims" rather than "the territory of the nation-state." She argues that these spaces of the assemblage are sites of mobile markets and technologies where a "spectrum of mobile and excluded populations articulate rights and claims in universalizing terms of neoliberal criteria or human rights," shaping social spaces and crystalizing "mutations of citizenship." assembling refugee exclusion, through these "spaces of exclusion," illuminates how state and non-state actors demarcate a site of action and produce resultant unfavourable outcomes for those outside the margins of citizenship.

Lastly, the assembling urban spaces utilizes Coutin's (2000) concept of "spaces of non-existence" to underscore why a multiplicity of actors constructs spaces of exclusion. Coutin (2000, p. 28-29) defines a "social space of illegality" as this deliberate effort to erase legal personhood and create a "space of forced invisibility, exclusion, subjugation and repression that materializes the undocumented wherever they go" (see also De Genova 2002, p. 427). Coutin (2000) and De Genova (2002), providing informed accounts of the sociopolitical processes of illegalization, draw attention to the contradiction that state actors create between physical and social space, which generates spaces of non-existence for

those deemed not to belong. While De Genova (2002) and Coutin (2002) serve as a springboard to understand why and how illegalization and spaces of non-existence are created, they overwhelmingly centre state action. With assembling urban spaces, I provide a holistic understanding that considers how and why broader societal actors participate in constructing otherness and producing refugee exclusion. The case of South Africa reveals that societal xenophobic discrimination and violence create these spaces of non-existence where refugee belonging in everyday space is questioned with erasure outcomes of legal presence. These collective processes render refugees and migrants visibly unwanted in everyday spaces and subjected to exclusion.

Indeed, processes of exclusion are complex, messy, and far from straightforward. Persons with precarious status, such as refugees and asylum, maybe be excluded in some dimensions and included in others. Using the concept of multi-spatiality, scholars illuminate how persons with precarious status occupy space on the non-citizen side but may also intrude on the citizen side (Goldring & Landolt 2011, 2013). Basok and Wiesner (2018), for example, show how migrants can be simultaneously made illegal in the electoral process and the right to work while being legalized in the right to residency and access to health care and education services. This multi-spatiality is exemplified in the South Africa case where refugees are by law accorded the right to work and study but not the right to vote and sometimes even the rights accorded to them are infringed upon. Specifically, with increasingly restrictive migration and refugee policies and xenophobic citizenry practices, refugees' rights to work and study are circumvented, creating a mismatch between law and practice.

Further, assembling urban spaces considers how language constructions of otherness by a multiplicity of actors within the nation's urban centres impact refugees' socio-economic, political experiences, both as individuals and collectives. This focus on the impact of the construction of otherness for refugees is important. I argue that it is insufficient to merely produce accounts of the sociopolitical and linguistic processes that result in exclusion, rather that it is necessary to also examine exclusionary construction of difference in terms of its consequences on the emotional, physical,

economic, cultural, and psychological wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers. In considering these consequences, assembling urban spaces combines insights from assemblage approach and conceptualizations of space and precarity. Scholars drawing on Massey (2005) and Lefebvre and Nicholson-Smith's (1991) conceptualization of space have drawn attention to the intersection of space and precarity. Banki's (2013, p.454) conceptualization of "precarity of place" shares this emphasis on the conditions of vulnerability and instability that migrants experience in physical locations due to the migrants' risk of deportation or other forms of removal. The existential instability results in a state of "not quite homeless, not yet deported or detained." Ilcan, Rygiel, and Baban (2018) show that these physical locations of vulnerability are also spaces of migrant struggles and negotiations, an understanding that bears similarity to the link Trimikloniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos (2016, p.1036) make between precarity and space. Drawing on empirical research in countries in the southeastern part of the Mediterranean basin and their boundaries with Africa, Asia, and Europe, Trimikloniotis, Parsanoglou, and Tsianos (2016) show how migrant struggles are interwoven with precarious spaces. To these scholarships, assemblage thinking allows us to consider how the collective functioning language of difference produce outcomes that are emergent and irreducible to the functioning of individual actors' properties, capacities, and tendencies.

2.2.3 Assembling Bordering Practices

I contend that bordering processes are produced not only through embodied and emplaced forms of citizenship that "mark some bodies as illegitimate and others out of place" (Johnson and Jones 2011, p. 61; see also Hepworth 2012, 2014, Rezzonico, 2020), but also through notions of citizenship that produce others in space, which I term assembling bordering practices. It is in this process of assembling bordering practices that nationals empowered by citizenship ideas use their status to exclude those they label as "illegitimate," regardless of status. Assembling bordering practices emphasizes the critical role those everyday citizens play in enacting borders and constructing illegitimacy.

Assembling bordering practices is inspired by Rumford's (2008, 2011) concept of borderwork, which refers to the creation of borders by ordinary actors. Rumford demonstrates that everyday actors (such as ordinary citizens, UN officials, entrepreneurs, and non-governmental organizations) "are active in constructing, shifting, or even erasing borders." These actors facilitate and constrain mobility, instill fear that prevents peaceful residence or contestation, and undermine borders imposed on others. Significantly, Rumford's research emphasizes the embedded features of borders in the fabric of society, concluding that borders are "the routine business of all concerned" and the role borders play in networked connectivity around "questions of identity, belonging, political conflict, and societal transformation" (Rumford 2011, p. 67-68). It reveals a plethora of actors who collaborate, at times through contradictions, to shape inclusion and exclusion. We recognize the perspectives and projects that the bordering assemblage undertakes to gain a competitive advantage in society through this border work, which constructs borders in everyday life. It is not surprising, then, that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees made the following remarks about borders during a Security Council briefing in April 2019:

Over these three and a half decades, I have never seen such toxicity, such poison, in the language of politics, in the media, in social media and even in everyday discussions and conversations around this issue. This toxicity often focuses, sadly, tragically, on refugees and other foreigners. That should be of concern to us (United Nations Security Council 2019, p. 5).

Borders are the space where the state, the media, and everyday citizens intersect and overlap. With increasing migration pressures, states have doubled down on border control. As McNevin points out, in the face of a burgeoning "crisis of citizenship," states "appear ever more willing to assert their sovereign power in demonstrations of territorial control" (McNevin 2009, p. 181). Through border policing, other bordering practices such as detention, and stringent policies and practices, states are forcefully expressing territorial control. Through constructions of cultural and moral difference charged with notions of illegality, underserving, and dangerous labeling, state actors are strengthening borders and legitimizing exclusionary dimensions in diverse spaces (Rezzonico 2020). Increasingly, scholars conclude that borders are intrinsic to state assertions of sovereign power over territorial space and a

combination of social, cultural, and political processes (Johnson & Jones et al., 2011). Ultimately, these bordering processes and practices function as selection and verification measures that serve to categorize non-citizens and reduce pathways to rights (Rygiel 2011, Connoy 2018). Furthermore, borders in all their guises seek to not only reduce pathways to rights but also create subjectivities that are differentially included in territorial space (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

While recognizing the bordering logic and role of the state, its multiple practices, and the sites of bordering, I argue that non-state actors are co-opted and are critical entities in bordering practices and outcomes. Indeed, when we consider the question of who borders in the twenty-first century, the colossal ways that non-state actors set and define bordering practices have not taken centre stage. Johnson and Jones (2011, p.62) point out that “border studies can be enriched by focusing on the performative aspects of borders by state and non-state actors.” Their call to research the combination of state and non-state actors in bordering practices aligns with my own. I focus on the bordering performances and practices of a multiplicity of actors, elucidating how this concert of actors excludes and expels those deemed not to belong. Indeed, bordering practices are no longer the forte of states; rather, as Rumford (2008, 2012) succinctly points out through his concept of border works, “ordinary people are increasingly involved in the business of bordering” (Rumford 2008, p.67). Therefore, it is imperative to engage with the linkage and outcome of the multiplicity of actors involved in bordering processes.

The framework underscores the circumscribing bordering practices of intersecting actors. With assembling bordering practices, assembling refugee exclusion identifies not only the processes of sorting and categorizing associated with borderwork and acts of citizenship, but also engage with the amalgamation of bordering practices by the multiplicity of bordering actors, state, and non-state, and showcase the emergent properties and resultant outcomes of these practices. These outcomes — exclusion and expulsion— may occur through legal processes or discriminatory and violent citizenry acts in private and public spaces such as streets, schools, hospitals, businesses, malls, and roads.

2.3 Acts of Contesting Refugee Exclusion

In the last three sections, I developed the framework of assembling refugee exclusion informed by key concepts of citizenship, space, and borders, as well as insights from the assemblage approach (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) to consider how a plurality of actors through disparate processes converge to produce and sustain refugee precarity and exclusion. Overall, I argued that these exclusionary processes occur due to the citizenship and belonging agenda enacted through violent bordering practices and the rhetoric of violence in everyday spaces. In this section, I develop another framework to consider how refugees contest the processes of assembling refugee exclusion. With this framework, I demonstrate that processes of assembling refugee exclusion not only create uncertainty and injustice for refugees and asylum seekers but also produce shared sites of precarity that create opportunities for collective resistance.

Two major conceptualizations have guided and informed the analysis of refugees' political subjectivities. On the one hand, there is the Agambenian understanding of the camp as an exceptional space in which refugees are regarded as having a "bare life," vulnerable to the vices of other actors. On the other hand, refugees are viewed as political agents with autonomy and agency, despite their difficult circumstances. However, I assert that refugee vulnerability and agency are inextricably linked. They are co-constitutive elements that shift based on intrinsic individual characteristics and the combination of socio-economic and political factors enacted in moments when individuals are empowered and constrained by individual capacity, community agency, state responses, and the level of non-governmental organization support.

Through what I term acts of contesting refugee exclusion, I consider how refugees enact themselves politically to make demands for social justice and rights as individuals, achieve economic gains in a community with other precarious groups, and socially situate themselves with allies of citizens and non-governmental organizations. Acts of contesting refugee exclusion unpack the complex political

subjectivities of urban refugees in order to reflect the struggles, ambiguities, and power dynamics that characterize refugee experiences as right-bearers seeking protection. In short, I focus on how refugees contest exclusionary citizenship practices, assert presence to create a shared sense of place and belonging, challenge power entanglements with state and non-state actors, and draw on affective encounters within communities of refuge and beyond to resist bordering practices.

As individuals, acts of contesting refugee exclusion speak to the intertwining of experiences of vulnerability and exclusion, reaffirming how refugees contest meanings around belonging to challenge exclusionary expressions of citizenship that haphazardly suspend rights regardless of legal status. Acts of contesting refugee exclusion draw on scholarship that has explored how migrants enact themselves politically (McNevin 2009, Isin & Nielson 2008, H. Johnson, 2015). McNevin (2009) shows how conventional forms of citizenship, which refer to legal status, are increasingly subject to challenge through alternative expressions of citizenship. Refugees enact these alternative expressions of citizenship to contest the status-based citizenship agenda that is at the heart of assembling refugee exclusion. Using the Sans Papiers in France as a case study, McNevin (2009) demonstrates how the Sans Papiers, despite their citizenship status, emphasized their economic participation as a claim to a "structural relationship to legal presence" in the nation-state, invoking a form of substantive expression of citizenship (p.170). McNevin's concept of "contesting citizenship" focuses on irregular migrants' political activism, arguing that "irregular migrants sometimes invoke a radical discourse of political belonging that moves beyond a conventional citizen/non-citizen divide, even while they seek to be included within the boundaries of citizenship as they stand" (2009, p.165). Acts of contesting refugee exclusion use the concept of "contesting citizenship" to expose refugees' tacit acts of challenging exclusionary citizenship while also seeking to be included within the bounds of citizenship and associated rights and benefits. As McNevin points out, these acts "include the ways irregular migrants have mobilized, marched, occupied buildings, rioted, gone on strike, petitioned, blogged, written manifestos, and generally drawn attention to their long-term presence in the state where they live with

the constant threat of deportation" (2009, p.163). However, acts of contesting refugee exclusion focus on those moments when refugees confront state actors and institutions to challenge their exclusionary practices.

In communities, acts of contesting refugee exclusion utilize Isin and Nielson's (2008) concept of "acts of citizenship" to elucidate how non-citizens enact themselves as subjects of the state through various sites and scales using rituals, customs, norms, habits, and routines. Acts of contesting refugee exclusion draws on the idea of substantive citizenship to reveal the multiple forms of activism that question territorial, legal, and cultural boundedness. For example, H. Johnson (2015, p. 955) observes how citizenship becomes accessible to non-citizen protestors. She writes:

The "citizen" is thus redefined from legal status to a conceptualization driven by action as subjects actively constitute themselves. Citizenship becomes something other than an exclusive, bounded identity and is rendered emergent, accessible (in theory) to anyone regardless of actual legal status.

Because substantive citizenship is inclusive and accessible to those on the periphery of society, it contests formal citizenship. In conversation with Ataç, Köster-Eiserfunke, and Schwiertz, Rygiel draws attention to how migrants utilize the language of citizenship to unsettle the categorization of political subjects (Rygiel et al, 2015). The scholar argues that concepts such as acts of citizenship and citizenship from below give us a language to make sense of how non-migrants, asserting themselves as political beings, "unsettle this very ontology of who counts as a political subject" and who benefits from claims of rights and privileges, disrupting the citizen/non-citizen binary that constructs non-citizen migrants as "others." Building on this scholarship, acts of contesting citizenship espouse how refugees employ legal structures to contest exclusion. Similar to Conroy's (2018) concept of "acts of liberating irregularity" that explores the contestation and resistance that refugee claimants exercise in Canada's health care sector, acts of contesting refugee exclusion attend to the "various visible and less visible deeds that, through solidarity and performativity, resist and challenge irregularity" that refugees in South Africa enact to resist the process of assembling refugee exclusion.

In resistance to assembling exclusionary spaces, acts of contesting refugee exclusion attend to how refugee families organize access to various forms of care and social protection (informal, semiformal, formal) and how this influences their well-being, which encompasses the two intertwined elements of social membership (rights, obligations, and privileges) and affective dimensions (emotional support, well-being). In the same way that scholars such as Shand (2018) have used the explanatory power of assemblage thinking to consider how marginalized urban youth cope with extreme poverty, I consider the strategies and performances used by refugees to meet their basic needs while navigating complex power and social relationships. Shand (2018) examines the lived experiences of young people growing up on the streets of Sub-Saharan African cities using an urban assemblage framework to create a "thick description" of the practices that young people in urban areas use to cope with extreme poverty and marginalization, as well as the effects of these actions on the construction of their young lives, their transition into adulthood, and the city. In considering these strategies and performances, I explore how community collectives and organizations use the combination of a shared sense of belonging and precarity to find opportunities for collective social and economic movement.

Finally, drawing on the concept of bordering solidarities (Rygiel 2011), acts of contesting refugee exclusion consider how refugees with South African citizens and civil society organizations challenge the assembling refugee exclusion, consisting of state and non-state actors. Bordering solidarities attend to how migrants in community with others "navigate border controls, reimagine political community and subjectivities," and struggle against the politics of control (Rygiel 2011, p.1). Through this formation of solidarity, refugees are further empowered to claim rights more aggressively, exert presence more forcefully, and make social justice demands on those who might be unaware of or ambivalent about their presence. Investigating migrant struggles shows that the constitution of this binary, and its subjectivities, is a matter of politics that serves to justify the denial of rights, status, and justice. The constitution of this binary as a fixed identity also legitimizes violence against migrants (Rygiel et al. 2015), illuminating how governance structures expand rights for some while constraining

and endangering those of others. Therefore, a focus on those moments when migrants constitute themselves as political subjects despite their lack of formal citizenship status is significant.

While these scholarship acts of citizenship and citizenship from below have given us powerful tools to consider the ontological and political production of citizens/non-citizen binaries and how non-citizen migrants enact themselves as political agents that blur this binary, it is premised on the assumption that this contestation is against state institutions and formal processes. Building on this scholarship, contesting refugee exclusion considers how refugees challenge formal and informal processes enacted by various actors, including the state and citizens.

2.4 Conclusion

This framework outlined an understanding of assembling refugee exclusion to make sense of the intersecting relations that shape refugee experiences in South Africa. It sheds light on how a multiplicity of diverse actors, through different forms of organization, enforces and contests exclusionary interests and pursuits. State and non-state entities employ notions of citizenship, identity, and legality to produce cumulative effects that engender precarity, insecurity, exclusion, and expulsion. Building on conceptualizations of acts of citizenship (Isin and Nielsen 2008) and border solidarities (Rygiel et al. 2015), I moved beyond the vulnerability and unpredictability associated with exclusion and precarity to conceptualize acts of contesting refugee exclusion that highlight the acts of contestation and resistance that refugee populations, in isolation and solidarity with citizens and other migrant communities, employ to challenge exclusion.

The following three chapters offer an empirical analysis of relations between state and non-state actors in shaping refugee experiences in South Africa, each dedicated to citizenship (chapter 3), space (chapter 4), and borders (chapter 5) to provide a more in-depth understanding of how refugee precarity and exclusion is produced, experienced, and challenged within the everyday.

Chapter 3: Assembling Exclusionary Citizenship: Employing a xenophobic citizenship agenda in refugee governance in South Africa

This chapter combines recent conceptualizations of citizenship beyond the nation-state with perspectives from assemblage thinking to understand how multiple actors, processes, moments, and events function to condition refugee experiences. Employing the assemblage approach while drawing from and contributing to critical citizenship and migration scholarship, it attends to those moments when heterogeneous actors, driven by an exclusionary citizenship agenda, which I refer to as a xenophobic citizenship agenda, enact multiple processes to facilitate exclusionary citizenship practices that produce uncertain, precarious, and perilous outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers. Using refugee experiences as the site of analysis, I examine how refugee status determination and documentation processes and social service provision become sites of exclusionary citizenship where institutional power within the broader societal imagination around belonging is employed to engender conditions that inhibit effective social, economic, and physical participation for refugees and asylum seekers. The analysis of refugee subjectivities reveals how the amalgamation of heterogeneous actors, processes, and moments creates conditions of limbo and exclusion for those at the margins of society. I argue that ingrained and embodied notions of citizenship and identity serve as organizing forces for state actors' exclusion and expulsion of refugees and migrants, which are influenced and shaped by dominant societal discourses and assumptions about the legitimacy of belonging. This embodiment of citizenship, what I understand as a citizenship agenda, does not operate at the sole behest of the unitary, monolithic state, but functions, I contend, through interinfluencing relationships among assemblages of bureaucratic state actors and disenchanted hostile civilian populations, among other actors. The chapter traces how formal processes, bureaucratic practices, and informal citizen mechanisms rooted in citizenship ideations coalesce to affect refugee lived experiences in South Africa.

A growing number of refugees and displaced communities face challenges because of state sovereignty, its organizing citizenship paradigm, and increasingly restrictive formal and informal state

and citizen settlement processes. Among the challenges is the diminishing prospects for long-term solutions, particularly in resettlement and local integration. At the end of 2021, there were approximately 90 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, accounting for more than one percent of the global population (UNHCR 2022). The responsibility of providing for large refugee populations has overwhelmingly fallen on a small number of states, primarily developing countries, which house 85 percent of the world's refugees. Despite the rhetoric of global responsibility sharing, opportunities for resettlement in a third country are scarce. UNHCR data reveals that while 1.47 million refugees needed resettlement in 2021, only 47,352 (less than 3%, between January – October 2022) departed (UNHCR 2022). In terms of local integration, UNHCR estimates that only 1.1 million refugees worldwide became citizens of their asylum countries in the last decade. Because of the significant shortfall in resettlement and local integration, many refugee populations languish in protracted situations, in camps, and increasingly in urban settings, where they encounter hostile, bellicose host communities as they struggle to secure livelihoods. As a result, refugees are caught in a conflict with state actors seeking to control their mobility; poor citizens who see them as a threat because of limited job and business opportunities; and the media, which reconstructs social reality through asymmetric information that disavows the state's responsibility for refugee protection.

In a world of rising populism and xenophobia, aggressive behaviour towards refugees is no longer unconventional. Therefore, to situate refugee experiences in the 21st century, we must understand how refugees become entangled in a web of myriad actors imbued with an exclusionary citizenship agenda. Therefore, in this chapter, I ask: how do institutional processes of refugee status determination and documentation condition refugee experiences? Furthermore, how do these conditions impact the mundane lives of refugees? And how do refugees navigate these realities?

The experiences of Congolese, Burundian, and Somali refugees in South Africa expose the entrenched citizenship agenda that produces exclusionary discourses, attitudes, and practices. While recent South African scholarship has bemoaned the increasingly restrictive policy and practice

environment in which refugees and asylum seekers must forge their livelihoods (Crush et al. 2017, Landau & Amit 2014), the convergence of state and society is frequently overlooked. This chapter addresses this oversight as it unfolds in four sections. The first section (3.1) briefly provides the context for refugee and migration governance in South Africa. Section 3.2 provides a framework for understanding the relationship between refugee governance and urban refugees in South Africa, predicated on the model of assembling refugee exclusion, specifically teasing out the mode and function of assembling exclusionary citizenship. The third section (3.3), building on the first two, offers an in-depth examination of how assembling refugee exclusion impacts refugees and asylum seekers' lived experiences in South Africa. It also highlights key aspects of the South African legal protection framework, the barriers, and obstacles to obtaining and enjoying legal status, and the impact of access to social services and livelihoods for these communities. While in the first half of this chapter, I discuss structures that constrain the choices and opportunities available to refugees, I also recognize the inherent capacity of refugees to act and make their choices. So, Section 3.4 looks at how refugees use their own power to fight against policies and practices that limit them.

3.1 Utilizing a Xenophobic Citizenship Agenda in Assembling Refugee Exclusion

Refugee governance in Africa is often framed in the language of solidarity, humanitarianism, and economic struggle, in contrast to the discourses of exclusion, securitization, criminalization, containment, and restriction commonly associated with the western discourse about refugee governance. However, South Africa reveals spaces of tension and marginalization in the country's urban environment. The South African government employs securitized deterrence strategies to render the country's space undesirable for refugees and migrants through restrictive policy implementation and policy reforms that induce containment. These state practices are influenced by the complex dynamics of xenophobic violence, rising social inequality, and historically rooted racial and economic disparities that have shaped resource ownership. The interactions between these dynamics expose contradictions

and complexities that play out on refugees' and migrants' bodies.

