

# **Border Practices at Beitbridge Border and Johannesburg Inner City: Implications for the SADC Regional Integration Project**

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## **Abstract**

Regarded not only as a line that separates South Africa and Zimbabwe to underline the interiority and exteriority of the two countries, as well as to control and manage migration and immigration, Beitbridge border effectively plays out the immigration debates and dynamics at the heart of the nation-state of South Africa. Based on a qualitative study of how migrants from other African countries are treated at this border and in Johannesburg inner city, we suggest that the harassment suffered by the migrants at the hands of border officials, including immigration officials, the police and army, is indicative of a larger dynamic that exists in the centre, which is represented by Johannesburg inner city. Such bordering and rebordering practices at the border and at the centre reflect negatively on the spirit and letter of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional integration project.

**Keywords** Borders, Beitbridge border, African migrants, inner city of Johannesburg, SADC regional integration

## **Introduction**

The case study used in this paper is divided into two parts. We studied both the Beitbridge border<sup>1</sup> separating South Africa and Zimbabwe and the inner city of Johannesburg to contemplate the attempts made to achieve regional integration in Southern Africa through the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Some basic assumptions form the basis of the case study under consideration. These include the notion that borders are institutions, which express that both the nation-state (Johnson et al., 2011) and South Africa (as a nation-state in this case) are integral parts of the SADC region, in whose integration project it has voluntarily committed to participate. Because of this, South Africa's border practices, as understood from the purview of its immigration policy and as played out at the Beitbridge border and Johannesburg's inner city, affect, and reflect on, efforts to achieve regional integration in Southern Africa. Gaps exist between the aspirations for an integrated SADC, in which borders are seamless (Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992; Southern African Development Community, 2005), and the actual encouragement of free movement of people between and within SADC member states. This, therefore, raises a fundamental question. If what transpires at Beitbridge border and at the centre (Johannesburg inner city) is taken to be indicative of the larger dynamic of the South African state, and given the drive by states in Southern Africa to regionally integrate, how do the immigration policies of a SADC member state and regional

integration policies relate to each other? This is a pertinent question given attempts by the respective sovereign states in this region to establish a viable regional economic community.

The significance of this question vis-a-vis South Africa (or, indeed, any other SADC member state) lies in the fact that it is a voluntary member of the SADC. In turn, the collective of 16 Southern African nation-states that make up the SADC has committed itself to the double objective of fostering regional integration (at the Southern Africa level) and African integration (at the continental level) (Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992, Preamble; Article 5).<sup>2</sup> The SADC integration project is thus ongoing, just as are debates around the process of integrating Southern Africa (see e.g. Kalenga, 2012; Simão, 2015). In grappling with the question raised above, we move beyond the discussion of identity politics in the region and xenophobic discrimination, to a serious consideration of border practices and how this reflects on the regional integration project in the SADC, and Africa in general.

Notwithstanding, we are fully cognizant of the importance of identity politics and xenophobic discrimination in the SADC region, especially in view of the recurrent attacks on foreign nationals in South Africa (Akinola, 2018). These matters are very serious, with implications for not only the rights of the victims but the SADC integration project too. We do not address them in this paper, not so much because border practices are more serious, but in the interest of space, and the scope and focus of this paper. And we, of course, have extensively addressed them elsewhere (see, e.g., Adeniran and Ikuteyijo, 2018; Magidimisha et al., 2018; Nshimbi and Moyo, 2017). Hence, empirically, the paper foregrounds the tension between the realities and implications of borders to member states and the SADC integration project. The implications of border practices in and around the South African nation-state, which continue to frame a fixed territoriality against threatening outsiders, with whom it intends to integrate, forms the argument of this paper.

By focusing on the Beitbridge border and the inner city of