As Africa's most industrialized nation, South Africa is one of the largest recipients of economic, labour, and political migrants in a pattern that began before independence. It dates to the mid-nineteenth century, when settlers from Europe and labourers from other parts of Africa and Asia moved in swaths to the bottom tip of the continent (Crush 2000). More recently, the end of apartheid in 1994 brought new migration patterns, including the considerable growth of mixed migration from neighbouring countries beyond. While Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Namibia are among the top ten countries whose nationals make up the largest share of the immigrant population in the country, nationals of the United Kingdom, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India constitute significant numbers (Statistics South Africa 2015). Moreover, the 2016 UNHCR Global Trend Report (2017) shows that South Africa, as one of the largest recipients of new asylum seekers, received 35,400 new claims in 2016, most from Zimbabwe (8,000), the Democratic Republic of Congo (5,300), Ethiopia (4,800), Nigeria (3,300), Bangladesh (2,800) and Somalia (1,600). Data from the World Bank indicate a trend that shows the number of asylum seekers in the country are decreasing from 2016 (See Figure 3)

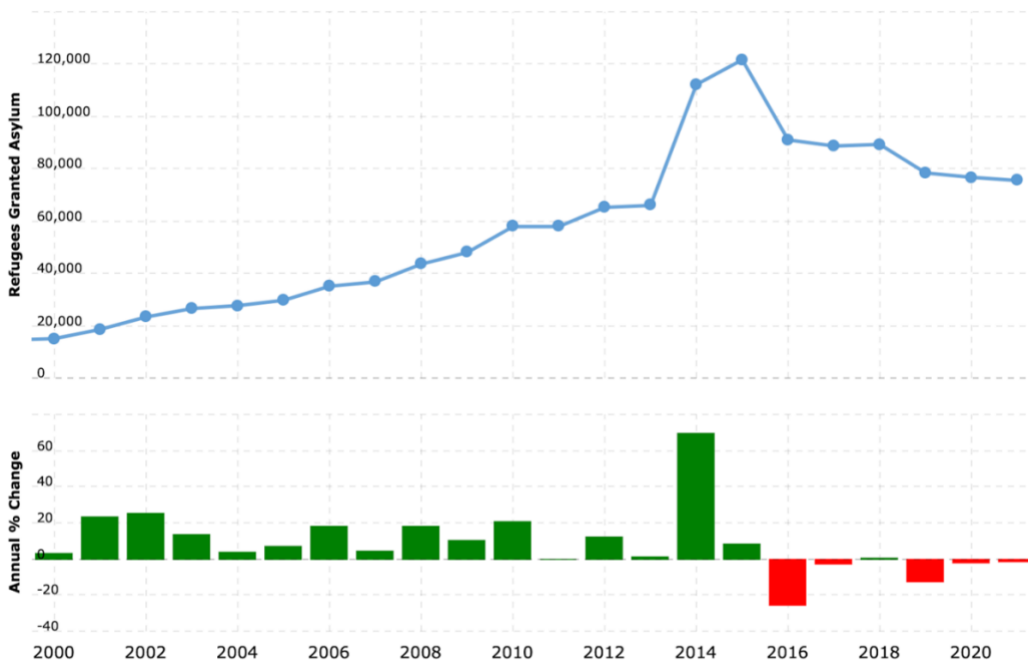


Figure 3. Trend in asylum in South Africa (source UN Population Division)

While statistics concerning asylum seekers and refugees remains a contested political issue; it echoes conversations about migration policy reform, governance practices, and societal responses. Together with other socio-economic factors, these intersecting dynamics produce conditions of illegality, precarity, and expulsion for refugee and migrant populations. The bleak refugee situations produced by state actors reflect some of the insights highlighted in critical citizenship and migration literature.

Scholars continue to challenge the simple binary conceptualization of citizenship/non-citizenship and illegality/legality to explain the migration experience in favour of an understanding that emphasizes the blurred boundaries between inclusion and exclusion (see detailed discussion in Chapter 2 section 2.2). As previously stated, Goldring, Bernstein, and Bernhard (2009) use the concept of "precarious migration status" to demonstrate that the boundaries surrounding the production of illegality are ambiguous and complex. They argue for a focus on the institutional processes, such as state policies, regulations, and practices of policy implementation, that create gradations of status lying between legality and illegality. Focusing on Turkish refugee policies on Syrian refugees, Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel (2017) show how forcibly displaced populations are caught in an in-betweenness state "as neither refugees nor guests," an ambiguous position thrust on them. This environment reveals how states can create ambiguity, unpredictability, differential inclusion, and limited access to citizenship rights (Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel, 2017). Similarly, Squire (2011, p.6) argues that migrants are "irregularized through processes of securitization and criminalization," meaning that the various security and policing practices produce irregularity. I find this focus on the functioning of prescriptive legislation and administrative decision-making processes compelling and critical in explaining the factors that produce precarity.

Precarious migratory status is also multidimensional; it cannot be understood in isolation from the specific state policies, regulations, policy implementation practices, activism, and discourses that construct it, or in isolation from the multiple pathways to precarious status that exist at various levels (Goldring et al. 2009). For example, despite the provision of the right to work, it is compromised in

practice. Goldring, Bernstein, and Bernhard locate regularization processes and the legal production of illegality, both of which generate precarious immigration status, within a broader analysis of citizenship's political, economic, and cultural politics. Reviewing Canadian immigration and humanitarian policies, they demonstrate how citizenship, specific state policies, regulations, practices of policy implementation, and discourses construct precarious migratory status through multiple pathways (Goldring et al., 2009). While their insights illuminate the particularities of refugee governance in South Africa, my work reveals how multiple actors in contingent moments with specific rationalities and tendencies construct vulnerability beyond precarious status.

States play a fundamental role in exclusion and inclusion processes. They do so by using the law to produce illegality as well as legality (De Genova 2002), to institutionalize gradations of precarious status (Baban, Ilcan & Rygiel 2017a), to sustain irregularity (Squire 2011), and to create bordering practices (Mountz 2011, Johnson & Jones 2011). States create sharp or blurry forms of refugee and migrant exclusion while encouraging citizens to perceive their superiority in this hierarchy of belonging—requiring scholars to examine modes of governance and control. Scholars have moved beyond the dualities of "citizen/non-citizen" or "legal/illegal" to consider the status spectrum states create through various policies and practices. However, this scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on the role of the state in migration governance, ascribing exclusion and differential forms of inclusion to administrative state bureaucracies. It has paid limited attention to how non-state actors, citizens, and the media converge with the state to generate complex outcomes for refugees and migrants. I propose a shift to look at how xenophobic citizenship agendas are used as an underlying principle by state and non-state actors in society's complex maze and interlocking system to create new and unexpected outcomes for refugees and migrants.

South Africa's migration and refugee landscape reveals the intersection and reinforcing dynamics between the state's propensity to control migration and citizens' xenophobic violence. These dynamics are underlined by citizenship fundamentals and instrumentalized through extra-legal practices

of policy implementation and interest-driven perspectives. My shift to considering how a coalescence of actors, state and non-state, shapes refugee experiences is significant in understanding the current and changing refugee and migration environment within the broader political, economic, and cultural politics of nationality and citizenship.

As stated earlier, a focus on this amalgamation of actors allows for a simultaneous reflection on state-refugee, citizen-refugee, and state-citizen relations that converge in complex ways to shape the lived experiences of refugees. Some scholars conceptualizing citizenship beyond state-centric understandings draw attention to how disparate actors converge on refugee and migration governance (Koster 2015, Ong 2006, Fresia and Von Känel 2016). This scholarship focuses on intangible and tangible relations among various actors to reflect on the creation of citizenship boundaries in practice. In the next section, I utilize this conceptual understanding to make sense of how the Assemblage utilizes a xenophobic citizenship agenda that includes state institutional practices and everyday practices.

3.2 Assembling Exclusionary Citizenship: Practices of Migration Governance in South Africa

The case of South Africa provides a compelling example to elucidate how the complex processes, relations, and actions of state and non-state actors, referred to as "assembling refugee exclusion," utilize a xenophobic citizenship agenda to shape refugee experiences. Here, I focus on how governance processes institutionalize exclusion. Through their policy implementation practices, state institutions play a crucial role in engendering conditions of vulnerability and unpredictability for refugees and asylum seekers. Also, other non-state institutional actors, due to limitation or complacency, contribute to these conditions of uncertainty and precarity. These conditions, and the culminating frustrations for forcibly displaced populations, are visible in every stage of the asylum system: entry, access to reception, application, decision, and appeal. An International Federation of Human Rights study recognizing human rights abuses of migrants in South Africa revealed that would-be asylum seekers at the border, in fear of police harassment, arrest, detention, and extortion, failed to inform immigration officers of their intention to apply for asylum (International Federation for Human Rights

(FIDH) 2008). As a UNHCR official puts it, these entry challenges have not changed in recent years: "we hear reports of asylum seekers facing hardships at the border and subsequently being arrested inland for unlawful entry" (Interview, UNHCR Pretoria 2018). Without an application for protection, forcibly displaced populations cannot obtain the two-week, non-renewable, temporary permit or the opportunity to apply for asylum. This short-term permit, called an "asylum transit permit" by the government, is given to a person seeking asylum at a land border, airport, or harbor. The government's asylum eligibility procedures published online state that "the permit is valid [for] 14 days only and authorizes the person to report to the nearest Refugee Reception Office in order to apply for asylum in terms of section 21 of the Refugee Act." They are consequently rendered illegal, even though Section 21(4) of the Refugee Act protects asylum seekers from detention for unlawful entry. In practice, administrative procedures lead to what Scheel and Squire (2014) call the "production of forced migrants as illegal migrants." In figure 4 below, I demonstrate how this process is supposed to transpire.

Beyond the entry, access to refugee reception offices (RROs) for asylum seekers is riddled with administrative red tape, closures, and delays. It takes longer than two weeks for asylum seekers to register and obtain documentation since the RROs' limited capacity and the demand for asylum yield long queues and compel asylum seekers to camp out for nights on end (Amit 2011a, FIDH 2008). In 2011 and 2012, rather than increasing capacity at its six RROs (Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Pretoria, and Pretoria West), the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) closed new asylum applications in the urban centres of Cape Town (partially), Pretoria (completely), and Port Elizabeth (entirely). It did continue to assist asylum seekers who had lodged their applications before the closures (Carciotto et al. 2018). An official from an NGO talked about why the Pretoria West RRO closed and the chaos that followed:

There used to be two [RROs] in Pretoria, one in Pretoria West and another in a place called Marabastad [Desmond Tutu Refugee Reception Centre]. So, they [the government] closed the one in Pretoria West, and now there is only one in Marabastad. So, the capacity to even deal with numbers in Marabastad is not there. I do not know if it was a cost-cutting mechanism from the

government. It is chaotic (Interview, Cape Town, December 2017).

The Port Elizabeth RRO was closed due to apparent abuse of the asylum process by economic migrants from Southeast Asia (Carciotto et al. 2018). Due to litigation pressure from human rights civil organizations and a court order, the Department fully reopened Port Elizabeth RRO in October 2018.

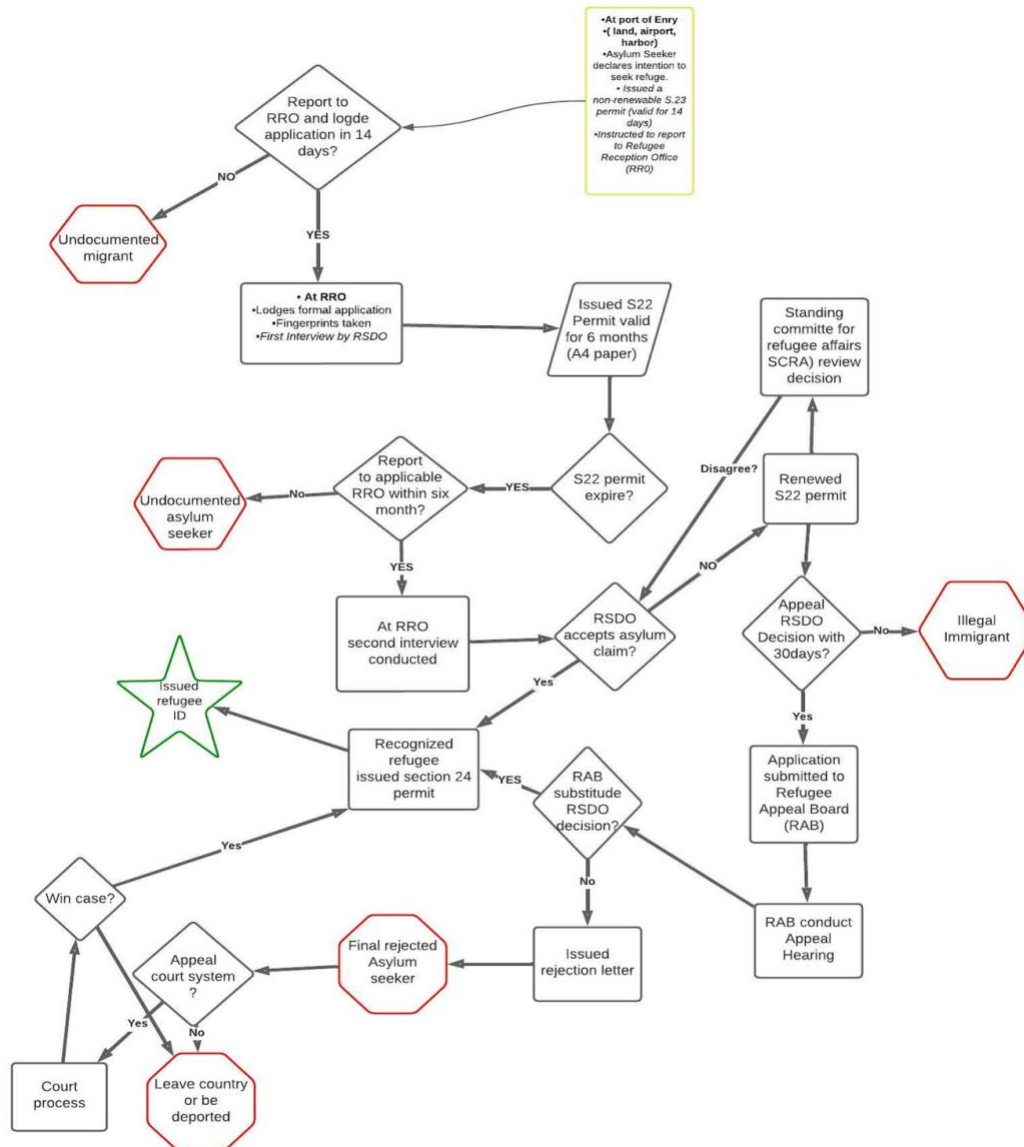


Figure 4. Refugee Status Determination process in South Africa¹

¹ [http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/refugee-status-asylum#:~:text=When%20granted%20asylum%20\(written%20recognition,review%20process%20by%20an%20RSDO.](http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/refugee-status-asylum#:~:text=When%20granted%20asylum%20(written%20recognition,review%20process%20by%20an%20RSDO.)

Similarly, the Supreme Court of Appeals ruled in 2017 that the closure of the Cape Town RRO was "substantially irrational and unlawful" and ordered its reopening (Shelly 2018). Despite judicial rulings and proclamations compelling the DHA to reopen refugee reception centers across South Africa, its response obstinately obstructed judicial decisions or budge under pressure from opposition parties (Mabuza 2018). Most recently, in May 2021, the Scalabrini Centre and the Somali Association of South Africa requested the court to issue a "Special Master" to enforce compliance from the DHA (Scalabrini, 2021). The government's approach to closing asylum processing centers and intentionally creating restrictive bureaucratic practices demonstrates its commitment to shrinking asylum space, which is a critical component of assembling exclusionary citizenship.

Scholars have argued that these closures are part of broader government actions to clamp down on perceived abuse of the asylum system (Landau & Amit 2014, Amit 2015a). For asylum seekers, the systematic deterrents translate into daily unpredictability and perpetual uncertainty. Delays in access to reception centers hamper access to application and documentation renewal; the subsequent lack of documentation and a lack of status increases precarity and exacerbates vulnerability. Joshua, a father of five, explained the impact of the Cape Town closure on his family as follows:

We can no longer renew our permits here in Cape Town since the government closed the reception center. So, we must travel thousands of kilometres to Musina, where we first applied, and this needs lots of money and time away from work and school for my children. I do not have money to go at times, but we will have problems if not renew. We might get arrested and have other problems at school or going to the hospital. It is tough (Interview, Cape Town, November 2018).

As this experience demonstrates, these closures have significant financial, logistical, and emotional impacts on asylum seekers such as Joshua, who must continue to negotiate their precarious status and documentation challenges on top of their day-to-day living. Joshua's case exemplifies the situation of many other asylum seekers whose precarious status and documentation struggles impact their economic and social well-being. This situation exemplifies what Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel (2017a) refer to as "the ambiguity of precarity," in which one area of precarity exacerbates another, creating vulnerability loops that exacerbate the situation. Indeed, exclusionary citizenship ignores and is disinterested in how its

institutions and processes impacts on the well-being of refugees and asylum seekers

Even when asylum seekers can file applications, the system is overburdened (as the demand exceeds the capacity) and riddled with systemic irregularities. Scholars characterize the refugee management system in South Africa as having chronic processing delays, administrative inefficiencies, and ever-growing wait times for status decisions (Amit 2015a, Amit and Kriger 2014, Crush et al. 2017). Moreover, the inability of immigration policy (Act No. 13 of 200) to provide adequate opportunities for economic migrants, especially the right to work options for lower-skilled migrants, results in the utilization of the asylum process to obtain temporary residence in South Africa. As a result of these gaps in immigration policy, the refugee status determination architecture has occasionally come to a halt (FIDH 2008, Amit 2010a, Landau & Amit 2014). While statistics of asylum applications and figures, in general, remain a contested issue, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) reports that in 2007 the backlog of pending asylum applications stood at 80,000 (FIDH 2008), and the 2017 UNHCR Global Trends Report indicates that 191,300 claims were pending at the end of 2017, numbers that increase yearly (UNHCR 2018). South Africa's asylum system, designed for 50 000 applications a year, processed as many as 222, 300 in 2009 and 62, 2000 in 2015 (Masuku and Ramaa2020). In effect, the bureaucratic system is in crisis. While this crisis might seem insurmountable to actors within the system, I see these challenges as solvable if the system's interest were to ensure adequate refugee protection, while providing more pathways for labour migration. However, inefficiency and deliberate ineffective bureaucracies within the department of home affairs are part of an exclusionary citizenship agenda that serves to exclude those deemed undesirable despite of the imperatives of international refugee law and national law commitments.

Recent developments in the form of the White Paper on International Migration for South Africa (DHA 2017), if implemented, could introduce low-skilled permits for migrants from Southern Africa, potentially reducing the burden on the asylum system. However, the policy paper does not address the significant number of applicants seeking asylum from countries outside the Southern Africa region. For

many, their only solution is to wait for an asylum decision. With the current process rates, many asylum seekers wait for than five to ten years before the DHA decides on their asylum claim or appeal process (Schockaert et al. 2020). Thus, asylum seekers get entangled in the constantly renewing loop of the six-month asylum seeker's certificate (see figure 5). A certificate called a "section 23 permit" is given to asylum seekers to legally reside in South Africa. If the permit expires without renewal, their stay is rendered illegal. These stringent asylum requirements foster precarious status and limit opportunities for inclusion via refugee status, permanent residence, or citizenship, restricting opportunities for gainful employment and reducing prospects for cultivating a sense of belonging.

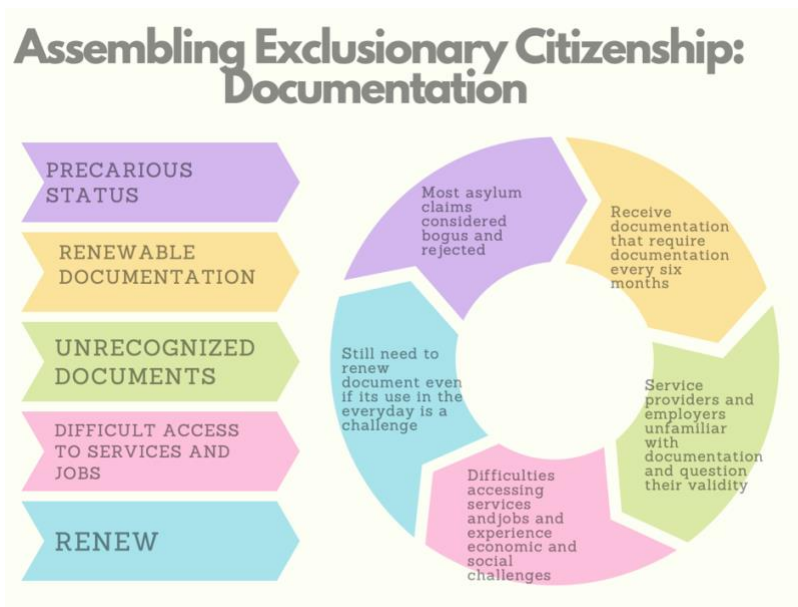


Figure 5. Assembling exclusionary citizenship through documentation processes.

The continual renewal process often comes with a substantial financial burden for asylum seekers who, to remain legal, must spend hundreds of South African Rand travelling to their point of entry, paying renewal fees and late application renewal penalties. That is on top of having to negotiate with corrupt officials. If they do not, they risk the wrath of the migration apparatus, which could potentially lead to arrest, demands for bribes, detention, and deportation. A study participant, a

Congolese asylum seeker, explained the situation as follows:

I must renew my papers every six months, and every single time I think of the process, I start feeling unwell; I feel stressed. The queues are long, and at times if you do not have money to pay, you do not get inside, or your papers are not renewed. At times, I go and do not get seen, or I am told to come back another day. Those with money move through the process easily (Interview, Cape Town, October 2017).

The insecurity in the renewal process not only impacts asylum seekers financially but interferes with securing livelihoods by demanding time away from employment, school, or other forms of engagement.

A Burundian asylum seeker framed her frustration in more hopeful terms:

I am tired of renewing my permit every six months. My only hope is that I am granted refugee status so that I do not spend as much time standing in queues at the department of home affairs. At least with the refugee card, you only need to renew it every five years. (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017).

As these experiences show, the chains of consequence extend to many aspects of asylum seekers' wellbeing. The institutional processes affect the social, psychological, emotional, and economic aspects of their lives. These processes make visible how the state institutionalizes gradations of precarious status (Baban, Ilcan, & Rygiel 2017a). Asylum seekers have been included at the margins, yet with outsider status, a looming reminder of their lack of citizenship and refugee status—a reminder made more poignant by the refugee status determination process being inaccessible and fraught with failure.

In some instances, asylum seekers attempt to circumvent the system to ease the pressure of exclusion. A Congolese asylum seeker said in an interview why he launched a second application in Cape Town despite having an existing case in Johannesburg:

As I said, you are tied to a certain point. You cannot say you are in Cape Town, cannot find a job, and decide to relocate to Limpopo or Gauteng. You cannot go because you must come back within six months or less to renew your paper. Suppose you are there [Limpopo or Gauteng], and you cannot get your salary on time, or it is too little for you to move. You will become illegal. Like in Johannesburg, it is worse because they do check at every point. Like at the train station and in town, the police will just stop you and check your documents. I was checked once, but luckily mine was valid at the time. (Interview, Cape Town, October 2017).

The challenges associated with the renewal processes increase the risk of deportations within a state content to paint deportations as a routine administrative function. It is at the intersection of institutionalized state exclusionary measures and a society hell-bent on migrant hostility and xenophobic violence where assembling exclusion form and function. State migration management produces

discourses of “us” versus “them” that shape and intersects with politics of nationalism, xenophobia, and overall hostility toward non-citizens.

The irregularity in the refugee status determination (RSD) process is conspicuous. While recent reforms could reduce demand and speed up the RSD process and the review of asylum applications, the process remains riddled with what scholars have described as “poor and ill-informed adjudication” (Crush et al. 2017, p. 3) and deeply flawed status determination process (Amit 2010a, 2015a) that “makes no attempt to realize the goal of refugee protection” (Amit 2012a, p. 99). Studies by the African Centre for Migration reveal persistent biases and deficiencies: errors in the application of both domestic and international law; haphazard copying and pasting resulting in referencing the wrong claimant or country; failure to provide adequate reasons for rejection of claims; illogical conclusions and speculations; the inaccuracy of facts; selective use of internal relocation standards; and use of outdated country of origin information (Amit 2010a, 2012a, 2022).

The opacity of the process has allowed DHA officials to equivocate, using vague language and boilerplate rejection letters without adequate examination and consideration of the refugees’ application or the provision of case-specific reasons for decisions. Crush, Skinner, and Stulgaitis (2017) demonstrate that refugee status determinations are subject to arbitrary decisions and claims adjudication based purely on the country-of-origin information and not the individual experience of claimants. Crush, Skinner, and Stulgaitis’s (2017) system analysis reveals a citizenship agenda with a logic of exclusion that permeates bureaucratic processes. Bureaucratic refugee status determination is far from an impartial and fair process; it is entangled with the perspectives and interests of officials whose social identity is infused with hegemonic belonging-based thinking, language, and actions. Many study participants lamented the complexity of accessing officials, obtaining, and renewing documents, and being interviewed by officials who have preconceived notions about the validity of their refugee claims. Most participants expressed conviction that their claims were rejected before the interview process. This Congolese father-of-two expresses his frustration with what he sees as unfair process.

We received a general letter saying that our claims are not valid. It does not tell us what about my story of war and persecution is not true. I know that my family was killed because of the war in Bukavu, South Kivu [DRC], and I had to flee with nothing because my life was at risk. How is that not a valid claim? They [RSO] just don't believe us because they don't want us here (Interview, Cape Town, December 2017).

Asylum seekers feel powerless and relegated to appeal decisions, which further favours the interests of the exclusionary state. In assembling exclusionary citizenship, state actors informed by prevailing, societally ingrained and embodied notions of citizenship and identity makes it difficult for asylum seekers to lodge and obtain refugee status. Indeed, as Vigneswaran (2008, p.41) argued, the asylum process in South Africa is " beholden to an institutional culture of immigration protectionism," with state officials frequently going out of their way to prevent asylum seekers from entering the system, and this is not simply due to a lack of institutional capacity. Ideation around who belongs and who does not significantly drive this RSD decision-making process. For many asylum seekers, their hope lies in the appeals process.

Appeals are adjudicated by a single Refugee Appeal Board that sits only two to three times a year to determine whether the decision reached by the Refugee Status Determination Officer (RSDO) is according to domestic and international refugee law. These scarce meetings of the Refugee Appeal Board have only worsened the backlogs, forcing asylum seekers into prolonged periods without an outcome to their appeal. In 2016, the UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2015 revealed that South Africa had appeals backlog of over a million asylum applications (UNHCR 2016), a situation that has devastating documentation consequences for asylum seekers. A female Congolese asylum seeker explains her experience of waiting in limbo as nerve-wracking.

My application was rejected in 2010, and I am now waiting for my appeals decision for seven years now. I must renew my [asylum] permit every six months or I will become [an] illegal [immigrant]. It is stressful and frustrating. I don't when I will get an answer. Our lives do not matter to them (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017).

Indeed, many asylum seekers whose asylum application were rejected by RSDO expressed how this space of in-betweenness where they have limited access to services and must spend significant resources to sustain their legal permit through constant renewal. In March 2021, UNHCR partnered with the government to support the establishment of the Refugee Appeals Authority of South Africa (RAASA),

formerly the Refugee Appeal Board (RAB), in a project that they hope will "resolve the backlog of approximately 150,000 appeals and put measures in place to prevent another backlog from occurring" (UNHCR Help South Africa 2022). According to their website², this new board will "resolve pending appeal cases over the course of 4 years, through the ramp-up of resources, including an increase of members and technical equipment funded by UNHCR." Time will tell what this new initiative will yield, but it is a ray of hope for asylum seekers caught-up in these spaces of waiting.

Despite the increasing backlog in asylum applications and the flawed asylum adjudication process, the state has clamped down on its administrative apparatus to frustrate current and potential asylum seekers. Asylum seekers face a high risk of rejection, detention, and deportation. The RSD's 85–95 percent rejection rate becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy utilized to advance the rhetoric that 90 percent of asylum seekers are illegitimate economic migrants who are exploiting the asylum system and South Africa's culture of human rights (Crush et al. 2017, Landau & Amit 2014). The Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Fatima Chohan at a budget vote debate in 2014 remarked that "one of our major challenges [...] is that many people who seek asylum are actually economic migrants who use the asylum seeker process to avoid applying for a visa under the immigration Act (DHA, 2014)." This rhetoric permeates and shapes refugee status determination processes and increases the rate of rejection. However, this rhetoric fails to acknowledge that the high rejection rate is evidence of a system that fails to fulfill its core mandate and violates domestic law, administrative law, and international refugee law (Amit 2012a). This inconsistent interpretation and application of refugee law not only makes it difficult for refugees to access protection and assistance but devalues principles of international refugee protection. Moreover, a lack of document increases the chances of detention and deportation if arrested. An asylum seeker explains the situation as a catch-22.

People end up in prison for two to three years until they are deported due to a lack of valid papers. Not because you do not want to have valid paper, but because your place of renewing is

² <https://help.unhcr.org/southafrica/2022/04/14/appeals-backlog-project/#:~:text=The%20Appeals%20Backlog%20Project%20was,technical%20equipment%20funded%20by%20UNHCR>

very far, and you do not have the means to renew it. That is the reason why I opened a new application close to where I am. However, these days they no longer allow it anymore. If you are new, you cannot open in Cape Town. If it expires, you will have to renew in Musina or Pretoria. You must go there where you first applied at your own cost. It is terrible. (Interview, Cape Town, October 2017).

These practices equate to a dangerous set of state powers that cheapen refugee law (Chimni 1998, 2009).

Despite counterclaims from civil society organizations and evidence from academic research, the government's rhetoric portrays refugees and migrants as hurting the country's economy, undermining citizens' livelihoods, and increasing criminality (Tawodzera et al. 2015). Not only does such rhetoric marginalize a group of people and exacerbate discriminatory practices, but it also has no regard for the life and death stakes involved in refugee adjudication, and it promotes public xenophobic violence.

In sum, processes of assembling refugee exclusion subject people to insecure statuses that are conditional on status renewal procedures (Basok & Wiesner 2018) and various forms of "semi-legal" status (Kubal 2013) scattered across a spectrum between legality and illegality. While it may seem expedient to the state to hamper asylum seekers and not charter protection measures that come with refugee status, these actions upend the building blocks of democracy and human rights on which liberal states are built. It also renders refugees and migrants legible to violent expulsion (see chapters 4 and 5).

State behaviour shapes itself in relation to citizen interest; thus, an exclusionary host community is a harbinger of increasing state restrictions and abuse of human rights. As such, citizen behaviour affects state action. For political expediency, states jettison migrants' human rights to demonstrate migration control, shape public opinion, and maintain political power. The work of Roni Amit at the African Centre for Migration and Society at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, has demonstrated how state actors responsible for the status determination and documentation processes violate the refugee act and other constitutional duties through bureaucratic failures, incompetence, and corruption (Amit 2012a, Amit 2012b, Amit 2022). It becomes clear that these failures are not only a product of ineffective governance processes but also reflect deeper societal exclusionary thinking that permeates all facets of society. Officials involved in the status determination

and documentation processes are influenced by the prevailing socio-political ideas, perspectives, and practices.

In the face of the disconnect between existing refugee policy provisions and the actual lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers, the South African government, seeking to deter migration and reduce pull factors, has proposed new provisions to achieve two critical outcomes for asylum seekers. First, it aims to rein in South Africa's commitment to freedom of movement and, second, to rescind the right to work and study for asylum seekers. This new policy, articulated in the Refugees Amendment Act of 2017 and signed into law 14 December 2017, aims to establish holding facilities at the exterior border of Musina, where refugee status determination would occur and no longer at refugee reception centres in major cities. Scalabrini, an NGO working in South Africa, draws similarities between these new policies and migration restrictions commonly implemented in the Global North countries. Driven by securitization of migration premised on the notion that supposedly bogus [or fraudulent] asylum seekers abuse the system and thus should be distinguished from bona fide asylum seekers, the state aims to mirror European countries' establishment of reception and transit centres by creating asylum processing centres (APCs) to house asylum seekers and process their applications at the country's external borders (Carciotto et al., 2018). At these APCs, "applicants will undergo a risk-based assessment and be detained during adjudication" (p. 15).

A key provision of this recent policy is rescinding asylum seekers' right to employment and study without a solid plan for how their livelihoods and their children's educational needs will be met. The new policy will stifle economic and livelihood pursuits and limit education for school-age children and university-bound students. As Carciotto et al., 2018 argue, curtailing asylum seekers' right to work would have significant "social, political and economic implications" (p. i). In the immediate term, this curtailment, as they convincingly point out, would exacerbate existing integration challenges that asylum seekers currently experience, as they "do not hold recognized ID books" and thus "encounter economic challenges and often face local hostility" (p. i). These existing challenges encompass both the

asylum seekers' capacity to engage in self-employment and "barriers to accessing wage-earning employment" (p. i), severely impacting their capacity to sustain themselves and their families as well as make meaningful contributions to society. From a rights perspective, the study shows:

[that] the policy will likely infringe upon asylum seekers' constitutional rights, as courts have recognized that economic restrictions could leave many asylum seekers destitute [and] breach their rights to dignity. Inhibiting asylum seekers from engaging in self-employment also has implications for integration, as poverty increases chances of subverting the law, and heightened competition in low-skilled job markets may well raise hostility towards asylum seekers in the country (p. i).

The constitutional right in reference here is the right to dignity for asylum seekers ruled on by the Supreme Court of Appeal of South Africa (SCA). In a 2003 judgment, the SCA confirmed the right to work for asylum seekers and ruled that the right to work, even where such work is not required for one to survive, is a necessary "component of human dignity." Further, the court held that "human dignity has no nationality. It is inherent in all people- citizens and non-citizens alike- simply because they are human. And while [an individual] happens to be in [South Africa]-for whatever reason- [this right] must be respected, and is protected, by section 10 of the Bill of Rights". Therefore, this policy change will render the pursuits of livelihoods arduous for asylum seekers and violate their constitutional right to dignity and ignore this ruling by the SCA.

We are witnessing this production of assemblages of refugee exclusion occurring in the way policies are implemented and the instrumentalization of law to institute restriction and exclusion. A crucial concern is the recent policy reforms that further exacerbate refugees' and asylum seekers' vulnerability. The country has passed various amendments to the Refugee and Immigration policies that roll back some of the provisions of the original Act. These amendments include the Immigration Amendment Act 8 of 2016, the Immigration Amendment 13 of 2011, the Refugees Amendment Act 10 of 2015, and the Refugee Amendment Act of 2017.

In the South African migration governance environment, one recent, crucial amendment is the Refugee Amendment Act of 2017. This radical new policy restricts refugees' freedom of movement, residence, and employment, all of which had been stipulated in the previous Act. Among other

provisions, the 2017 Act aims to remove the right to work and study for asylum seekers, and it accords the power to the Director-General of Home Affairs to establish and disestablish RROs as deemed necessary. It also proposes stringent measures for applying for and abandoning asylum claims. With this new policy, the state has practically reneged on the constitution's provisions and revoked the commitments made under international refugee law. The state has abandoned its post-independence commitment to freedom of movement for forcibly displaced communities, especially asylum seekers. The restrictions on access to employment and education for asylum seekers is a significant shift away from progressive human rights frameworks underpinned by the constitution of South Africa. It moves away from the founding principles of independence established under Nelson Mandela. The new policy further aims to stifle refugee and civil society organizations' human rights approach and thwart judicial efforts that challenge how the state implements refugee status determination and documentation processes. The policy will regularize the abrupt and unlawful closure of reception centres by giving the Ministry of Home Affairs more power and changing document renewal practices. These policy reforms are part of assembling refugee exclusion processes that function to yield exclusionary outcomes. Despite the plethora of constitutional and human rights infringements proposed to amend the Refugee Act 130 of 1998 (Refugee Act), these amendments to the Refugee Act came into force on 1 January 2020.

UNHCR is regularly made aware (through NGOs, individual engagement platforms, and organization research) of irregularities in state RSD and documentation functions. It similarly keeps abreast of the difficulties faced by those seeking refugee status. However, being aware of the challenges is not enough for UNHCR or other supporting organizations to avoid grappling with diplomatic relations, limited resources, and the plethora of persons subjected to refugee conditions. While UNHCR works to safeguard refugees' and asylum seekers' rights, the agency is caught between sustaining refugee protection and maintaining cordial diplomatic relations with the state. UNHCR has established platforms and convened regular meetings with stakeholders, including refugees, to find solutions. The effectiveness of these platforms is limited by the sheer number of refugees versus staff. International

organizations (such as UNHCR), NGOs, and human rights organizations have had limited success addressing the effects of state policy on the issues refugees face. However, in one notable example of successful advocacy by UNHCR, refugees and asylum seekers can access antiretroviral (ARV) treatment previously limited to nationals.

The general lack of knowledge about the differences between migrants and refugees and the discriminatory attitudes among service providers not only impedes access to services but affects the fees charged and the quality of service. States' unpredictable financial contributions to the global humanitarian system and waning commitment to global and local forced migration remedies, UNHCR, and other organizations means they cannot adequately fulfill their protection mandate to address the needs of displaced people (Betts, 2008).

Beyond the state's failure to adhere to administrative justice and domestic and international law in the refugee status determination process, the implications of the status determination decisions for the day-to-day experiences of refugees are significant. For example, as Amit (2012a, 2010a) succinctly points out, bona fide asylum seekers, those fleeing persecution, are in danger of refoulement (the forceful return of asylum seekers to where their lives and liberty are threatened) because of a flawed system. The risk to refoulement for refugees who seeking asylum in South Africa is real as this Burundian refugee leader explains.

You are arrested and potentially deported if the police find you without valid document. They will not care if you previously had a valid asylum seeker permit that has expired. They would not be interested in listening to your reasons. We live in constant fear of xenophobic violence and police arrest. Imagine if you have expired papers but need to report violence. Most people simply don't report for these reasons. We are not safe. (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017). Moreover, I would argue that in addition to the risk of refoulement, practices of status determination that produce precarious status create vulnerability and uncertainty due to documentation challenges, creating situations that have a significant impact on refugees and displaced communities. Xenophobic violence heightens rampant corruption, denies resettlement, and increases the risk of detention, deportation, and refoulement.

The concept of assembling exclusionary citizenship provides an understanding of contemporary

migration experiences of refugees and other vulnerable groups who find themselves at the margins of state function. Amits' (2012a, 2012b, 2010a) analyses reflect the various in-between and simultaneous statuses migrants occupy in some social and political spheres. South Africa is no exception. They become unwanted by-products of economic globalization, nationalism, and political transformation in sending, transitory, and receiving states. The following section explains how precarious migratory status shapes the lives of Congolese, Somalian, and Burundian refugees in urban South Africa.

3.3 Impact of Production of Exclusion on the Lived Experiences of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Assemblages of refugee exclusion are sharply evident in how the lack of knowledge of refugee and asylum documentation, societal biases, and othering discourses impact refugee access to social services. By law, schools are not allowed to deny access to children who have refugee status, whether they have asylum documentation or no documentation. In practice, access to schooling by for children with refugee status is subject to knowledge of and familiarity with the law by officials at specific schools. In this regard, there is no harmonization of admission procedures in primary and secondary education. Refugee children are subjected to excessive documentation scrutiny when applying for school admission, which makes school admission and registration a source of stress and worry among asylum seekers, whose precarious documentation is subject to frequent expiration. A 2015 survey of foreign children in Gauteng, Limpopo, and Western Cape provinces in South Africa found that only 7.99% had refugee status papers, 15.09% had asylum paper and a significant 40% were undocumented (Scalabrini, 2019). In the absence of documentation, schools must grant three months of temporary admission; however, compliance with this procedure is subject to individual schools.

The challenge is more pronounced for Grade 12 (also known as Matric in Southern Africa) than the other grades as learners need a thirteen-digit identification number to sit for the national exams. Yet asylum seekers do not possess an ID consistent with the national requirements. As a result, children with

no appropriate documentation are at risk of not being allowed to sit for the exam. In an interview, an NGO official explained the Grade 12 examination challenges for asylum seekers.

There might be issues there because the only thing you will have is the asylum seekers' permit, of which the number is a mixture of letters and numbers, so that means it does not conform to thirteen ID digits. There is a possibility that you will not be able to write Matric given that you do not have a thirteen-digit ID barcode, be it South African or refugee ID. That is another barrier to at least finish your high school if you are an asylum seeker (Interview, Pretoria, March 2017). Some children can access UNHCR and its legal partners for intervention and obtain special concessions to sit for the exam. But for most asylum-seeking children, the absence of a harmonized practice means that they are at risk of not completing their secondary education. This barrier to education fortifies exclusion in a country that rejects a significant portion of asylum applicants.

South Africa's education policy demands all children within the Republic have access to education without discrimination based on race, national origin, and other cleavages such as sexuality and disability. The lived reality is very different. Mandating documentation results in a disparate impact for a community that otherwise should be protected from discrimination. Students without proper birth certificates or status documents are particularly subject to school expulsion. Separated and unaccompanied children, who lack adequate parental or guardian support, are particularly vulnerable. Unlike primary and secondary education that utilizes a means test to allow children from impoverished households to attend schools for free, pre-primary education is outside the public education system. In interviews conducted at the Scalabrini Centre, officials echoed the frustrations that parents and children experienced because of unrecognized, expired, or nonexistent documentation. The quagmire of asylum living in this context makes it difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to achieve academic milestones.

Documentation is a significant challenge at all levels of education, particularly for post-secondary education where institutions of higher learning stringently demand valid documentation. At the tertiary level, documentation becomes a notable barrier to both admission and funding for asylum seekers. Institutions of higher education are reluctant to register students without recognized refugee status. Moreover, the limited scholarships provided to students from forcibly displaced communities require that potential applicants be recognized refugees. Thus, asylum-seeking students, who may have

lived in the country for ten years or more, whose grades meet the standard for university entrance, must overcome significant challenges to further their studies. Even for recognized refugees, limited funding under the UNHCR Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Scholarship (DAFI) means that only a few may have the opportunity to get funding. An education official explained in an interview the predicament of asylum seekers and refugees pursuing higher education thus:

On average, it will cost you at least thirty thousand rand to study at a decent institution like the University of Pretoria. Moreover, given that you do not have any assets which you can leverage to sort of get a loan from the bank or anything like that or the fact that you are a refugee, you are automatically disqualified from the domestic National Student Financial Aid Scheme or similar programs. So, it is challenging as there are zero opportunities to further your studies. So, the DAFI scholarship program makes a fundamental difference. (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018). However, this support is only available to a small percentage of students, so those without a scholarship need to find job, which tend to minimum wage jobs. The education official explained the challenge of finding employment in a high unemployment market.

Even if you do get a chance to find a job you will find that you end up at the lower end of the spectrum, maybe working a retail job—which you know after paying your rent and buying groceries and making other monthly commitments is not enough to even study at the cheapest institution which you can find, which is the University of South Africa, which is part-time studies.

Refugees and asylum seekers must navigate these financial impediments to tertiary education. In the end, refugee leadership, UNHCR, and their partners need to intervene by lobbying schools and universities to allow children with asylum permits to sit for the final exam or access higher institutions; however, the potential for students to fall between the cracks is significant.

Similar discrimination based on status and documentation is also evident in the health care sector. While health provision to non-nationals at present has been the least problematic of state services, xenophobic attitudes, coupled with documentation challenges, become impediments to health care. One interview subject, a young refugee man, gave this account of his experience in accessing health care services:

Some of them [health officials] have never seen a Section 23 before. You know it could be their first time encountering a refugee. Moreover, it is an A4-page document that looks unofficial, and an average South Africa may doubt its validity. So, when you present it, they sometimes think it is homemade (Interview, Cape Town, October 2017).

The lack of documentation or expired documentation also compels refugees to forfeit treatment in fear

of access denial. Access to health facilities can present a minefield of challenges for displaced communities. Refugees have highlighted the obnoxious behavior of health practitioners. Discrimination at health facilities takes shape in the form of service providers expressing xenophobic sentiments. These sentiments include comments implying refugees and asylum seekers abuse state resources. Refugee women in interviews with me related stories of nurses saying such things as “foreigners like to give birth” or “Why are you crying? Did I make you pregnant?” Such attitudes are tied to identity discourses of an unwanted “them” expressed by people fully aware that there will be no repercussions for abusive words. Indeed, this insensitivity, discriminatory behaviour, and abuse of power on the part of health care providers contradict their duty to provide care and have created conditions that have resulted in death. In one instance, a Burundian interview subject disclosed that her mistreatment by health care workers resulted in the death of her newborn child.

These health care worker’s practices intersect with the tensions between nationals and migrants arising from delayed access to health services. Chronic queues with long wait times are a source of frustration for both refugees and locals. Long queues further result in scapegoating refugees and migrants for an inefficient bureaucratic process and ineffective health governance, rendering visible how health care professionals and citizens attitudes impact refugees and migrants. Health professionals reported in interviews that when they are engaging with refugees, language barriers and a lack of adequate identifying documentation complicates the provision of care. So too do citizens’ “attitude of entitlement.” Despite the initial hiccups with the necessary documentation to access health services, most refugees and asylum seekers expressed that South Africa’s health services are one of the few spaces where health care workers render services without significant discrimination compared to other sectors such as education and refugee status determination.

The health care sector is incidentally one area where refugee health professionals are easily absorbed. A UNHCR official explained that unlike in other sectors, the health industry has been opened to recruiting refugee nurses.

The only area I have come across that people have been able to find employment in has been nursing. Funny enough. The only people I have ever known who got their South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] qualification and get to work as asylum seekers or even a refugee is the nursing profession. I have met one or two refugees working in the nursing field—any other field, not really (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

One thing clearly emerges from examining refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences accessing education and health care: private individuals and government officials have limited knowledge of the different categories of migrants fall into, and the resulting forms of documentation that attach to those categories. Overall, South Africans, both private individuals and government officials, seem to have limited knowledge of the rights of different categories of migrants and the distinctions between official documents among these categories. This limited knowledge further reinforces xenophobic attitudes and creates environments conducive to discrimination and exclusion. At the same time, it encourages refugees and asylum seekers to distrust government officials. That distrust prevents refugees and asylum seekers from lodging complaints about discrimination, corruption, and demands for bribes—when they know where to make those complaints in the first place.

Through the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), the government provides social grants for South African citizens, permanent residents, and refugees (SASSA, 2020). The grants cover older persons, persons with disabilities, foster children, care-dependent children, children between seven and eighteen years of age, and allows temporary social relief for persons in distress. However, a UNHCR staff member revealed in an interview that only recently did the “agency took time to make amendments to its database to accommodate the specificities of refugee ID and thus enable refugees to be registered.” Even when registered, refugees face discrimination and documentation challenges when trying to access these grants. Social grant officials may inform them that they do not qualify. At times, such challenges arise when poorly informed officials are confused by the difference between a person of refugee status and other migrants or are unaware that some refugees qualify and thus have a legal right to receive social grants. Moreover, the prolonged asylum process inhibits asylum seekers from potentially benefiting from social assistance grants even when their circumstances are dire. This inherent instability of the asylum process is what scholars such as Banki (2013, 454) refer to as the “tightrope-

like nature” of precarious life, a state of “not quite, not yet.”

The impact of the assembling refugee exclusion on refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa is most evident in the physical security dimension. Law enforcement personnel may fail to inform refugees and asylum seekers in conflict with the law of their right to remain silent, the consequences of non-compliance, and their right to legal representation under Section 34 of the Constitution. Discriminatory practices, such as xenophobic comments, are made evident in many ways. Vernacular dialects, unknown to refugees and migrants, may be used to explain critical information. Section 4.3.2 will come back to the question of language and how citizens wield it to further marginalize migrant communities.

Such exclusionary practices occur within a context of prolonged detention, extortion, bribery, and rampant corruption. Undocumented persons and asylum seekers in-between documentation are at greater risk as they may face indefinite detention, unlawful prosecution, and unreported xenophobic violence. Generally, refugees and asylum seekers are defenseless against law enforcement and immigration officials. A refugee leader explained the quandary:

It is not easy to work with the police here. However, I try to know the police in my area so officers can help my community members or me when there are problems. Police generally do not like helping refugees. They would speak to you in their local language even when they know you do not understand. If you tell them to speak in English, they will tell you to go back to your country and are not welcome in South Africa. Police are generally hostile and easily corrupted with cash, and if you do not want to give them money, they refuse to help even though they must do so (Interview, Cape Town, December 2017).

Most research participants cited feeling threatened by law enforcement and perceived the police as hostile toward refugees and migrants. This perception is rooted in an experience where state security officials’ interests and perspectives merge with the antagonistic host society to the detriment of refugees and asylum seekers. Again, the confluence of state and non-state actors in discriminatory practices is the bedrock of nationalistic politics and xenophobic violence, dynamics that are rooted in a xenophobic citizenship agenda.

Beyond social services and security, non-recognition of asylum and refugee documentation has more profound effects on livelihoods. Employers in the formal market tend not to recognize the asylum-

seeker and refugee documentation or the accompanying right to work. One NGO manager and refugee bemoaned his experience in the private sector:

Throughout my career, I did apply to RMB [Rand Merchant Bank], which is an investment bank, and they were impressed with everything. However, then, when it came to the fact that I was a refugee and they want a work permit, that sort of disqualified me. Even though it clearly states on the permit that you can enjoy socio-economic rights, the right to study and to work, like a South African would. I do not know if it is an issue of miscommunication or ignorance, but Section 24 [refugee status] is hardly recognized (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

This scenario is further expounded by a UNHCR official who explained the disconnect between the

Refugee Act authorization of the right to work and the actual experiences that asylum seekers face in accessing employment.

The asylum seekers' status does allow a person in South Africa to work. It allows them to work and study in theory. It is part of the government policy that they can work and study; it says that on the permit. However, when a refugee does try—even if they have qualifications, a degree in economics—to approach a company in South Africa. It is difficult. It is not clear where the confusion comes from; it is Home Affairs itself, or whether it is just companies who are not informed on what the document allows. Maybe they just afraid of sort of backlash from government, I am not sure (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

Further complicating access to the formal employment market is the arbitrary way non-South African

qualifications are assessed and verified. The same UNHCR official explained the challenges of getting a qualification verified by the SAQA.

Getting the SAQA accreditation for their qualification is a nightmare. It can take two or three years. So, the rejection of applicants can be arbitrary, you know. They will just find a reason. Alternatively, they will say, no, you need to do a South African degree or whatever reason they give. Therefore, making it complicated. Without the SAQA you cannot work, because the companies will first ask you, “where is your SAQA accreditation?” To say your qualification is the equivalent of a South African qualification is not sufficient (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

Accreditation processes are standard administrative checks and balances in many countries. Yet in South Africa, pervasive xenophobic attitudes permeate the prolonged process and are compounded by seemingly arbitrary decisions. This contributes to refugees' and asylum seekers' experience of differential inclusion. Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) correlate the differential inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in employment opportunities with a tripartite relationship between labour, mobility, and security; a relationship that, as part of the sovereignty machine, functions through citizenship. In other words, the refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences in the private sector are regulated and

underpinned by notions of citizenship and non-citizenship, reinforcing the power differentials between refugee workers and employers.

Consequently, being barred from employment in the formal market forces most refugees and asylum seekers into the informal market, which is unregulated (Crush et al., 2017). Unregulated and precarious employment can reveal the refugees' capability to creatively circumvent the barriers they encounter. For example, some asylum seekers and refugees employed in the security industry do so with a fraudulent security certification or using the identity of a friend or acquaintance who has legal ID. One male security guard explained his experience in the industry, stating: "I had to work with my friend's name because he had the documents that allowed him to work. I think the employer knew what was happening, but he did not care because I would work long hours for little money." Even if refugees and asylum seekers want to pursue security industry certification allowing them access to these jobs, status, and lack of documentation hampers access to training and accreditation.

Due to the barriers in the formal market, many refugees have resorted to self-employment. Some, often male Somali refugees, have opened small shops that market and sell essential items and necessities in townships and city centres. Others, typically male Congolese and Burundian refugees, serve as informal parking security guards. For still others, such as mainly female Congolese refugees, working as hairdressers in hair salons has provided a means of accessing employment. Asylum seekers face even more significant challenges in establishing a business. An asylum seeker expressed his frustration with this restriction: "Even business, you cannot open a small company with asylum documents. You cannot register a business with asylum documents. You can only do informal business. You cannot do anything legal." The refugee reality in South Africa renders the lives of urban refugees precarious, impairs the right to human dignity, and leaves them destitute.

Apart from the bureaucratic practices creating documentation challenges, the culture of corruption and bribery within the status-determination and documentation processes and law enforcement, while not state-sanctioned, is tolerated. I argue this culture is necessary in assembling

refugee exclusion as it forms a significant part of the state's exclusionary logic and producing a reinforcing refugee exclusion. Asylum seekers and refugees frequently encounter service providers who demand bribes to provide documents or access to refugee reception centres or social services. Nor is it uncommon for refugees to have their documents confiscated or destroyed by police officers and migration officials (FIDH, 2008) if they are unable to pay a bribe. One Somali woman explained her experience: "I always need to have cash on me if I need to give it to the police or immigration officers when I am threatened with arrest and detention. I sometimes do not have money, and this makes things difficult." These forms of abuse strain refugees' limited financial resources, exacerbate their vulnerability, particularly of women and girls, and cultivate a culture of unfairness, corruption, and discrimination.

Due to their vulnerable position, refugees and asylum seekers do not report these abuses, fearing that authorities might not address their claims or that reported officials would utilize their power to retaliate, whether through withholding documentation or obstructing their asylum applications. As a result, refugees and asylum seekers suffer in silence, as reporting these concerns to UNHCR and other NGO actors does not yield favorable outcomes. Overall, the documentation and social obstacles refugees and asylum seekers face within this context have both legal and social implications in their day-to-day lives. They experience discrimination based on language, status, and nationality, factors that hinder integration and social cohesion, and limit access to services.

3.4. Acts of contesting refugee exclusion: Challenging a xenophobic citizenship agenda

Critical citizenship and migration scholars have explored how migrants, regardless of status, have reaffirmed their presence and rejected exclusionary discourses and actions in host societies. Scholars have focused on this substantive citizenship to expose the various forms of activism that non-citizens espouse to question territorial, legal, and cultural boundedness. Indeed, even in extremely subordinate positions, refugees and asylum seekers exercise social, economic, legal, and political agency. Their

political agency is usually recognized through forms of activism, including embodied resistance in the public domain (Gabiam and Fiddian-Qasmiye 2017, Mensink 2020). McNevin (2009, p.165) develops her concept of ‘contesting citizenship,’ focusing on the political activism of irregular migrants. This contestation of citizenship, McNevin (2009, p.163) enlightens, is made visible through the ways irregular migrants have “mobilized, marched, occupied buildings, rioted, gone on strike, petitioned, blogged, written manifestos, and generally brought attention to their long-term presence in the state where they live with the constant threat of deportation.” Isin and Nielson (2008) elucidate how non-citizens, through various sites and scales, enact themselves as subjects of the state using rituals and customs norms, habits, and routines. However, the case of South Africa presents an interesting case where non-citizens need to assert presence, enact themselves as a subject of the state while contesting exclusion from host communities. The ability to enact oneself as a subject of the state, as legitimately present in the territory, while that legitimacy is being questioned by a combination of state and non-state actors presents a unique form of resistance and exercise of agency. Drawing on this scholarship that focuses on contesting citizenship yet asserting subjecthood, I explore how refugees and asylum in this context assert their belonging and push against exclusionary state and non-state politics. I focus on the embodied, performative language and tactics refugees and asylum seekers use to challenge discrimination, exclusion, and expulsion, what I refer to as acts of contesting refugee exclusion. These acts can be a combination of political, legal, economic, and social agency.

3.4.1 Legal Agency: Knocking on the Judiciary

Refugee activism focusing on rights claiming moves beyond politically visible public acts such as protesting to leverage the power of the law through courts. This form of legal agency draws on existing frameworks of international human rights, and the legal frameworks of the host states, refugees and migrants assert the legitimacy of presence through the law.

An independent, fair judiciary is a core principle of the rule of law, central to the functioning of democratic societies and critical to preserving public trust and confidence in the institutions of justice.

The courts in South Africa have played a pivotal role in establishing and enforcing national and international laws to protect forcibly displaced communities. Refugees and asylum seekers have relied on the courts to leverage their independent powers against exclusionary state practices. Case law demonstrates this form of fearless agency. In the case of AI and others vs the Department of Home Affairs, three undocumented doughty Burundian asylum seekers lodged an urgent application to the High Court of South Africa (Western Cape Division) on the 27 May 2019 to compel the DHA to provide them with permits in terms of section 22 of the Refugees Act, 130 of 1998 while their second application for asylum as refugees *sur place* is being considered. The asylum seekers, who arrived in South Africa between 2006 -2012, claimed asylum and got rejected in 2014, claimed that in 2015 political circumstances in Burundi changed for the worse and thus, it is not safe for them to return. However, the DHA maintained the view that “a failed asylum seeker who has not departed the Republic after he/she was rejected must be deported.... Those who return from their countries and wish to apply are free to apply at any Refugee Centre accepting newcomers.” The DHA effectively closed the door for section 23 permit application and hampered any possibility of obtaining or extending expired asylum documentation.

Asylum seekers who do not have section 23 permits are effectively undocumented, illegal foreigners, and subject to the range of vulnerabilities that lack of documentation creates, such as the risk of arrest and deportation. Moreover, as the asylum seekers stipulated in their court application: they are “unable to secure accommodation, unable to obtain jobs to provide for themselves and their families and that they may at any time be arrested, detained and/or deported.” Legally supported by the UNHCR funded University of Cape Town Refugee Rights Clinic, the court, among other rulings, ruled that:

The applicants have shown that they will suffer harm if the interim relief [of an asylum seekers permit] is not granted. They will not be able to work unless they are employed on an illegal basis and will, at the very least, face resistance should they try and enrol their children at school. They will find it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain medical attention at a state hospital (AI and others vs the Department of Home Affairs).

Overall, the court ruled in favour of the asylum seekers and ordered the DHA to accept the applicants’ application for asylum and grant them asylum seekers permits in the interim “until appropriate

proceedings for refugee status determination have been completed.”

This form of interim relief to ensure that a belligerent state grants asylum seekers documents to remain lawfully in the country is common. However, refugee office managers have on many occasions refused to adhere to court orders, frustrating asylum seekers and their legal representatives. In the case of *Tshiyombo v. The Members of the Appeal Board et al.*, we witness an example of the strategic incompetency and deliberate disregard of court orders that the Department of Home Affairs exercises. Beyond refusing to confer the required documentation to asylum seekers, the Department fails to comply with supplying refugee legal representatives and the courts with refugees’ files necessary for court proceedings. Acknowledging this contemptuous behaviour and the difficulties it presents in this case, Hon. Justice Binns-Ward cited frustration that the Judge in the case of *Bozalek J in Katshingu v. Chairperson of Standing Committee for Refugees Affairs and Others* [2011] ZAWCHC 480 (2 November 2011) shared. He reflected:

Set down at the same time as this [review] application was a related application for contempt arising out of the respondents’ failure to furnish the record of proceedings timeously in terms of Rule of Court 53. Those proceedings have, however, been postponed. The main application was launched in early September 2010. Notwithstanding this and the respondents’ ongoing opposition, by the time the matter was argued on 25 October 2011, the respondents had failed to file any heads of argument or any opposing affidavits, with the result that the issues fall to be determined on the applicant’s version alone (*Bozalek J in Katshingu v Chairperson of Standing Committee for Refugees Affairs and Others*).

The exclusionary logic of state practices emphasizes prioritizing immigration law over refugee law to render perceived bogus asylum seekers deportable. In the case of *Ruta v. DHA and AI and others v. the Director of asylum seeker management at the Department of Home Affairs*, the courts emphasized the need to interpret these legal provisions in harmony. In *Ruta*, His Lordship Constitutional Court Justice Cameron, referencing the principled provisions of the refugee act as it relates to the reception and management of asylum seeker applications, emphasized that:

The provisions of the Immigration Act must thus be read together with and in harmony with those of the Refugees Act. This can readily be done. Though an asylum seeker who is in the country unlawfully is an ‘illegal foreigner’ under the Immigration Act and liable to deportation, the specific provisions of the Refugees Act intercede to provide imperatively that, notwithstanding that status, his or her claim to asylum must first be processed under the Refugees Act (*Ruta v. DHA and AI and others v. the Director of asylum seeker management at*

the Department of Home Affairs).

With a robust judicial system, the court system has often been referred to as the last frontier in refugee protection as it has significantly pushed back against the state and its restrictive policies or restrictive interpretation of policies.

In the case of *Armand v. Refugee Appeal Board*, the courts landed one of the most significant blows in an individual against the refugee status determination and appeal system. Applying the exceptional substitution relief section 6 of the Promotion of the Administrative Justice Act 3 of 2000 (PAJA), Acting Judge Holderness delivered an extraordinary judgement on 28 February 2017 reviewed and set aside a decision by the Refugee Status Determination and Appeals Board that rejected an application for refugee status and asylum. Mwamba Mununga Armand, an asylum seeker from the eastern DRC, first sought asylum on 2 February 2009 citing persecution — unlawful arrest and detention for indeterminate time— in the DRC by militia and government forces in Goma. On 17 May 2011, an RSDO interviewed Armand without an interpreter, even though he lacked proficiency in English, and rejected his application. With the assistance of the UCT Law Clinic, Armand appealed against the RSDO’s decision with the Refugee Appeals Board. While the Appeal Board must consist of three members to decide on a case, only one member reviewed the case, dismissing the appeal on 5 June 2015.

Exercising significant agency, Armand launched a case against the refugee appeal board and others on merits of administrative justice, requesting a court “order substituting the impugned administrative decision with one by the court declaring him to be a refugee and granting him asylum in South Africa, as contemplated by section 3 of the Refugees Act 130 of 1998(‘the Refugee Act’). Evaluating the merit of the case as it relates to the procedural practice, Acting Judge Holderness noted that the asylum seeker did not “receive the required support and assistance when he first applied for asylum in 2009” as procedures were not explained to him, not advised of his rights, not provided interpretation. The Judge, appalled by the behaviour of the RAB in rejecting the applicant’s version of events out of hand as being ‘implausible,’ cited the iniquitous nature of the board, which consisted of a

single member, and the disregard of the “objective facts about the applicant’s country of origin.” As a result, the Judge, further dismayed by the prolonged duration between the first application of asylum and the outcome of the appeal decision on 11 May 2015, six and half years later, set aside the RAB’s decision. What is even more significant about this case is the recognition by South African courts of the discriminatory, lackadaisical attitude that refugee status determination officers (RSDO) and RAB officials espouse in reviewing asylum applications. The Acting Judge stated:

Regarding the appeal findings, it is apparent from the numerous reported and unreported decisions involving judicial reviews in refugee matters that all too often, the approach by the relevant decision-makers is skeptical and cynical, and that, rather than giving applications the benefit of the doubt in the absence of good reasons not to do so, the evidence given is frequently rejected, even though there were no facts to controvert it (*Armand vs Refugee Appeal Board*). This permeative attitude, judges have acknowledged, becomes an impediment for RSDO and RAB officials to properly apply their mind, apply the benefit of doubt generously in determining qualifying criteria to the refugee definition, and take an inquisitorial position that assesses objective and subjective to ascertain the merits of the case.

There is a plethora of cases brought to the court to defend refugee rights. These examples show how refugees employ established structures to challenge the securitization of forced migration. In essence, refugees leverage NGO legal knowledge and capacity to challenge the DHA in court. This form of political agency demonstrates the paradoxical capacities of asylum seekers to raise awareness of individual and shared grievances and injustices established state structures yet remaining vulnerable to the same political system.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the experiences of persons with various gradations of status—refugees and asylum seekers—to tease out how the confluence of restrictive policies and aberrational practices rooted in the citizenship agenda of states and non-state actors shape their existence. It underscored the conflicting nature and disjunction within South Africa’s legal framework in providing progressive protection in writing while creating precarious status and exclusionary conditions in practice. It emphasized how the state’s progressive ideals are seldom enacted by officials entrusted with the

mandate for refugee protection and service delivery. Specifically, it explored the role of bureaucratic state actors in rendering refugees' lived experiences vulnerable and unpredictable through undependable service delivery and frightening everyday encounters. I contend that these practices are not only embedded in state control and bordering logic but are rooted in broader societal exclusionary ideations. These ideations permeate bureaucratic state practices that have been co-opted by and are influenced by ordinary citizens. Within this milieu of socio-economic inequality, high rates of unemployment, and governance failures, refugees and asylum seekers become the target of scapegoating and blame.

This chapter has contributed empirically to the theoretical arguments advanced by critical citizenship and migration scholars with respect to how institutional practices are instrumental in creating blurred boundaries between exclusion and inclusion. I have shown that state espousing a citizenship agenda embolden civil society to perpetuate exclusion against refugees and asylum seekers. Institutional state practices, as part of society, interconnect and co-function with other actors in this broader assemblage that advances the perception that refugees and migrants' presence is a threat to the nation's collective imagination.

In tracing the outlines of this empirical case, I have drawn attention to the contingent and contextual nature of citizenship by revealing how refugee presence serves as an organizing and reinforcing force for action in diverse areas of security, documentation, and status. At the governance level, I argued that assembling refugee exclusion functions in two ways. First, the state produces exclusion through refugee status determination practices of policy implementation that are extra-legal, discriminatory, and inconsistent. These unscrupulous actions create precarious status and serve to dissuade potential asylum seekers and maintain conditions of perilous existence for refugee communities. These practices infiltrate other areas of service provision, such as health care and education. Second, through recent policy reforms, the state—emboldened by societal actions—subjugates refugees and asylum seekers and excludes them from meaningfully engaging in the marketplace. Significantly, while this thesis acknowledges the dominance of the state in refugee

governance, it underscores the importance of the multiplicity of actors that interact in complex ways to reinforce and exacerbate vulnerability, precarity, and uncertainty among displaced communities. I have argued here that attention to the relations among actors, as opposed to individual actors' actions, is paramount in understanding refugee experiences.

Chapter 4: Assembling Urban Spaces: Rhetoric of violence in South Africa's Everyday

This chapter examines how diverse actors construct and employ language to territorialize urban everyday spaces to scapegoat, exclude, and expel refugees and asylum seekers from social, economic, and geographic dimensions. Understanding how exclusionary actors use language to mark refugee presences in everyday spaces is critical for developing integration, refugee governance, and migration theories, practices, and policies. Without investigating how these cumulative forces discursively produce an unwanted "other" in everyday spaces, migration researchers and practitioners cannot adequately account for the multifaceted actors, factors, and processes that condition refugee experiences. Tracing the composite actors, factors, and processes reveals how the combination of state officials' rhetoric, everyday citizens' dialogue, and media discourse construct exclusionary language that conditions and influences the country's perception of refugees and asylum seekers. Researchers need to refine their interpretations of the conditions that shape refugee living by highlighting how exclusion occurs through language constructed in quotidian materialities.

This study set out to investigate how heterogeneous actors instrumentalize and weaponize discourses of citizenship, nativism, nationalism, and other forms of belonging to produce otherness. I, therefore, focus on the discursive practices of members of society, examining with how society as a whole and citizens individually or as a group perceive and assume their roles as citizens with a "voice" and a degree of agency, especially in relation to the presence of refugees and asylum seekers. In doing so, I pose two interconnected questions. First, how do citizens (through omission or commission) participate in the construction and subsequent repression, oppression, or exclusion of a collective other? Second, how do the media, community members, and political actors emphasise differences to incite violence? Through what I term "assembling urban spaces", I demonstrate how heterogeneous, relational actors employ the power of language as a rhetorical and affective mode to categorize, vilify, and objectify refugees and asylum seekers, making them legible to violence and exclusion. By focusing on

the daily lives of refugees and asylum seekers in urban centres, I show how non-state actors, emboldened and co-opted by the state, use the rhetoric of violence to identify, demonise, and discriminate against refugees and asylum seekers, making them susceptible to restrictive policies, collective bordering practises, and violent expulsion. I contend that it is in this process of assembling urban spaces where derogatory language, exclusionary political pronouncements, and rabble-rousing media discourses are affectively constructed to blame and scapegoat refugees and asylum seekers for the ills in society. Prior to and during enforced exclusion, language serves as a strategy for naming, instituting, and dehumanising. This dissertation demonstrates that urban centres are valuable ethnographic sites for capturing not only what refugees are excluded from through legal citizenship processes (see chapter 3), but also how exclusion through language manifests in everyday spatial practises.

The chapter begins by laying a contextual foundation to understand linguistic practises around migration in South Africa's urban spaces. The discussion will then turn to how human geographers and migration scholars have used the concept of space to make sense of the complexities of sociolinguistic processes, structures, and phenomena to illuminate refugees' subjectivities, collectivities, and dependencies across economic, political, social, and cultural dynamics. Employing assemblage thinking while drawing from and contributing to critical citizenship and migration scholarship, I developed the concept of assembling urban spaces to consider those moments when heterogenous, relational actors converge be it provisionally to spatially mark and discursively other refugees in everyday spaces. Assembling urban spaces reveals how diverse actors in shared space use language to invoke notions of citizenship and identity to make claims and determinations about national and linguistic belonging, resource entitlement, and opportunity offerings.

The following section (4.2) looks at how actors use language to construct the "other" in space with grave consequences for mundane activities like walking, shopping, and going to work terrifying for forcibly displaced communities. I also consider the consequences of the subsequent social

marginalisation and demonization of refugee presence. I argue that refugee experiences of discrimination, enacted through assembling refugee exclusion, exist along a continuum that begins with xenophobic rhetoric, questioning, targeting, and discrimination and progresses to delegitimizing bodies perceived to be out-of-place, a forceful rapturing of refugee existence, and a quest to expel them by any means necessary, including the use of violence and force. There is indeed increasing concern that the bellicose nature of citizens, emboldened by state actors and traditional leaders, has time and again resulted in an outburst of violence that leaves refugees and migrants disadvantaged. The state's unwillingness or inability to effectively address xenophobia exacerbates the threat of violence for marginalised migrant communities. There is an urgent need to find solutions to these prevailing conditions that emphasize difference through language as problematic.

Despite these circumstances, refugees are not passive entities; rather, as section 4.3 demonstrates, they are assertive and resilient actors who respond to exclusionary rhetoric uttered in space in everyday spaces. To illuminate these acts of agency, I consider the forms of social and economic agency that refugees enact.

4.1 Constructing the Other in everyday language

Urban South Africa is riddled with historically rooted contradictions and complexities in the sociopolitical, economic, spatial, and cultural domains that have colossal contemporary ramifications. With a population of over 60 million people (2021), of which an estimated 40 million majority are urban residents (World Bank 2022b), contemporary South Africa's urban sprawl is beset with expanding informal settlements, alarming criminality, rampant violence, and escalating water crisis with associated increasing demand for sanitation infrastructures. Due to rising social inequality and persistent economic disparities, in part due to forces of globalization and pervasive corruption among the political elite, most South Africans are far removed from the hoped-for economic rewards of the hard-won 1994 independence. With unemployment rates of 61.4 % among the youth (aged 15-24 years) and 33.9% national average during the second quarter of 2022 (Statistics South Africa 2022), significant number of

urbanites grapple with rising inflation, inadequate housing, and food insecurity. Conversely, profits from the continued monopolization of land, the mining sector, and tourism industries benefit the political elite and the offspring of historically advantaged white minorities, concentrating resources among a few and grinding down egalitarian proclivities and reform programs. South Africa's economic environment boasts heightened inequality rooted in historical precedents coupled with systemic corruption and pervasive criminal activity. It has left many disenfranchised, destitute, and desperate. A deadly trio that generates fertile conditions for scapegoating through boisterous language.

As Africa's most developed and industrialized country, South Africa's urban centres attract internal migrants from rural areas and international economic and labour migrants and refugees and asylum seekers from the Southern African region and beyond, creating vibrant linguistic and cultural diversity. However, the movement of people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, coupled with a pervasive and long-standing social inequality and friction, has produced opportunities for hostility and tension. Impoverished South African citizens perceiving refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants as an economic and social threat and competition within a space that lacks economic capaciousness employ discriminatory language to express their frustration and distaste of migrant presence. The tendency has been to utilize rhetoric of violence and brutal violence to refugee and migrant populations, specifically those from other African countries.

Xenophobic discourses, attitudes, discrimination, and violence have become prevalent in South Africa's landscape. While the state passively condemns violence, it has not adequately punished or publicly brought perpetrators of violence to justice: a situation that raises questions about the complicity of state bureaucracies in xenophobic violence. Specifically, has the state subtly co-opted citizens and the media into the exclusionary logic of the nation? Citizens, refugees and other asylum seekers, the media, the state, and other non-state actors converge in these urban spaces: they interact and clash here. The interactions produce social construction of refugees that vilify, disparage, and condemn their presence.

This social construction of migrants highlights some of the insights human geographers and

migration scholars developed. They have sought to understand how individual and collective decisions are influenced by and affect the societal structures and institutions that shape refugee and migrant experiences. As stated earlier in Chapter 2 (section 2.3), space in the social sciences is often understood through its relational nature rather than in the absolute view that emphasizes “things passively embedded” (Thrift, 2009, p. 86). Through this lens of relations and encounters, migration scholars have put forth various understandings of space to make sense of the multiple co-productions in migration processes occurring at different spatial scales, including linguistic constructions. They have centred their analysis on everyday encounters and relations to elucidate how authorities’ and local officials’ organized practices and mentalities, rationalities, and techniques intersect with refugees’ and asylum seekers’ subjectivities. Hepworth (2014), through an analysis of the experiences of Senegalese traders, Romanian Roma, and undocumented Latin American caregivers, alerts us to the critical role presence plays in the governance of migration. Hepworth defines the “the nature of the encounter” as a “constitutive event in which bodies are deemed in-or-out-of-place; those moments when active agents construct others as illegitimately present (2014, pp. 1–2). Building on the concept of irregularity defined by Squire (2011) as the “political condition that is experienced and enacted in heterogeneous ways through divergent struggles that cross between migration and control” (p. 9), Hepworth prioritizes presence. It is through “presence” that these populations are constituted “as ‘illegitimate outsiders’ in the nation” and “ascribed different degrees of legitimacy” (2014, p. 2), regardless of their legal status. Problematized presence, therefore, refers to this “irregularization as those processes whereby one’s presence within the nation is questioned or rendered illegitimate” (p. 4). As opposed to status, it is this focus on presence that I find useful to elucidate how refugees and asylum seekers are discursively constructed as illegitimately present in urban South Africa.

Other scholars have built on the concept of irregularized presence to provide valuable insights into how state actors question, target, and problematize refugee and migrant presence and the implications of this questioning and targeting. As stated earlier, Connoy (2018) considers the challenges

refugee claimants experience in Toronto's health care spaces. Building on Hepworth's (2014) work on irregularization, she teases out the irregularization process where refugees and asylum seekers are considered "abnormal, out of place, or otherwise irregular, regardless of legal status" (2018, p. 11). This process, she argues, occurs "through targeting and questioning of presence." By presence, she means "being here, or one's concrete locality within and occupation of space." The ultimate objective of this problematized presence or irregularization, Conroy (2018) clarifies, serves as a "positioning" or "standing" that confers a hierarchical ranking of greater or fewer privileges and rights. This classification has significant consequences for refugees and asylum seekers whose social status tends to fall low on this arbitrary scale.

By considering the implications of how refugees are targeted, and their presence questioned, we come to understand the interlinkages between rights and presence. For Rygiel (2011, pp. 13–14), problematizing presence serves to interrupt rights and claims to them because presence is associated with recognition and rights. Rygiel (2011, p. 14) argues that this "questioning of presence" has two objectives. First, it "serves an instrumental tactic of avoiding conferring rights." Second, it destabilizes and hinders the "association, recognition, status, and rights that come with being of the city" (p. 14). The consequences of denying rights or obstructing access to their benefits disrupt and hinder relationships, shaping refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences in the everyday. Moreover, I argue that the questioning and targeting processes move beyond state authorities to include non-state actors, an inclusion made possible by labelling and framing refugees and asylum seekers in everyday language.

The work done on the problematized presence and spatial constructions serves as the foundation for understanding the complex interactions within and across the social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics that shape refugee experiences in South Africa. However, the scholarship predominantly focuses on the role the state and bureaucratic actors play in irregularizing and problematizing presence in everyday spaces. While this scholarship shows how state practices transform quotidian spaces into places of immobility and exclusion through various governmentalities of obstruction, they give limited

attention to how elements encompassing society define and redefine exclusionary politics.

Understanding refugee experiences through my framework of assembling urban spaces moves beyond this state-centric approach to reveal how a multiplicity of actors, including the state, territorializes and lays claim to everyday space to problematize refugee presence, expel refugees, and blame them. I argue that these territorializing processes are articulated through cognitive and linguistic processes of categorizing, disparaging, and objectifying refugees and asylum seekers through derogatory language, political proclamations, and media discourses.

I employ the concept of assembling urban spaces to describe how actors utilize discursive power to cultivate “us” versus “them” distinctions. This construction of difference and rhetoric around otherness is at the heart of exclusion and expulsion. As Staszak (2008) points out, “otherness is due less to the difference of the Other than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the Other as such” (p. 1). This differentiation between us, who is the self, and them creates a “criterion that allows humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is defined by its faults, devalued and susceptible to discrimination.” Focusing on the experiences of Sudanese asylum seekers in Cairo, Egypt, Grabska (2006) shows how an assemblage of locals and authorities socially marginalizes this group by throwing racial slurs and creating conditions that lead to a deep sense of alienation. I use this understanding of the relations between space and othering to develop my concept of spaces of exclusion, making sense of the othering processes that an assemblage of actors in South Africa uses to shape the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. I find this ability to explain spatial heterogeneity in society through a lens of questioning presence through language useful as I consider how refugees are constructed in space.

4.2 Assembling urban spaces: Discursive Construction of the Other in Space

With the concept of assembling urban spaces, I draw from and contribute to the above-discussed

literature and scholarship that explicitly ties space dynamics to discursive practices. I consider how language is employed to construct categories of otherness that are instrumentalized for various gains, producing adverse effects for refugees and asylum seekers. I argue that multiple actors employ assembling refugee exclusion processes to achieve four objectives: to identify and name, to discriminate and exclude, to scapegoat and blame, and to expel or push out. These processes have significant emotional, psychological, and economic effects and are precursors to physical violence.

4.2.1 Naming and Identifying

In addition to the various legal and bureaucratic processes that shape the status of refugees and asylum seekers in public discourse, pejorative slurs such as "parasites," "disease agents," "illegal asylum seekers," "job-takers," "asylum-abusers," "criminals," and "makwerekwere" are used to construct otherness and express criticism, hostility, or disregard for African migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. Makwerekwere, which in its origin is an onomatopoeia that refers to the crackling sound of foreign Bantu languages to natives' undiscerning ears, now serves to homogenize and subsume all African refugees and asylum seekers under one foreign umbrella. Some South Africans express their dislike of having foreigners in their midst through such derogatory language, objectification, political proclamations, and media discourses. According to Matsinhe (2011), "the figure of Makwerekwere has been constructed and deployed in South Africa to render Africans from outside the borders orderable as the nation's bogeyman" (p. 295). This demonization of refugees and asylum seekers as a rejection of the African self is rooted in the history of colonial group relations. Matsinhe argues that the construction of the African other is an imprint of the historical racial divide between privileged whites and disenfranchised Africans, reconfigured as a "we-image" of South Africans against the rest of the continent. It gives rise to this socio-discursive construction around national identity and the national self. Through this national self, native South Africans frame others in derogatory terms that precede restrictive refugee and migration policies and cause intense, violent eruptions. Overall, the use of derogatory language serves two purposes. First, to make refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants

feel uneasy in physical (public and private) and emotional space, to force them to leave or, at the very least, to make their stay unpleasant. Second, to foster a sense of belonging within the group in relation to the outside, unwanted other, which would allow collection action against them to be taken.

Scholars of rituals have also made extensive use of the concepts of performative action and performativity, examining how rituals work performatively to have effects on the world. First described by philosopher John L. Austin in his renowned book "How to do things with words" (1962), performativity refers to the "process of subject formation, which creates that which it purports to describe and occurs through linguistic means as well as via other social practices" (Cavanaugh, 2015). Thus, performativity is the process of subject formation that produces that which it purports to describe and takes place through linguistic and other social practices. With assembling urban spaces, I argue that these practices of conjuring refugees and asylum seekers through language serve to shape the narrative around them as well as to performative aspects of multiple actors who serve exclusionary interests. The state has also used language to create and deepen divisions among residents, employing "us" versus "them" discourses. The state speaks of invasion, of bogus asylum seekers, and of abuse of the system to invoke a spectacle. In August 2022, a video of the Limpopo MEC for Health Phophi Ramathuba, whose interaction with a female patient at hospital posted on Twitter went viral, garnering both criticism and support for her actions (Maseko 2022). In the video clip, Ramathuba is seen at a female patient's bedside with a group of people behind her, launching into the rant when the patient says she speaks Shona (a Zimbabwean language).

You are killing my health system [...]. You are supposed to be with [Zimbabwean President Emmerson] Mnangagwa; you know he doesn't give me money to operate. And I'm operating with my limited budget. When you guys are sick, I'm hearing that you just say, let's cross the Limpopo River [border area between Zimbabwe and South Africa], there's an MEC there who's running a charity department (ZimLive 2022).

In assembling urban spaces, actors use derogatory language within spaces where they have an audience, as this example demonstrates, to create a scapegoating spectacle that refugees, asylum seekers, and other

migrants are responsible for various social and economic problems. Politicians and traditional authorities leverage exclusionary logic and performative language for political gain, increasing hate crimes and xenophobic violence against refugees and immigrants. The prevailing culture in the country is a huge departure from the language of inclusivity, unity, and acceptance that Nelson Mandela hoped for during the independence movement and articulated in the constitution. The aim of the current administration is clear: to portray fellow human beings fleeing misery, conflict, and war as hostile and dangerous threats to nation-building. Organizing and categorizing are vital to obtaining the buy-in of significant portions of society.

The state's failure to effectively admonish citizens as they continue to blame refugees and asylum seekers for societal ills signals consent. This failure to reprimand its citizens is manifested in three distinct ways. First, the state has rarely punished perpetrators for outbreaks of xenophobic violence, despite mounting pressure from internal and international human rights organizations. South Africa has witnessed displacement, looting, property destruction, injury, and death (sixty-two deaths in 2008, twelve in 2019). Second, it has taken nearly two decades for the draft National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance to be completed and finally adopted in March 2019. Third, the government has not established substantive mechanisms for justice or measures to respond adequately to the security apparatus's failure. As Akinola (2018) argues, the absence of political, economic, legal, and social mechanisms creates gaps in addressing the social ills that produce xenophobia. Thus, the normalization of xenophobic violence and discrimination has become an inadvertent state policy.

The government's narrative that refugees and asylum seekers are economic opportunists who exploit the country's generosity has been amplified by national broadcasters who uncritically reproduce these narratives without exploring who the asylum seekers are and what they have seen or endured. In

2011, a parliamentarian for the ruling African National Congress (ANC), Maggie Maunye, citing how Spain turned back refugees stated:

Really, this intake, for how long are we going to continue with this as South Africans? Is it not going to affect our resources, the economy of the country? [...] We've never enjoyed our freedom as South Africans. We got it in 1994 and we had floods and floods of refugees or undocumented people in the country, and we always want to play as if no there's nothing like that (news24 2011)

A divisive medium proliferates exclusion. In a society where exclusionary language is incisively weaponized to define belonging, the media has been part of the trenchant discourse that reproduces and bolsters animosity toward refugees and asylum seekers. How language is harnessed to achieve specific outcomes has been key to the debates around the media and migration, particularly those that reinforce "fear of the other" (Zembylas 2010). Media reporting, while couched in the language of neutrality and objectivity, tends to disseminate the idea that migrant populations are responsible for rising prostitution and criminality, unfettered unemployment, and ineffective public service delivery, reinforcing the "us" versus "them" chasms that are at the heart of rising tensions and xenophobia. Therefore, the media is part of the assemblage as it compounds existing pressures and legitimizes exclusionary actions. The press' inadvertent role in excluding marginalized populations raises critical questions about media accountability in a democratic society.

The media echoes and reinforces these portrayals of asylum seekers as criminals and homogenizes them as a unified group. For example, the same parliamentarian remark that "wrong people" were entering the country received significant media attention. She remarked.

"What are we saying about them? We let all these war criminals come to the country. When we are supposed to tell them to go back, we are told that we're violating human rights laws and all that" (News24 2011).

This homogenization demonizes a diverse group, leading to collective othering by bureaucrats and the broader population. Collins (1986, 2004) argues that relegating groups to the "other" category objectifies their existence and predisposes them to unfair, inhuman treatment. The portrayal of asylum seekers as

unwelcome, violent, and exploitative sets precedent for viewing them through a prism of difference, while South Africans, irrespective of violent xenophobic actions, are characterized as economically frustrated individuals. From a solution-based perspective, a UNHCR official stated in an interview that the organization needs to advocate extensively for and disseminate information that would hopefully change these attitudes. UNHCR must have more media campaigns in schools, in many forums—radio and television—to educate South Africans on the difference between economic asylum seekers and refugees. As this UNHCR official suggests, there is a need to engage the media to change the discourse. Currently, the assemblage of actors employs derogatory terms to disparage refugees and asylum seekers of African origin and construct them as less than human.

4.2.2 Discriminating and Excluding

Name-calling is only one-way language is used as a weapon. The rhetoric of violence is pervasive. In interviews, refugees and asylum seekers expressed how they are accosted and subjected to vulgar language in everyday spaces: on the street, in shopping centres, and on public transport. Typical comments include that they do not belong in South Africa and should leave or return to their home countries. This discriminatory language is also present in spaces of social service delivery and business. A male Burundian refugee expressed how accessing services is replete with linguistic challenges. He stated:

If you don't speak one of the local languages, that would be a major barrier. They wouldn't even take [you] seriously. If you speak English, then you are perceived to be a foreigner. Why should I even help him? You know it's a deep socio-cultural issue. I mean, I've encountered that. For instance, when I went to the Department of Home Affairs, I was expected to speak Zulu or [another local language] even though there is no requirement. If you would talk Zulu or another South African language, they would more or less assume that you know they are one of us. Even if you show the document [refugee documentation], they'll be much more lenient. So, there are also biases when it comes to the issue of languages (Interview, Cape Town, October 2017).

This use of language to decipher who is worthy of service demonstrates how language is used to penalize vulnerable groups seeking services and deny them a sense of belonging. The ability to speak local languages in official and unofficial spaces is instrumentalized to problematize presence. This problematization of presence is what Conroy (2018) defines as irregularization. Referring to the

Canadian context, Connoy argues that refugee populations, “through targeting and questioning,” by state actors are constituted “as abnormal, out of place, or otherwise irregular, regardless of legal status” (p. 11). This problematization of presence, as this detailed narrative demonstrates, is not only a product of state actors but is also enacted through everyday spatial processes involving disparate, relational actors ranging from service delivery officials to citizens, where these heterogeneous relational actors create a linguistic system that codes and stratifies to exclude through language.

Though English is an official language in South Africa, it is less preferred and often used interchangeably with local languages both in formal and informal spaces. While at least 35 native South African languages are spoken on an everyday basis, there are eleven official languages: Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, Zulu, Afrikaans, and English. Although English is regarded as the predominant language for official verbal communication, other languages are nevertheless frequently used.

Refugees must maneuver the terrains of eleven different non-English languages. Having come from French-, Swahili-, and Arabic-speaking countries, refugees and asylum seekers from the DRC, Burundi, and Somalia face the double burden of learning English, only to confront locals speaking to them in local tongues. In an interview, a UNHCR official shed light on the complexity of languages and exclusion.

They can't communicate. They come here [to South Africa] Burundians have never spoken English in their country. It is a French-speaking country. Here they learn English. They try to learn a language spoken by most (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

Even when asylum seekers have learned the local languages, their accents reveal their foreignness.

Discriminatory language plays a prominent role in shaping discourse, attitudes, and, ultimately, action. Hepworth (2014) refers to these moments as the “encounter” defined as a “constitutive event in which particular bodies are deemed in-or-out-of-place,” “illegitimately present,” and “ascribed different degrees of legitimacy, as distinct from their actual legal status” (pp. 1–2). These encounters in the everyday serve as both a precursor and binder connecting constituent parts of the assemblage—the state, the media, and citizens—to the experiences of those objects of focus.

4.2.3 Blaming and Scapegoating

Economic insecurity is not the sole cause of anti-migrant backlashes, but it provides fertile ground.

Citizens attribute economic failures and poverty to refugees and asylum seekers, blaming them for taking their jobs and saturating the market with businesses they cannot profitably compete with. When people feel they are competing for scarce resources, messages encouraging them to turn against supposed competitors for the few opportunities or jobs in existence undoubtedly resonate. In a country with an unemployment rate of 46.5 (Q2:2022) percent among the youth (aged 15-34) as mentioned earlier (Statistics South Africa 2022), the idea that migrants are taking over permeates the local consciousness. A Burundian male explained how this scapegoating is rooted in jealousy.

[Citizens complain that] we took their sisters and jobs. They also complain about how we refugees can live in town [more affluent neighbourhoods], near the beach, or in very nice places while they live in Khayelitsha and other townships. How can we drive better cars? How can refugees have a better life while they don't have an [good] experience? (Interview, Cape Town, December 2017)

The aversion to refugee presence is most evident in how locals interact with refugee-owned businesses.

A Congolese refugee woman operating in a central business district characterized the situation as follows:

To work here in Bellville, you need to ensure protection; otherwise, South Africans will take advantage of you. They will use your services and not pay. They will claim that allowing you to stay in their country is payment enough. How can one make money with clients who have that attitude? So, I always call on my Nigerian brothers nearby. They will help if my client refuses to pay for my services. They would carry weapons (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017).

She acknowledged that dealing with boorish, swindling customers takes an emotional toll and comes with immense risk; it occurs in a context of competition with bellicose locals. Referring to her South African neighbours, she said that “they [local South Africans] weapons or have groups they rely on in the event tensions erupt in conflict between locals and asylum seekers. This refugee is one of many who operate in a hostile environment where there is a constant risk of death. “Sometime back,” she recounted, “just a short distance from here was shooting, and one South African man was killed. This person was not even involved [in the fight].” In this unpredictable, hostile environment, stray bullets can catch you off-guard. “It is easy to become a victim of these shoot-outs, just because you are in the vicinity, even if you are not directly involved,” she said.

Such antagonism based on social inequality has led to intolerance, discrimination, and abuse of refugees and asylum seekers. A male Congolese refugee expressed the risk associated with conducting business in South Africa's urban townships like so:

[Violence] happens mostly in the township. Or if you are found in spots where they are having riots. Most of the people sell in town. They are most affected by these attacks on businesses around areas where [locals] march, destroy things, or steal. If you are very unlucky and are at the wrong spot, you can get killed (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017).

These risks are considered an unfortunate reality of a bitter experience for refugees: starvation and death are alternatives.

4.2.4 Expelling and Pushing Out

Rhetoric is instrumental in the “dramatization and criminalization of migratory phenomena”

(Giornalistic cronro il Razzismo, 2008). It is utilized to make the presence of refugees and asylum seekers illegitimate (Hepworth, 2014). In addition to this criminalization and illegalization of asylum seekers and refugees, commonly associated with state actors, the assemblage's rhetoric also serves specific objectives: to dehumanize their personhood, to scapegoat them for societal ills, to marginalize their presence spatially, to deny legal status, and to exclude them from participatory citizenship. The goal is to render refugees and asylum seekers legible for expulsion. A male refugee participant stressed how language could identify who to target for discrimination and violence:

Even if you become a citizen with a document, once you are in their midst, and they identify you as not one of them, by language and culture, you are still prey. They can even attack you because they believe that documents don't matter. If you are not part of them, it is like that (Interview, Cape Town, January 2018).

It is through this vilipending of groups of people that hostility becomes incipient. Landau (2011, pp. 11-12) argues that many citizens view asylum seekers as demons who need to be exorcised through state regulatory mechanisms and citizenry patrols of social and spatial boundaries. According to the author, violence against refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa “reflect[s] the legacy of a political configuration that has continuously defined and demonized aliens while subjecting them to arbitrary yet ineffective forms of coercion, harassment and removal” (p.11). In a related point, Landau argues that there are similarities between the apartheid state view of native South Africans and the contemporary

post-apartheid perception of human mobility as a threat to insiders' economic and physical well-being as well as national citizenship. Other scholars argue that the exclusionary nature of the contemporary state is a continuation of exclusionary migration policies adopted with the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and that this impulse for exclusion was embodied subsequent legal frameworks. (See Klotz 2013, Peberdy 2010, and Klaaren 2017).

Scholars agree that the state's stigma of asylum seekers has caused a decline in legal immigration and a simultaneous increase in the difficulties migrants experience obtaining temporary residence permits. State stigma has led to heightened and more restrictive border control and a sustained effort to expel foreign nationals. In many ways, the xenophobia of South Africa produces a tendency to try to exclude refugees and asylum seekers from being legally present. Even when lawfully present in South Africa, refugees and asylum seekers are made illegal through institutionalized legal processes and structures and citizen behaviour in everyday spaces. Drawing on Coutin's (2000, p. 30) work, De Genova (2002) defines "this social space of illegality" as the "erasure of legal personhood—a space of forced invisibility, exclusion, subjugation and repression that materializes the undocumented wherever they go" (p. 427).

Despite the precarity and uncertainty that refugees are subjected to everyday spaces, they are actors with agency. The following section in this chapter engages with those moments, acts, and daily practices when refugees, despite their vulnerability, assert themselves as members of the society who participate in the social and economic domains and challenge exclusionary language in the media and the everyday.

4.3 Acts of contesting refugee exclusion: Push-back against exclusionary rhetoric in space

Beyond the judicial, visible, loud actions that refugees and asylum seekers take to bring attention to their plight in contesting citizenship practices and pursue acts that seek to reverse the restrictive policy implementation and extra-legal practices of state actors (see Chapter 3, section 3.4), there are those quiet

acts and tactics that refugees perform and enact to confront exclusion. Several studies draw attention to the effective social agency that refugees and asylum seekers perform as part of their day-to-day living to manage their everyday precarity (Pascucci 2016, van Kooy and Bowman 2019, Kallio, Meier and Häkli 2020). These scholarships focus on how refugees and asylum seekers reclaim waiting in everyday living draw our attention to the complexity embedded in these “temporal” liveable spaces (Griffiths 2014, Burrell and Hörschelmann 2019, Thorshaug and Brun 2019, also, Häkli, Pascucci, and Kallio 2017).

Kallio, Meier and Häkli (2020:2) point out:

Spaces of waiting are not only spaces of stagnation but are characterized by temporal complexity. While waiting in refugee camps or for their asylum claim to be processed, people seeking asylum quest possibilities to act through new connections and friendships, attend educational programmes, learn languages, start families, and initiate other mundane activities. Haikli, Pascucci, and Kallio (2017) elucidate how refugees in Cairo disrupt the order in which they are embedded by simply existing while depending on it to live in the first place. We observe this paradoxical condition in which refugees question the practices of the established order while depending on the order for their survival. Inspired by this growing body of work, and to build a more nuanced understanding of refugees and asylum seekers’ diverse forms of agency, I consider the various forms of social and economic agency that refugees and asylum seekers pursue to challenge rhetorical and other forms of violence.

4.3.1 Social Agency: Accessing and providing social services

This section explores those subtle ways where mundane forms of subjectivity can be interpreted as social and economic acts that push back against restrictive practices. These acts of agency are most visible in access to social services and access to social rights, where the provision of services to refugees and migrants has been riddled with discriminatory and exclusionary language and practices. As discussed in chapter 3, refugees and asylum seekers experience significant challenges when seeking health, education and other social services. Most of these challenges are a product of limited access to documentation, effective refugee status determination process and discriminatory practices. To circumvent or in some way curtail these experiences, community network and support structures become

tremendously critical. One approach utilized by community members is assisting and advocating for others with service provision. The story of Zanesh, a young, intrepid Somali woman, provides a valuable instance. Zanesh, a confident, bold, and articulate young Somali woman, is determined to make a change in her community by particularly empowering women. As a mother, a wife, and leader in the Somali Community, Zanesh negotiates gender norms in her community and the struggles of asylum living in South Africa. In a predominantly patriarchal and male-dominated community, she believes that women's voices and leadership are critical. To make this possible, she closely works with women in her community to encourage them to play a more significant role in community business and social collectives. She also volunteers as a translator at hospitals and health services to ensure that members of her community, especially women, receive adequate care. Her husband is also a leader. She particularly believes that many refugees from her community will not receive the service they deserve without her interpretation services at the health centres. She summarized the struggles members of her community face daily:

When you call the police, and he sees that you are a foreigner, he won't even take your statement. Even if you complain, no one will just take your statement. And when you go to the hospital with a sick child, the doctor will ask you, "why are you in this country?" At schools, they claim that the school is full. [The school officials would say that], "we have no place for your child." If you go anywhere with our paper [refugee documentation], it is a struggle. When they [service providers] say, "please ID," and you take out the status [refugee documentation]. They will just throw it in your face and ask, "what is this? I ask you for a passport or an ID." [Even if] you tell them this is what the South African government gave, and they will just throw them back to you (Interview, November 2017, Cape Town).

Another approach refugees and asylum seekers take to fill the gaps left by inadequate, discriminatory service provision is establishing their own. Refugee communities establish businesses to sustain their livelihoods and set up various community NGOs that focus on food security, pre-primary education, women empowerment and other developmental objectives. Most of these initiatives aim to remedy the exclusionary effects of society and fill the gaps that UNHCR, civil society organizations, and the state overlook. These solutions are particularly evident in the case of day-care, early childhood education services. Moses is the head principal of a pre-primary school, a pastor, and director of a refugee-led

organization in Cape Town. Moses, determined to create a space where children can learn, ventured into pre-primary education, a field he had no official training. As a father of young children, he narrated the struggles he faced finding a place of care and education for this young child as he sought work. However, because of the fuzziness around documentation that many refugees and asylum seekers face in South Africa, it became an uphill battle to find a cost-effective pre-primary school in his neighbourhood. He also noticed how other members of his community struggled. To address this challenge, he decided to open a pre-primary school that takes in 3-6-year-old to allow parents to pursue employment and business opportunities. While they initially started with less than ten children, the school has grown considerably to 50 children divided into three classes. The venture has been so successful that it accommodates children of refugees from diverse nationalities and nationals. Understanding the struggles of finding employment and sustaining business opportunities, the school is free for all children. However, parents are requested to make donations based on their capacities. This allows the flexibility for parents to make substantial contributions when resources permit and nothing when resources are constrained.

In supporting livelihood initiative, another example is Joshua, a Burundian refugee who collects bread from markets to donate within his community. Joshua believes in serving his community and addressing food insecurity. He used to own a shop but now works for others as bellicose citizens destroyed during a xenophobic outbreak. Joshua lost everything. Outside this job, he also tries to develop partnerships with local businesses to encourage them to donate rejected items which he then hands out to struggling members of his community and locals in his neighbourhood. Joshua knows of at least 3000 asylum seekers without any form of documentation or whose document has long expired. Most of these individuals, he claimed, cannot sustain themselves as they have limited to no employment prospects. They forage for food within the community. Even after involving lawyers that resulted in a court ruling that instructed the Department of Home Affairs to issue some of these documents, his situation has not changed as the DHA refused to honour the court ruling. He says sharing donated items

with locals builds cohesion and reduces hostility in the community.

4.3.2 Economic agency: Refugees and the market

Scholars of refugees in South Africa have extensively discussed the capacity of refugees in this context to leverage collective action for economic gain (Rukuni, Maziriri, Dhlamlenze, and Benedict 2022). One community whose economic prowess is extensively studied is the Somali community (Tayob 2022, Gastrow 2022). This community particularly believes in strength in numbers and the power of the collective in social, religious and economic domains. Waiganjo (2018), exploring the coping strategies that Somali women espouse in Gauteng, demonstrates how they use social and economic partnerships to negotiate livelihood constraints and opportunities. From this qualitative study, Waiganjo shows that these partnerships are exemplified by how they establish “business ethnic niches where they sell ethnic clothes and Somali foods, narrate stories, ... [and] navigate marriage unions” (2018:650). Somali businesses leverage collective purchasing power to buy in bulk as a conglomerate of various companies and then sell as separate units at much more competitive prices to increase their purchasing power and profit margins. As Waiganjo frames this entrepreneurship strategy: “the Somalis benefit from the wholesale supply of Somali network distributors. Their partnership enables them to enjoy bulk purchase at a cheaper price that eventually maximizes their overall returns” (2018, p.654). Beyond economic gains, the benefit of this arrangement is multifaceted. The partnership decreases security risks for more vulnerable community members, such as women, as they employ their male counterparts to sell items on their behalf. This security risk is particularly more pronounced in neighbours where migrants’ presence is frowned upon. It is easier for businesswomen to be public facing within their community enclaves. As there is safety in numbers, it is for this reason that refugees establish shops close to each other.

Moreover, with Somali network distributors, women business owners do not have to travel outside the community to purchase business goods. Further, the network facilitates the imports of items outside South Africa. While this capacity to be competitive in the marketplace has also been a source of tension between Somali shop owners and local communities, it is also a testament to their ingenuity and

capacity to thrive in hostile, economic and social environments. Through a shared sense of precarity, they organize themselves to mitigate (share information and support each other) the effects of precarity and exclusion.

Unlike Somalis who utilize a collective approach to business and community, Burundian and Congolese refugees are more individualistic in their livelihood pursuits. A case in point is that of a female entrepreneur: Jane. Jane, a middle-aged woman from the DRC, believes in hard work and pushing to achieve your dreams. She is a mother of three and the primary breadwinner in her family. While Jane came to South Africa to join her parents, who had refugee status, her case and that of her children are filled with complexity. While she could have obtained derivative status as a minor, this option was not made available to her. She is an asylum seeker, and so are her children. Jane claims that she makes a profit from her business and generally leads an economically prosperous life. She, however, expressed that her documentation concerns keep her up at night. Outside vending and related business initiatives, the economic prowess of members of this community extends to areas of research and knowledge mobilization. Peter, a young male Congolese father of two, demonstrates this ability to combine research skills and insider knowledge for economic gain. As a devout Christian and a husband, Peter draws comfort from interactions in his local church. Despite his asylum status, which frustrated obtaining admission and subsequently registering at the institution, Peter managed to pursue education at the University of Cape Town. Despite funding challenges and social upheavals, Peter persevered and completed his degree in 2017. He expressed that “paying his fees and feeding his family because he could not work during his studies” tested his resolve, but he prevailed with assistance from his church and short-term jobs as a research assistant. Religious organizations play an essential role in pro-refugee philanthropy (Gordon 2022). Peter, a first instance rejected asylum seeker, desires nothing more than to obtain refugee status. Having this status, according to him, would open more opportunities for work and a chance to be considered for resettlement to a third country by UNHCR. He expressed that finding employment with an asylum seeker’s certificate is difficult; therefore, he tends to choose to find jobs

within academic terrains that do not require refugee status. While he acknowledged that Cape Town is somewhat less violent than Johannesburg and Pretoria, he still felt that a simple act of sauntering within the city is a risky undertaking. According to him, “local communities are hostile.” Yet, he believes that until he obtains his status, he will keep fighting for his family. These stories of struggle, hope, and resilience are common among refugees and asylum seekers. Displaced communities display a fervent pursuit for economic gains and upward social mobility despite extreme conditions that constrain their economic capacity.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter explained how urban everyday spaces become the site the assemblage of state and non-state actors constructs and territorializes to exclude and expel refugees and asylum seekers from social, economic, and geographic dimensions. It argued that language matters: the words citizens, the media, and state bureaucrats utilize to refer to non-citizens are imbued with history and are a precursor to future events. When the state employs stringent policies and labels asylum seekers as bogus, it aims to demonstrate to its citizens that it is proactive in managing migration. However, it also renders refugee communities subject to bellicose host groups, which increases hostility. When non-state entities, emboldened and co-opted by the state, utilize violent rhetoric to identify, vilify, and discriminate against refugees and asylum seekers, it makes those targeted susceptible to restrictive policies, bordering practices, and violent expulsion. As such, the assemblage creates a space of exclusion where cyclical, reinforcing relationships between the entities serve to ultimately produce devastating, exclusionary effects for refugees and asylum seekers.

Despite the constraints emplaced on refugees and asylum seekers, they are not passive entities without agency. In the latter part of the chapter, I demonstrated how refugees and asylum utilize individual and collective means to withstand forces that aim to render their existence invisible and precarious. Through acts of social and economic agency, refugees and asylum seekers expressed tenacity, exercised courage, and demonstrated determination to hurdle over conditions of vulnerability.

While these acts may not seem significant, they reveal how marginalized persons exercise agency to safeguard their livelihood and assert presence.

Chapter 5: Assembling Bordering Practices: Borders Beyond the State in South Africa's urban spaces

This chapter examines how various actors, including the state, engage in bordering practices. Building on the discussion in Chapter 4 on the categorization, identification, and differentiation processes that assemble refugee exclusion through language. In this chapter, I tease out how multiple actors building on these precursive processes produce bordering practices that are based on exclusion. This focus on how bordering practices work in social relations reveals how the construction of the Other through language is a precursor to multi-actor bordering practices such as xenophobic violence and other discriminatory practices. Drawing from migration and border studies, I argue that bordering practices are no longer confined to the domains of the state as non-state actors have weaponized them as part of processes of assembling refugee exclusion to demarcate borders around the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers in everyday spaces. I agree with scholars such as Squire (2009, 2011), Vaughan-William (2010), and Stierl (2022), who contend that seeing bordering exclusively as an act of states overlooks the multiplicity of agents, including citizens, involved in bordering practices. I argue that focusing on bordering as opposed to the actors who border reveals that this act is performed by more actors than state bureaucrats or state-sanctioned entities. Therefore, it is significant to ask, "Who borders" in the twenty-first century? Using South Africa as a case study, I ask two further sub-questions to answer this broader question. How can we better understand the nature of actors who enact borders in South Africa? How are bordering actors other than state actors involved in the exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers? In turn, how do refugees, asylum seekers, and their allies challenge these processes of assembling bordering practices? The role of non-state actors is evident in how they lobby for increasingly restrictive and stringent migration policies and enact violent bordering practices. I argue that contextual understanding of refugee experiences in South Africa demands seeing xenophobic violence through its pernicious effects and as a bordering practice with an inherent logic. My research is built on critical, scholarly work that has highlighted the need to shine a light on the nature and scope of

actors who border. This approach represents a contribution to the development of new border imaginaries and ethnographies.

Migration and border studies offer valuable insights into the construction of subjectivities, the performance of state sovereignty, and the reduction in pathways to rights that render asylum seekers and refugees precarious. However, what is less clear is how state and non-state actors converge to bring forth effects that are exclusionary, contradictory, and complex. In short, the chapter explores bordering practices in South Africa's everyday spaces. This chapter builds on the discussion in Chapter 4 around the concept of spaces of exclusion to demonstrate how the assemblage moves from the rhetoric of violence to enacting violence.

The chapter consists of four main sections. Section 5.1 draws on the current understanding of borders to situate how the multiplicity of actors converges to form assembling bordering practices that encompass non-state actors. The subsequent section (5.2) builds on current debates about historical and contemporary factors in the causes of xenophobic violence that shape refugees' and asylum seekers' experiences in South Africa to understand how these actions form part of a bordering logic. Drawing from ethnographic findings that focus on the experiences of Congolese, Burundian, and Somali forcibly displaced populations, the third section (5.3) explores the impact of these grotesque, sadistic, and violent practices on the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. In turn, the fourth section (5.4) considers how refugees, in community with others, contest these forms of exclusionary practices. Situating my analysis of assembling bordering practice in the South African context is particularly fitting as, despite their legal status, forcibly displaced populations in this country are increasingly subject to forms of exclusion because of their status and nationality. Their presence and status are challenged and repelled, which affects access to services and everyday living. As the previous chapters have shown, assembling refugee exclusion policies has economic, social, security, and psychological ramifications for refugee and asylum seeker communities. In this chapter, I distill how the multiplicity of actors

behind these assemblages ensnare forcibly displaced populations. I recognize that refugees push back against exclusion and further engage with how refugees in community with others resist the practices of the bordering assemblage.

5.1 Building Performative and Material Borders in Everyday Spaces

Migration scholars continue to challenge our thinking on how states utilize borders as a tool of exclusion beyond the state's territorial frontiers. According to them, states enact and perform borders in various ways: using legislation and technology as bordering practices that reduce pathways to rights (Tazzioli, 2018), further externalizing frontiers through extra-territorial border policies and control (Hyndman & Mountz, 2008), creating borders within a country's internal space and policing them (De Genova, 2013; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013), and creating subjectivities that are differentially included in territorial space (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2012). The emergence of more dispersed, fluid, and manifold borders and forms of bordering practices are illustrative of the dynamics of geopolitical power that shape and transform everyday life (Sohn-Liser, 2015).

The performative and material manifestation of borders have captivated critical migration and border scholars who explore their meaning, nature, function, outcome, and effects within the context of state sovereignty and citizenship, global and national politics, and international migration. These scholars have engaged a great deal with borders to offer valuable insights into the spectacle, the performance, and the politics of state sovereignty. Through their work, we understand the multiplicity of actors and their polysemic nature, as they mean different things to different people (Sohn-Liser, 2015). As extensively discussed in chapter 2 (section 2.4), scholars conceptualize borders to encompass fixed territorial boundaries in physical space and the evolving structures and entities spreading within and outside the state (Johnson and Jones 2011, Rumford 2011, Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, De Genova 2013). Borders emerge wherever and whenever verification controls are utilized to select and distinguish between categories of people (Connoy, 2018) through 'processes, practices, discourses, symbols,

institutions, or networks through which power works' within and beyond the state (Johnson and Jones 201, P.62). As Mountz (2011, p.65) points out, Borders are "characterized by movement rather than stasis." They manifest in innumerable ways, from "language, culture, myths, heritage, politics, legislation and economy," as Paasi (2011, p62) reveals. Mountz's (2020) most recent book, "The Death of Asylum; Hidden Geographies of the Enforced Archipelago," reveals how bordering practices, such as detention centers, imprison asylum seekers while concealing ongoing human rights violations. In summary, "borders are everywhere" (Balibar, 1998). This scholarship establishes that borders are best understood as the sum of social, cultural, and political processes, not just as fixed lines or boundaries.

From this understanding of the pervasiveness of borders, scholars contend that borders entrench unequal power relations between states and asylum seekers. This scholarship underscores the embodying and erasing functions of borders. Johnson and Jones (2011) contend that borders have a categorization element, as they "mark some bodies as legitimate and others as out of place" (p. 61). Similarly, Mezzadra and Neilson (2012) argue that borders create differential inclusion, where individuals are neither fully included nor excluded. A condition of in-betweenness of subjects who are neither fully insiders nor outsiders (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2021). Overall, this marking process creates subjective categories that are multiple, transitional, and evolving along a continuum of differentially included and outrightly excluded people.

This production of borders has rippling effects that are non-linear and may have a disproportionate impact on non-citizens. For asylum seekers, Schuster (2011) observes that restrictive border controls hamper the lodging of asylum applications, consequently "turning asylum seekers into illegal migrants" (p. 1392). Within internal spaces, bordering shapes how states frame and categorize non-citizens, whose access to rights is limited, to create specific subjectivities. These limitations may impinge on the right to employment, the right to vote, and the right to documentation. Paasi (2011) argues that "rather than neutral lines, borders are often pools of emotions, fears, and memories that can be mobilized apace for both progressive and regressive purposes" (p. 62). As Sharma (2001) points out,

borders also influence “people’s consciousness of who belongs” (p. 417–418).

5.1.1 Assembling bordering practices

The power of borders to influence belonging, fuel anti-immigrant notions, and cajole people to action raises important questions about the actors who border. Citizens can be co-opted into the bordering logic of the state, becoming critical entities in bordering practices and outcomes. Indeed, when pondering the question of who borders in the twenty-first century, the increasingly colossal ways that non-state actors play demand attention. As Johnson and Jones (2011) urge, “border studies can be enriched by focusing on the performative aspects of borders by state and non-state actors” (p. 62). Similarly, as Rumford (2011) succinctly points out, “ordinary people are increasingly involved in bordering business” (p. 67). My research aligns with the focus on bordering performances and practices that prioritize how a multiplicity of actors, in concert with the state, exclude and expel those deemed not to belong. An NGO official expressed the converging forces of states and non-state actors that affect refugees in South Africa.

Refugees, particularly asylum seekers, are trapped in this difficult space, where they are harshly treated by the state through the refugee status determination and service provision processes, as well as forced to contend with a violent host community that shuns their presence (Interview, November 2017, Cape Town).

Indeed, bordering practices are no longer the forte of states, and it is imperative to engage with the linkage and outcome of the multiplicity of actors involved in bordering processes, what I term an assembling of bordering practices. These bordering processes, I argue, are not just produced through embodied and emplaced forms of citizenship that mark some individuals as legitimate and out of place (Johnson & Jones, 2011, p. 61; Hepworth, 2014), but are also enabled by imbued notions of citizenship by those deemed to belong. Indeed, nationals, empowered by ideas of citizenship, utilize their status to exclude those they mark as “illegitimate” regardless of status.

In an era of a pervasive rise in populism and xenophobia entrenched around various cleavages, state-centred migration and border theories no longer have the explanatory power to make sense of the multiplicity of actors involved in bordering and exclusionary functions. Therefore, prioritizing the

interactions of state and non-state actors in shaping refugee and migrant experiences reveals how they assemble bordering practices, illuminating how these multiple actors' converging interests and actions intersect. The functioning of the bordering assemblage is one of the stages of assembling refugee exclusion. It focuses on the specific actions, or bordering practices, ordinary actors, reinforced by state actors, take to shape refugee experiences in everyday spaces. With assembling bordering practices, I demonstrate how exclusionary discourses and rhetoric (see discussion in chapter 4), a proceeding stage in assembling refugee exclusion, mature into violent outcomes enacted by everyday actors, emphasizing different factors and priorities.

Bringing these questions to the forefront of bordering practices reveals the multiplicity that works in concert, yet without forming a coherent whole and at times through contradictions, to shape inclusion and exclusion. Building on Rumford's definition of borderwork, we can recognize assembling bordering practices from the perspectives and the projects it undertakes to gain further advantage in society. Rumford (2011) points out "this constituency is increasingly large and diverse" (p. 68). This concept of assembling bordering practices is partially consistent with and yet distinct from Rumford's concept of borderwork. Borderwork refers to the production of borders in the everyday by different actors, while assembling bordering practices are concerned with circumscribing bordering practices by intersecting actors. Like the concept of the "act of citizenship" (Isin & Nielsen, 2008), borderwork also has a post-national dimension (Rumford, 2011). With assembling bordering practices, however, I identify the processes of sorting and categorizing associated with borderwork and acts of citizenship and engage with the amalgamation of bordering practices by the multiplicity of bordering actors—state and non-state—and showcase the emergent properties and resultant outcomes of these practices. This expulsion may occur through legal processes, or discriminatory and violent citizenry acts in private and public spaces such as streets, schools, hospitals, businesses, malls, and roads. As previously cited, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees made the following remarks at a Security Council briefing in April 2019:

Over these three and a half decades, I have never seen such toxicity, such poison, in the language of politics, in the media, social media and even in everyday discussions and conversations around this issue. This toxicity often focuses, sadly, tragically, on refugees and other foreigners. That should be of concern to us. (United Nations Security Council, 2019, p. 5)

The intersections of and overlaps between the state, media, and everyday citizens constitute assemblages of refugee exclusion and function as a bordering assemblage in everyday spaces. I define spaces of exclusion as those in which refugees and asylum seekers are considered unwelcome and unworthy of occupying space because of their status as refugees and asylum seekers where their legal status is not found. It is these spaces where assembling bordering practices produce havoc on the bodies of asylum seekers and refugees. In the continuum that begins with xenophobic rhetoric, questioning, targeting, discrimination, and the delegitimization of bodies considered out-of-place, the forceful rapturing of existence and quest to expel through any means necessary may extend to the use of violence and force.

5.2 Assembling bordering practices in South Africa's Urban Spaces

While migration and border scholars acknowledge the ontological, multidimensional nature of borders as a mechanism of division and inclusion at the conceptual and empirical levels, there remains a tendency to underplay the significance of the convergence of a multiplicity of actors. South Africa provides a valuable case study to reveal how citizens are involved and co-opted into bordering practices. These non-state bordering practices are diffuse and shape the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. The pervasiveness of xenophobic discrimination and violence, the citizenship identity and nativity that shapes xenophobia, and the ineffective state responses to xenophobic violence are at the root of bordering practices and their outcomes.

Xenophobic discrimination and violence, whatever their causes, create "spaces of non-existence" (Coutin 2000) where refugees' and asylum seekers' presence is problematized. This non-existence is forced on migrants through limiting the reality to what can be documented, temporalizing presence, "enforcing clandestinity," and limiting their physical and social mobility (Coutin 2000, pp. 30–33). The belligerent attitude and the problematization of presence hinder integration and create various forms of

precarity—livelihood and physical insecurity, social uncertainty, and economic instability. A focus on the everyday practices of citizens and state policies and practices is essential to understanding refugees’ and asylum seekers’ experiences. These lived experiences illuminate how citizens become engaged in the state’s bordering practices. Numerous participants shared their painful stories of how xenophobic use of language, discriminatory practices in places of services, and xenophobic violence enacted by state and non-state actors became bordering practices within state borders. A male refugee tells his story of everyday living in the streets of urban South Africa.

It is a major struggle living here. If they [citizens] are not calling you names saying “Mwakerekwere” when you are in a taxi, they are telling you to go back to your country. Even policy officers will speak in their local language when you seek their services because that is the attitude in the whole community. You are made to feel like you do not belong and that your presence is not wanted. I do not know why they are like this (Interview, January 2018, Cape Town).

The citizenry bordering practices encompass blaming and scapegoating refugees and asylum seekers for unfavourable socio-economic realities and governance failures. Appadurai (2006), considering the religious conflicts in India, asserts that national communities are imagined through the rhetoric of purity, difference, and danger, in which the “other” within the nation is an embodiment of globalization and an alter ego of the terrorist. He uncovers how majorities with “predatory identities,” frustrated over the nation-state’s failures, vent their rage on minority scapegoats. In a related argument, Appadurai considers how some Americans, despite being critical of the United States’ culture and morality, nevertheless prize their civic freedoms and strive to achieve the American dream (2006). Thus, it is not surprising that some South Africans, viewing themselves as exceptional and different from other Africans, shun the African identities and reject the “other” who represents Africa within the national space.

I observe how the state employs citizenship to exclude those it deems unworthy and how citizens utilize it as a mode of exclusion. This exclusionary logic is produced in myriad ways. Moreover, the inability or unwillingness of the state to address the subsequent exclusion and expulsion acts is what

makes these combinations into assemblages of exclusion.

State policy and action set the tone for citizen behaviour. State inaction in the security arena reinforces the perception of state complicity with perpetrators. The distrust of the security system sustains unequal dynamics in homes, particularly in abusive households. Refugee women are reluctant to report incidents of abuse within families and communities; they believe the system is not interested in protecting their well-being or that of their community (Freedman, Cranshaw, and Mutambara, 2020). A refugee Somali woman narrated her reluctance to report an incidence with her neighbour's sons that quickly escalated into verbal abuse.

My neighbour has two sons who kept throwing stones on my roof. While I initially contacted my neighbour, who is a South African citizen, to tell them to stop the boys. They insulted me and my family and told us that we do not belong here. Telling us that her sons had every right to throw stones on my roof. I did want to involve the police in the matter because I knew that they would likely take my neighbour's side. The boys felt [emboldened] to continue. I was left helpless (Interview, November 2017, Cape Town).

This lack of trust in law enforcement officers to be fair and just leaves refugee families and communities unprotected at a time when they desperately need it. Furthermore, reporting domestic cases may also expose the documentation particularities of the household or community member, which would expose them to a securitized immigration system. Consequently, victims of violence suffer in silence. South Africa reflects the increasing disconnect between the country's touted narrative of inclusivity and human rights, on the one hand, and asylum seekers' experiences of criminalization, exclusion, violence, and securitization on the other. Refugees and asylum seekers' legality is made illegal not only through institutionalized legal processes and structures but also through citizenry behaviour in the everyday spaces of movement and existence.

Border policing, justified through security discourses and curbing the risk of invasion, is utilized as a selective exclusion tool and process. As discussed in chapter 2, section 2.4, scholars of bordering practices demonstrate how states use sorting, ranking, and filtering processes to mark, identity, and differentiate groups of migrants to curtail movement and reduce pathways to rights (Johnson and Jones, 2011; De Genova, 2002; Rumford, 2006). More research needs to be done on when citizens' practices

resonate with the bordering logic of the state, as well as attention paid to situations in which governments are complicit and inactive in punishing injustice, to bring issues of refugee and asylum seeker human rights to the forefront. In the next section, I explore the impact of these xenophobic practices on the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

5.3 Impact of the Bordering Assemblage on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

With an unemployment rate of 46.5 percent among the youth in the second quarter of 2022 (Statistics South Africa 2022), competition for jobs is rife. This significant unemployment level among the youth has become a considerable source of tension between migrants and locals, with local citizens blaming refugees and other migrants for the lack of jobs. Thus, it is not surprising that a study by Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC, 2018), “Why do People Attack Foreigners Living in South Africa? Asking Ordinary South Africans,” revealed that nationals perceived foreigners as responsible for increasing unemployment (30.3 percent), for selling drugs (17.6 percent), and for causing other crimes (15.5 percent). The combination of economic stress, competition for jobs between migrants and locals, and xenophobic attitudes toward foreigners can be explosive. Not only is violence rampant, but it has become a form of entertainment: bystanders watch it happen on the street, while videos online replay the violence at the click of a button. Viral videos circulate on social media, showing what appear to be belligerent citizens burning down public buildings and migrant businesses, in some instances setting foreign nationals ablaze, while apathetic bystanders just watch.

Utilizing embedded ideas of citizenship, citizens draw on a collective sense of identity to weaponize themselves against perceived intruders who, from their perspective, exacerbate these socio-economic realities. A summary of this Human Sciences Research study report highlights these perspectives. The most dominant explanation researchers identified concerned the adverse financial effect that immigrants had on South African society. About a third (30 percent) of the public identified the labour market threat posed by foreigners as the main reason for anti-immigrant violence. The

criminal threat posed by international immigrants was the second most frequently mentioned cause of violence. Almost a third (30 percent) of the adult population said that the abuse occurred because communities responded to the criminal activities of international asylum seekers. Overall, 71 percent of the public identified the threat posed by immigrants as the primary explanation for anti-immigrant violence (HRSC, 2018). While no evidence substantiates these anti-immigrant beliefs, these perceptions sustain and underpin pervasive violence. Moreover, these perceptions reveal a failure to reflect on how historical segregation and economic vulnerabilities entrenched by disenfranchisement have had contemporary ramifications—to say nothing of how those ramifications are sustained by poor governance and state corruption.

With the perception that the state has failed to manage migration, some citizens believe it is up to them to assume these responsibilities. Citizenry bordering practices are premised on the idea that it is the prerogative of citizens, whose social goods are perceived to be at risk, to take on bordering responsibility. One recent example is the rise of the vigilante movement known as Operation Dudula, a splinter group from a faction in the Put South Africans First movement that erupted when former president Jacob Zuma was sentenced to prison for contempt of court (Myeni 2022). In 2022, the group held several protests and anti-immigrant campaigns in response to rumors of an influx of illegal African immigrants. This led to the closing of several small shops in townships that were owned by migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Isilow 2022). While the government is said to have condemned the group's activities, they are still active (Isilow 2022). Dudula, which translates to "force out" or "knock down" in the Zulu language, expresses this commitment to force out African immigrants. According to group, their motivation is to alleviate the "burden placed on public health services, job opportunities, and social grants due to an influx of illegal immigrants" (Myeni 2022). Using culture, perceived migration or residential status, and language as parameters for differentiation between insiders and outsiders, they create us and them boundaries, where they must be forcefully expelled from socio-economic and geographic spaces. It is no surprise that Samantha, a female Congolese hairdresser

explained this commitment to expulsion.

They don't want us here. To them[citizens], we don't belong here, and we must leave. They do not care about why we fled to South Africa, and they would kill us [African migrants] to get [rid] of us, if not burn down our businesses. They do not want us here (Interview, December 2017, Cape Town). The combination of the belligerent populace and exclusionary state create ripe conditions for multiple, reinforcing bordering practices.

Reflecting on lessons learned from South Africa's refugee and migration management and anti-immigrant sentiments, Wellman and Landau (2015) opine that liberal refugee policies need to occur alongside local communities' political buy-in. South Africa's experience teaches us that generous asylum policies aren't enough. Unless there are programs to incentivize aid and integration, local communities will strike back, especially those that feel poor or marginalized. From Wellman and Landau's (2015) perspective, the liberal refugee policies coupled with restrictive immigration policies lead to the abuse of the asylum process and the rising popularity of anti-immigrant sentiments. These citizenry bordering practices have taken shape as somewhat localized violence has spread to become countrywide xenophobic violence. Xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments permeate every sector of society to the extent that refugees and asylum seekers have lost confidence in the police to carry out their duties effectively. Xenophobic violence imperils physical well-being and affects the economic, psychological, and social experiences of refugees and asylum seekers.

Interview participants displayed considerable skepticism that state services, such as the police, were free of these pervasive anti-immigrant attitudes. A male Burundian refugee described reporting xenophobic incidents to the police as like "reporting an unruly child to their parent" (Interview, Cape Town, February 2018). According to him, the parent would be biased and not take drastic action against the child, if any action at all. "It is useless," he said, "because it is a government [supported] issue." This distrust not only exacerbates vulnerability but has also created a perception that the state emboldens those with xenophobic tendencies, encouraging them to implement their plans. The interconnections between the state's inaction and citizenry bordering practices reveal the alignment between state and citizen that sustains these assemblages of refugee exclusion.

Moreover, the police's ineffectiveness in responding to and addressing security is a widespread concern. This laissez-faire attitude can actively make situations worse. A father of five stressed that reporting cases usually exacerbated tensions with the host community and could also lead to retaliatory killings. He stated:

Even when we report cases and the perpetrators are arrested, they are released a few days later. Once released, they would then come and kill those who reported the incident. So, there is no use. We no longer report for our safety (Interview, October 2017, Cape Town). The impartiality of SAPS has constantly come under attack. Refugees hold the view that the police are churlish toward foreign nationals and subject them to undue bias. According to them, the police tend to question the validity of reported cases and the truthfulness of claims without investigation. Refugees deplore how police and immigration officials disparage and deride their presence. Therefore, some refugees expressed disenchantment with the police system. The inaction and prejudice within the South African police system imperil vulnerable refugees. This abuse is agonizing for abused women and children, who suffer in silence from within their communities. Inaction empowers perpetrators. Would-be perpetrators within refugee communities and outside aware of the reluctance victims and survivors have in engaging the police are emboldened to act. The result is a cycle of abuse that hampers other areas of daily living.

The duality of xenophobic violence and criminality, coupled with ineffective policing, produces a no-win situation that leads to perpetual insecurity. Most refugees believe they will be condemned regardless of whether they report or not. Exclusion induces physical harm and destabilizes economic pursuits for refugee communities, but it also has harmful mental health outcomes and secludes refugee communities, isolating them from support structures. The inability or unwillingness of the state to safeguard refugees and asylum seekers' welfare exacerbates vulnerability, encourages hostility, and spreads violence. The government is continuously compelled to evacuate asylum seekers from hostile communities into safer spaces. However, this becomes a cyclical condition of disorder, evacuation, and return, as the hostile host community intends to expurgate and potentially exterminate those they deem to be unwanted others.

The intersection of criminality, experiences of displacement, xenophobic realities, and fear of retaliation has significant implications for women and girls. Women in refugee communities are reluctant to interact with the police, which increases the risk of normalizing domestic violence in these communities. Refugee communities are reluctant to report rape or attempted rape against women and children in fear of retaliation. In a country with a growing epidemic of domestic violence, refugee women suffer a triple burden of status, gender, and violence. A Burundian male refugee, fearing reprisals from the local community, failed to report an incident of rape perpetrated against his wife. He narrated the traumatic event.

I was away when three men broke into my home and raped my wife. It was during the 2008 Xenophobic attacks, so it was a rough time. We did not trust that the police would help, and we were also afraid that if we reported and the person was arrested, community members would target us even more (Interview, February 2018, Cape Town). This case reveals how rampant attacks, criminality, and the fear of further attacks, interfere with the well-being of refugee women, men, boys, and girls.

The mundane act of walking in the street particularly in townships of urban centres in South Africa is imbued with fear and uncertainty. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable because of the double burden of their status and gender. Their vulnerability is reinforced by inadequate state responses to both xenophobia and domestic violence. Feminist scholars have shown that most constructions of gender favour maleness and masculinity, femaleness and femininity are socially defined as the “other” or lesser being (Fleay, 2017). The resulting inequality plays a crucial role in the lives of female refugees and asylum seekers who need to negotiate the patriarchy. In doing so, they face challenges from their non-citizenship status, from unequal power and resource distribution, and from the absence of freedoms in society. An unreliable and ineffective security system produces perpetual insecurity in urban spaces. The effects of antagonistic attitudes combine with rampant criminality and violence, asylum seekers’ distrust of police, and xenophobic citizens. These forces reinforce each other in unpredictable ways.

A Google search of Cape Town townships such as Philippi, Khayelitsha, Delft, Hanover Park, ImizamoYethu and Mitchells Plain, where many refugees and asylum seekers reside, reveals

criminality's pervasiveness. Gang wars have created personal security fears. In July 2019, eleven people were shot and killed in less than seventy-two hours in Philippi East (news24 2019). Again, in November 2019, four people were shot dead in Mitchells Plain (eNCA 2019). Despite community policing forums, there is a recognition that criminality and insecurity in these areas have reached what the community and the media describe as a "crisis point," which led to the deployment of soldiers to the streets of Cape Town (Reuters, 2019). In a context where community members are afraid of retaliation when they speak out, solutions and justice are sparse. The lack of confidence that the system will protect witnesses further exacerbates the lack of cooperation with the security apparatus, creating a loop of continuous violence.

Moreover, these weaknesses within the safety and security apparatus of the state embolden citizens to perpetuate exclusionary violence. Indeed, assembling refugee exclusion reinforces itself through ineffective security responses that allow exclusionary motivations and actions to flourish. Thus, it is not surprising that a walk around South Africa's urban spaces is an exercise in fear and uncertainty. A woman living in Philippi, an informal settlement in Cape Town, expressed the challenges of living in this community.

Philippi's life is not easy. There is robbery, killing; thus, it is not easy to live in this location. I need to make sure my business is always locked for my security and that I don't walk when it gets dark. Also, I make sure that my children do not play outside, even if I am not at home. I must lock them inside the house for their safety (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017). In addition to living in a place where crime and violence endangers their physical safety, refugees must contend with the possibility of being targeted because of their identity and status. Without physical safety, their psychological and emotional safety cannot be fully established.

In South Africa, refugee communities lack economic, social, and psychological stability.

This fear of moving through everyday spaces is not restricted to nighttime, but increasingly, refugee women expressed concern about using public transport during the day. A Somali woman explained the situation as follows:

As Muslim women, we are easily identifiable because of our dressing and therefore become easy targets. Most times, I choose to use Uber for my safety. Even though this is more expensive (Interview, Cape Town, February 2018).

Her experience speaks to the continuous spatial insecurity refugees experience in the everyday. They are

compelled into spatial disappearance and made continuously aware—subtly or harshly—that their presence is unwanted. This antagonistic attitude, coupled with the reality of crime, violence, and xenophobia, reinforces vulnerability, precarity, and exclusionary outcomes. The pressure to remain alert in a hostile society drains individuals of the energy and strength to focus on other areas of well-being. Refugees become reluctant to move about in public. The state's inaction to punish these heinous crimes sends the message that the state condones them, which legitimizes and normalizes violence.

Overall, it is in everyday spaces of work, transport, business, and access to services that refugees' presence is problematized through multiple actors and processes of assembling bordering practices. Nationals perpetuate violence for disparate reasons. Some believe asylum seekers receive economic benefits that disenfranchise citizens. A Congolese refugee argued that xenophobia is rooted in the complex socio-economic challenges besetting South African society:

I understand the South African society has a lot of problems linked to social development and self-development. You find that many people come from a background or a political situation where they were marginalized. Most of them never got the opportunity to go to school so that they can't compete for higher positions jobs. But the system is made that they can't emerge. So, all that causes trouble when they see foreigners who are educated and are able to manage easily, it causes jealousy and creates anger and frustration, when they don't manage to get through (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

According to him, it is these socio-economic conditions that produce jealousy.

I should say [jealousy] is one major point. Because there are jobs that don't need to be educated—like security jobs, construction jobs, and those kinds of labour and there are so many foreigners who come and do them. They may not have qualifications, but they have commitment, and employers favours them. As they don't always claim for a high salary and all that. But the locals get frustrated in the same job because they want higher wages, and they want their human rights to be respected and all that (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

His analysis reveals the complex racial relations among black South Africans and their white counterparts. Primarily white-owned businesses prefer to hire foreigners at low wages rather than nationals, who are considered lazy and heavily unionized. Such hiring practices leave the impression that foreigners' employment comes at the expense of citizens, tapping into historical economic imbalances and stoking existing resentments and racial tension. As opposed to challenging the state's failure to address inequality and rising economic fragilities, a significant swathe of the population is

keen on scapegoating refugees and asylum seekers fleeing war and dictatorship.

The presence of refugees and asylum seekers is considered to have other impacts. They are perceived to drive up the cost of rent, take up spaces in schools, and prolong queues in service areas, such as at hospitals and health centres. A UNHCR official explained how refugee pursuits of an economic livelihood result in conflict with host communities:

In Brooklyn, they can't compete with Shoprite. They can't compete with Spar and Pick n Pay. They have to go to remote areas where they can set up a profitable business. And thereby trying to set up those spaza shops [informal convenience stores] in townships and in locations they come to direct conflict, they become a threat to the nationals, and that's why some Somali businesses, Congolese businesses in salons [hairdressers] they are a target because of business competition and because of crime. They are soft targets for criminals. These are foreigners who don't know the system. They don't know these people in person (Interview, Pretoria, March 2018).

As refugees and asylum seekers achieve economic gains, their success reinforces a suspicion that their perceived financial dominance comes only through illegal means. The prevalence of these suspicions causes refugee groups, like the Congolese, to be implicated. A Congolese refugee explained that these suspicions had a grain of truth. "They accuse refugees of selling drugs. It could be true, and sometimes they are right. People need to follow the laws of the land." While a UNHCR official did not provide details, he argued that refugees are sometimes caught on the wrong side of the law.

Moreover, citizens perceive state migration control measures as insufficient to regulate the increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa. They view themselves as critical actors who need to enforce bordering practices, often with violent means. They aim to drive away refugees and asylum seekers from the territorial location. As discussed in chapter 3, state behaviour shapes itself in relation to citizen interest; thus, an exclusionary host community is a harbinger of increasing state restrictions and human rights abuse. Equally, as the evidence above shows, ineffective security governance creates space for belligerent actors to disregard the human rights of refugees and other migrants. Moreover, international actors such as the UNHCR are limited by capacity, resources, and diplomacy (see section 3.2) to effectively protect refugees in urban centers. Consequently, refugees are caught up in a bordering assemblage of state and civilian actors who create conditions of

vulnerability and precarity, and despite these grim situations, refugees push back. In the next section, I will discuss how refugees, in concert with allies of NGOs and community members, contest bordering practices and challenge the bordering assemblage.

5.4 Acts of contesting refugee exclusion: Challenging bordering practices

Migration researchers have extensively discussed how vulnerability and precarity are inextricably linked to forms of agency. Smith et al. (2016, p.258), building a case for "an embodied and material understanding of the intersections of bodies, territory, and borders," show how refugee bodies simultaneously challenge state territorial controls yet remain vulnerable to bordering practices. In the context of South Africa, the presence of refugees and other migrants in South Africa is frequently portrayed as problematic. A situation that has led to the construction of refugees and asylum seekers' claims to asylum as bogus and a perception that migrants are responsible for skyrocketing crime and increasing unemployment. Pervasively discussed in the media and in public discourse, these constructions of the Other as the cause of social ills, as freeloaders who do not contribute to society, and as fake claimants of asylum give the actors the legitimacy to function.

Be that as it may, refugees have challenged the claims and actions that the bordering assemblage enact against them. In concert with NGOs and community-based organizations, refugees and refugee-led organizations work to protect themselves from exclusion, address social tension, and build social cohesion. A case in point is the Adonis Musati Project, a non-profit organization. Established in 2007 after a young Zimbabwean asylum seeker died of starvation at the Refugee Reception Centre in Cape Town, the Adonis Musati Project (AMP) works to support refugees and asylum seekers. On their website (<https://www.adonismusatiproject.org/>), the AMP frames its objective as seeking to "empower marginalized refugees and migrants in South Africa through fostering sustainable support networks and encouraging personal development that achieves lasting change" (Adonis Musati Project, 2021). The Project achieves this objective by assisting vulnerable asylum seeker and refugee populations in Cape

Town in the areas of "health and welfare, training, education, advocacy, and psychosocial care." The organization "believes in taking a holistic approach to offer assistance and address both the physical and psychological needs [of refugees and asylum seekers]." An official of the NGO explained the organization's herculean efforts to alleviate the distress and malaise of refugees and asylum seekers in Cape Town while being mindful of its limitations. She explained how the project evolved:

[The project] started as an emergency response to the needs we saw around us. We realized that people [refugees] needed accommodation, some skills training, and other forms of assistance such as food. So, it essentially grew from feeding people to assisting them with other needs like helping them find accommodation, clothing, pots, and pans and the like. So, refugees came with absolutely nothing. And then of course we had the xenophobic attacks in 2008, so we were involved with helping people get into informal camps and other safe spaces like churches and so on (Interview, Cape Town, November 2017).

Through specific programs focused on psychosocial care, the organization works with refugees through individual and community initiatives addressing both their physical and psychological needs. This work, while inadequately funded, is important.

Refugees are significantly more likely than non-refugee immigrants to experience post-traumatic stress and distress symptoms (Arnetz, Rofa, Arnetz, Ventimiglia, & Jamil 2013). This demonstrates that the unsafe and dangerous conditions that precipitated their migration, combined with precarious conditions in host and transit countries, have a substantial impact on their mental health. It has also been shown that psychological stressors affecting refugees' mental health have a significant and long-term impact on other aspects of their lives (Montgomery 2008, 2011, Hall 2022).

An awe-inspiring community organization that works with young people of all origins to build social cohesion between refugees and citizens is the United Family in Hout Bay, Cape Town. Hout Bay is a small seaside suburb situated twenty kilometres south of the city centre. United Family, operating predominantly in the informal settlement of Imizamo Yethu, grapples with both historically rooted racial tensions between residents of the Hout Bay suburbs, who are mostly white, and those of Imizamo Yethu and refugees and citizens within the Hout Bay area. While some locals' contempt for refugees and

migrants makes social cohesion difficult, the group builds social bridges across differences to promote a sense of community. This ability to build social bridges and provide support to vulnerable citizens in their community facilitates rapport between the groups. This environment enables citizens to work alongside refugees in fighting social tensions and xenophobia and toil in solidarity for refugee rights, creating a growing activism of politicized groups of citizens and non-citizens, what Rygiel et al. (2015) would refer to as "citizenship from below." I held a focus group discussion with the leadership of the group, who informed me that their aim is to support refugees with livelihood pursuits, youth empowerment, and work to reduce tension with the community. The team goes about this initiative by fundraising with national and international stakeholders and businesses. They work with locals to find cohesive approaches to addressing tension and allow young people from diverse refugee communities and locals to learn musical instruments, perform dramas, and play sports together. The team espoused bullish confidence that their work would yield favourable results in the long term.

Some community members have expressed remorse for the state of affairs in the country. While it may seem like those who are remorseful are few, it is a step in the right direction. Those who commiserate with refugees are better suited to engaging reasonably with community members with exclusionary views and orientations. Others further provide support to destitute and needy citizen community members, a move that aims to build social cohesion and barricade against forms of hostility. A case in point is that of Helena. A Congolese woman who shared her experience of friendship with South African women in her community. She narrated that she developed these relations through a shared interest in sowing. It was in this coterie of sewers that she realized that not all South Africans are xenophobic. During our interview session, Helena asked if we could continue the session the following day because her friend, a South African citizen, had an urgent situation that they needed to address immediately. While it may seem diaphanous, these friendships and formations of solidarity can provide a protective barrier against bellicose citizens during xenophobic outbreaks. With insider knowledge of impending xenophobic attacks, Helena's friends apprise her of these developments. Helena expressed

gratitude for the trust she had built with these women, recalling the many instances when this camaraderie secured protection from bellicose citizens.

5.6 Conclusion

The function and impact of these assemblages of exclusion on the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers are manifold. These impacts can be categorized into four main areas: security, economic, social, and psychological. From a human rights perspective, assemblages of exclusion hamper the enjoyment of rights at a micro-level. The discriminatory nature of these assemblages reflects both the prejudice in society and the extent to which the state and citizens inflict rights abuses. These violations have consequences that affect how individuals and communities forge their livelihoods and existence.

The combination of the lack of security and precarious status creates significant barriers in the economic domain. At the same time, the intersection of gender, status, education, and class shapes the individual migration experience. The injustice produced by spaces of exclusion has an overarching impact on refugees and asylum seekers' socio-economic rights. The competition over jobs and business opportunities has resulted in violence that aims to fracture and demolish refugees' livelihoods and asylum. The competition is evident during outbreaks of xenophobic violence and in daily tensions and confrontations in business interactions. These realities create socio-economic uncertainty and food insecurity and frustrate livelihood efforts.

At a psychological level, assembling refugee exclusion unsettle the well-being of people as it evokes prolonged vulnerability and uncertainty, heightens emotional distress, and increases violence and the risk of death. Refugees and asylum seekers' non-citizen status raise vital questions around power, identity, and place. The evidence from my research suggests that in an era of rising anti-immigrant sentiments, it is no longer enough to study the effects of state policies and practices on the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in isolation from the multiplicity of actors who act to shape their experiences.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I sought to identify the factors, actors, and processes that shape refugee experiences in South Africa. In doing so, I asked how the intersecting relationships between the state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizens, and the media construct the existence of refugees and asylum seekers. To answer this research question, I considered the experiences of refugees like Ngalula, whom I introduced in the first chapter. A young man who escaped the Democratic Republic of the Congo ten years ago in the hope of finding peace in South Africa. Unfortunately, his life in Cape Town, South Africa, has turned out to be the polar opposite of what he expected.

Ngalula's living conditions are characterized by insecurity, fragility, and unpredictability as a result of the actions and inactions of various players. Actors, like state bureaucrats at the DHA, treated his asylum claims with cynicism and skepticism, putting him in a state of limbo and waiting, navigating life with a tenuous asylum status and documentation that is scarcely valued but requires regular renewal. Furthermore, urban residents have shown a propensity and ability to perpetuate targeted violence against refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants. Ngalula's urban abode in Philippi puts him in direct contact with boisterous locals who dislike him and see him as a threat to their economic existence and well-being. These aggressive actors create precarious life conditions for refugees, by forcefully targeting the personhood and property of refugees and migrants, creating a toxic life. According to antagonistic citizens, refugees such as Ngalula are not native or indigenous to the land and hence should not profit from its rewards. Locals have shown a propensity to block refugees and hinder their movement in ways similar to state bordering activities. Furthermore, a state that has not appropriately addressed xenophobic language and violence tolerates an exclusive attitude and way of life, creating a single loop in which justice is denied and violence against refugees and migrants grows widely.

To make sense of the intersecting relations among a multiplicity of actors and the conditions they engender, I outlined a framework of assembling refugee exclusion. Through this framework, I demonstrated how a diverse set of actors, through different social and organizational formations, enforce

and contest exclusionary interests and pursuits. Offering empirical analysis from research undertaken in Cape Town, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, South Africa, between October 2017 and March 2018, I revealed how state and non-state actors employ notions of citizenship and belonging to exclude refugees and asylum seekers from socio-economic space with the penultimate aim of expelling them from the geographic territory. I showed how bordering practices are no longer confined to state practices but can be observed through the myriad of linguistic and violent ways citizens enact barriers to social and economic space. Systematically, while I recognized the intersecting and cyclical ways states and non-states reinforce each other, I organized the dissertation in three angles to explain the gamut of ways that assembling refugee exclusion operates. Angle one focuses on the refugee policies and legal frameworks, underscoring the conflicting nature and disjunction within South Africa's legal framework in providing progressive protection on paper while creating precarious status and exclusionary conditions in practice. In tracing the outlines of this empirical case, I drew attention to how the state produces exclusion through refugee status determination practices of policy implementation that are extra-legal, discriminatory, and inconsistent. This production of illegality and precarity through legal processes and policy implementation practices echoes critical citizenship and migration scholarships (De Genova 2002, 2005; Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel 2017a; Burciaga, Martinez, et al. 2019). These state-induced and sanctioned actions aim to deter and dissuade potential asylum seekers and maintain precarious conditions for refugee communities. These practices infiltrate other areas of service provision, such as health care and education. The state, emboldened by societal actions, subjugates refugees and asylum seekers and excludes them from meaningfully engaging in the marketplace through recent policy reforms. Second, and most significantly, while this thesis acknowledges the dominance of the state in refugee governance, it underlines the assemblage of a multiplicity of actors that interact in complex ways to reinforce and exacerbate vulnerability, precarity, and uncertainty among displaced communities. I have argued here that the state is not monolithic but is constituted by actors who are themselves embedded in society and influenced by the prevailing ideas, norms, and ways of being. As members of

society, these actors, I demonstrated, utilize a xenophobic citizenship agenda in their practices of refugee and migration governance in South Africa. These practices include reducing opportunities for asylum through ad hoc closures of reception centres; frustrating asylum seekers and refugees with document renewal implementation processes; inhibiting movement through stringent requirements to renew at particular locations; and failing to address backlogs in the appeals process. While I recognize that limited immigration avenues to South Africa overburden the asylum system, the deliberately flawed asylum adjudication process speaks of state actors whose agenda echoes societal thinking premised on the notion that refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from other African countries need to be exorcized from South Africa. As a result, it is not surprising that government actors use administrative apparatus to frustrate current and potential asylum seekers. This exclusionary citizenship approach is only the first angle of the assembling refugee exclusion.

Angle two, which focuses on everyday spaces, paid attention to the rhetoric and discourses that the state, the media, and citizens utilize to refer to non-citizens. Analyses revealed that when the state employs stringent policies and performatively labels asylum seekers as bogus, it encourages citizens to perceive non-citizens through the same lens. Scholars have shown that to showcase state power in migration management, the state utilizes spectacles of language and bordering practices (Mountz 2011, Paasi 2011). However, these discursive performances by the state easily co-opt bellicose host community groups. In turn, when non-state entities utilize violent rhetoric to identify, vilify, and discriminate against refugees and asylum seekers, political leaders and state actors are encouraged to enact and implement stringent policies and exclusionary practices. The dissertation shows this cyclical, reinforcing relationships between the state and non-state. Consequently, this enactment of exclusionary language serves as a precursor for violence (angle three) that produces devastating, exclusionary effects for refugees and asylum seekers.

Analysis of angle three in the progression of exclusion reveals the discriminatory nature of the assemblage. It reflects both the prejudice in society and the extent to which the state and citizens enact

human rights violations. These violations have consequences that affect how individuals and communities forge their livelihoods and existence. These effects shape refugees and asylum seekers' economic, social, political, cultural, and psychological realities. As the case of Ngalula demonstrates, refugees experience significant heartache and turmoil due to a combination of xenophobic violence, exclusionary practices by service providers, and cumbersome documentation processes. The combination of the lack of security and precarious status creates significant barriers in the economic domain and inhibits social, psychological, and emotional wellbeing.

Despite the constraints emplaced on refugees and asylum seekers, they are not passive entities without agency. In the dissertation, I engaged with how refugees and asylum seekers utilize individual and collective means to withstand forces that aim to render their existence invisible and precarious. Through acts of social, political, and economic agency, refugees and asylum seekers expressed tenacity, exercised courage, and demonstrated determination to hurdle over conditions of vulnerability. While these acts may not seem significant, they reveal how marginalized people exercise agency to safeguard their livelihood and assert their presence.

Refugees like Ngalula and other community members band together with supportive citizens and non-governmental organization (NGO) actors to challenge state and citizenry practices in the court system, the media, and in everyday life. These acts of agency, formations of solidarity, and humanitarian support practices operate alongside conditions of encumbrance, precarity, and disenchantment. To make sense of the intersecting relations that shape refugee experiences in South Africa, I outlined a framework of assemblages of refugee exclusion. Through this framework, I showed how a multiplicity of diverse actors, through different organizational forms, enforce and contest exclusionary interests and pursuits. Offering empirical analysis from research undertaken in Cape Town, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, South Africa, between October 2017 and March 2018, I revealed how state and non-state actors employ notions of citizenship and belonging to exclude refugees and asylum seekers from socio-economic space with the penultimate aim of expelling them from the geographic territory. I showed how bordering

practices are no longer confined to state practices but can be observed through the myriad of linguistic and violent ways citizens enact barriers to social and economic space.

The empirical chapters in this dissertation offer important insights into how we can conceive of the politics of exclusion by an assemblage of actors. Regarding chapter 3, which focuses on citizenship ideation, I demonstrate how diverse actors utilize and are influenced by the citizenship agenda to determine the deservedness and belonging of refugees. Focusing on the state, in this chapter I show that it is critical to deconstruct the state and look at who constitutes it, what the interests of these actors are, and how their citizenship ideology and perspective formed as members of society shape their approach to refugee management. Moreover, I argue that it is critical to understand how state actors' behavior is influenced by the communities of belonging and the societal discourse prevailing in these communities. In chapter 4, which focuses on space and language, attention is placed on how language is instrumentalized to frame and cultivate an environment where the Other is conjured. This chapter illuminates how multiple actors frame and construct an Other who needs to be exorcized from the everyday space of walking, shopping, residing, and living. The agenda becomes removing non-citizens not only from public space but also from the public imagination. Finally, Chapter 5 demonstrates how borders are not only barriers created by the state to exclude those who do not belong from the nation-state, but also barriers created by both the state and non-state actors to achieve exclusion within the state and expulsion outside the nation's geography. Through what I term "bordering assemblage," I prioritize these acts of exclusion and expulsion that target refugees' bodies and everyday space, whether this expulsion results in death or removal from the physical location. This chapter demonstrates how xenophobic violence perpetuated by citizens is a bordering practice that creates and reinforces the bordering approach of the state. In this chapter, I argue that xenophobic discrimination and violence are products of a bellicose society and systemic factors entrenched through historical apartheid and sustained through poor state governance in post-independence South Africa. All the chapters alert us to the various ways we can imagine acts of contesting refugee exclusion as deliberate, desperate, and

desirous ways refugees enact political subjectivity, assert economic agency, and, in some spaces, economic dominance, and use judiciary mechanisms to challenge processes of assembling refugee exclusion.

The three empirical chapters shed critical light on how exclusion is constructed, produced, experienced, reinforced, and challenged, and how we can conceive of the politics of exclusion which is rooted in South Africa's history and sustained in contemporary times. Specifically, these chapters demonstrate how multiple actors are very much involved in processes of excluding and expelling refugees and asylum seekers, which I understand to be assembling refugee exclusion.

Alongside the chapter contributions, there are limitations. First, gaining access to government officials proved onerous as officials, particularly from the department of home affairs, were reluctant to participate, meaning their voices were limited in this study. It would be interesting to include diverse voices from government positions from different seniority levels to see how perspectives on refugees would differ across seniority. The focus on refugee experiences on a wide range of issues such as health, education, housing, employment, social services, and food security provided a foundation, but it limited in-depth analysis on specific issue areas. Overt experiences of discrimination in other areas outside documentation and status determination, such as housing, were poignant, which demands a much more in-depth analysis. Refugees face landlord discrimination and inadequate accommodation in South Africa's skyrocketing housing crisis, and the pandemic has increased discrimination towards these vulnerable groups.

I conducted research for this dissertation in the major metropolitans of Cape Town in the Western Cape, Pretoria and Johannesburg in Gauteng; it would also be interesting to know how exclusionary practices and solidarity formations take shape in mid-range cities in smaller provinces such as Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, Bloemfontein in the Free State, and Pietermaritzburg in KwaZulu-Natal. Other refugee populations, such as Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Sudanese, also experience exclusionary issues in South Africa. In this light, it would be fascinating to analyze the exclusion and

agency of other population groups to demonstrate the encompassing nature of assembling refugee exclusion and the commonalities among different refugee populations in South Africa.

Although limitations exist, the dissertation makes important contributions to the field of migration more broadly. Specifically, the dissertation makes policy, empirical, and conceptual contributions. Regarding policy contributions, I offer numerous recommendations that aim to redress the effects of the assembling refugee exclusion. First, I recommend broad-sectoral training of immigration officials and service providers in South Africa on the rights of refugees in the country. Specifically, for immigration officials, I recommend training on migration management, customer service, human rights, written and verbal English communication, and refugee status determination. Second, I urge senior managers in line ministries to pay attention to how junior officials in health, education, social security, and other social services provide services to refugees and asylum seekers that are discriminatory and exclusionary.

Third, I propose a more robust engagement between civil society, the government, and migrant communities, including refugees, on social cohesion, social trust, and social participation. The government can play a critical role in promoting the benefits of social cohesion and delineating the contributions of migration to the host society and vice versa. The role of language in building rapport and mutual understanding is critical in building social cohesion. Therefore, the media and government officials need to be mindful of their language in referencing refugees and migrants. While it is unavoidable that the media will pander to its audience, it is critical to consider how specific language conjures images of difference and fuels exclusionary discourse, discrimination, and violence. Fourth, I strongly support the work of NGOs in South Africa such as Scalabrini, the University of Cape Town Law Clinic, Lawyers for Human Rights, Neo Hand in Hand, and Adonis Musati that work tirelessly to support refugees and find interim relief for their plight. I urge them to continue their great work and encourage donors to fund this work. Despite the work undertaken by NGOs, I strongly recommend that funders support refugee-led organizations such as the Somali Association of South Africa, African

Diaspora Forum, the various Congolese and Burundian community organizations across different cities, United Family in Hout Bay, Cape Town, and SOWA.

In fulfilling its international protection mandate, UNHCR is a critical actor in refugee governance. While the agency engages NGOs to support refugees in the urban context, its presence on the ground is limited. Refugees express that it is difficult, if not impossible, to reach UNHCR. The toll-free Refugee Helpline is busy, and obtaining an appointment is not easy. Therefore, I recommend that UNHCR increase the human resource capacity at the Refugee Helpline and the number of community services and protection staff to meet the growing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa. Furthermore, as the conditions of vulnerability that refugees face are in part due to documentation challenges, I strongly recommend that UNHCR strengthens its engagement with junior and middle managers in all areas of government and appoints a second trained international protection officer to the Department of Home Affairs to support, capacitate, and strengthen refugee status determination and appeals processes. Empirically, this project offers original insight into refugees' lived experiences, informed by semi-structured interviews and media and policy analysis of relevant documents. It also provides a unique insight into the asylum system and everyday life in South Africa through the voices of refugees themselves.

Finally, the dissertation offers conceptual contributions. I think the conceptualization of assembling refugee exclusion to focus on how the relations among multiple actors produce and reinforce exclusion allows for a greater understanding of the actors and factors that facilitate precarious existence among refugees. This conceptual approach reveals the relations among the multiplicity of actors that shape refugee lives. Specifically, it may allow for explicit recognition of the interlinkages and "alliances" (Koster, 2015) that form for a specific goal. In his study, Koster focused on the alliances between the state, private housing corporations, and municipalities to impose a citizenship agenda that distinguishes between "good" and "bad" citizens. For example, Anderson & McFarlane made a similar argument earlier (2011, p. 126) about the converging and diverging interactions between multiple actors:

"relations may change, new elements may enter, existing alliances may collapse, and new conjunctions may be fostered." I argue that the experiences of refugees in South Africa are shaped by the relations among the state, citizens, and the media that regulate movement through exclusionary identity construction, verification, exclusion, and expulsion (see chapters 3, 4, and 5). In this dissertation, I demonstrate how the presence of refugees from other African countries is problematized. A problematization enacted not only by the state and state entities through migration regulation, but also by citizens emboldened by the state (and thus shaping the state) to engage in exclusionary, discriminatory, and xenophobic behavior in all spheres of society. My scholarship adds to scholars such as Goldring, Bernstein, and Bernhard (2009); Baban, Ilcan, and Rygiel (2017a); and Squire (2011, 2021): they have drawn attention to the institutionalized processes that states create to produce gradations of status across a spectrum between inclusion and exclusion, where access to rights, opportunities, and residence is deliberately complicated to create ambiguity and produce precarity, uncertainty, and vulnerability. My work builds on this scholarship to further argue that we need to pay attention to how an assemblage of actors build on, work within, and reinforce institutionalized and extra-legal practices to marginalize those at the periphery of society.

Building on Rumford's concept of borderwork (2008, 2011), I offered the concept of assembling bordering to make sense of how a diversity of bordering actors circumscribe restrictions on the bodies of refugees and asylum seekers and on the space they reside. Assembling bordering practices attend to three aspects. First, it echoes the processes of sorting and categorizing associated with borderwork. Second, it prioritizes the amalgamation of bordering practices by the multiplicity of bordering actors, such as the state and non-state. Third, and most importantly, it showcases the emergent properties and resultant outcomes of these practices. The elements of exclusion and expulsion are particularly emphasized as crucial outcomes of assembling bordering practices. Exclusion and expulsion can occur because of legal processes or discriminatory and violent citizenry acts in private and public spaces such as streets, schools, hospitals, businesses, shopping malls, and roads.

A closely associated conceptual contribution to assembling bordering practices is the concept of spaces of exclusion. Spaces of exclusion refer to those spaces in which refugees are considered unwelcome and unworthy of occupying space because of their status, where divergent actors do not recognize their legal status. In these spaces, assemblages of refugee exclusion produce the most havoc on the bodies of migrants and refugees. In spaces of exclusion, we observe a shift in a continuum that extends from xenophobic rhetoric, questioning, targeting, and discrimination to delegitimizing bodies, rendering them "out-of-place" (Hepworth, 2014) and forcefully rupturing their existence in a quest to expel them from physical space by any means necessary, including the use of violence and force.

A final conceptual contribution is the concept of "acts of contesting refugee exclusion," which offers a nuanced understanding of how refugees challenge formal and informal processes enacted by an array of actors. These acts are heterogeneous and potentially contradictory, but significant in the fight against exclusion. Building on migration concepts such as "bordering solidarities" (Rygiel, 2014), acts of contesting refugee exclusion attend to the multifaceted ways refugees, in an individual capacity, in community with others, and with allies of citizens and NGO officials, contest a xenophobic citizenship agenda, pushback against exclusionary rhetoric in space, and challenge bordering practices by state and non-state actors. These forms of social, legal, and economic agency are evident in how they knock on the judiciary to reverse negative asylum decisions, detention, and deportation orders issued by the DHA (see Chapter 3); how they access social services and provide support to members of their community (Chapter 4); how they exercise economic agency in the marketplace (Chapter 4); and how they establish non-governmental organizations to build cohesion with locals and challenge bordering practices (Chapter 5).

These policy, empirical, and conceptual contributions shed new light on the complex ways in which exclusion is constructed, enacted, produced, reinforced, and challenged. In conclusion, I leave this project asking: what does the future hold for refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa? With an increase in the number of asylum seekers, rising unemployment rates, the prevalence of xenophobic

discrimination and violence, and the entrenchment of nationalism, exclusionary politics are likely to flourish. However, if this is the case, it will be challenged and resisted. The crucial actions that emerge from acts of contesting refugee exclusion are important not only for refugees' wellbeing but also for the subtle yet persistent challenges they pose to assemblages of refugee exclusion and the arbitrary foundations upon which discrimination, injustice, derogation of rights, and xenophobic violence are based. The use of assemblage provides a "generative critique that is constantly creating new associations, knowledge, and alternatives (McFarlane, 2011, p.212).

This dissertation demonstrates the importance of the concept of assemblages of refugee exclusion in discussing migration and displacement. Through the concept, we can better understand how experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and injustice are a product of the relationships of multiple actors. In this regard, future research involving attention to these actors and factors would benefit from an assembling refugee exclusion lens, which expands how we critically engage with issues at the intersection of refugee governance, media discourses, and citizen practices, as well as resistance and contestation by refugees and their allies. Through this lens, we see how governing systems that define migration — citizenship, borders, and space — are intricately linked to how relations among a multiplicity of actors shape refugee experiences. By doing this, we are given the freedom to establish connections not only between refugees and their allies who challenge exclusionary practices, but also a consideration of the relations at the heart of exclusion. This appeal to the interdependence of social ties between actors rather than state-citizen, state-refugee, or citizen-refugee relations, fosters a broader outlook that considers holistic approaches to understanding the complexity of factors that produce vulnerability and uncertainty for displacement communities. Understanding the breadth and depth of these factors is instrumental to developing comprehensive responses that address the plight of refugees, such as Ngalula.

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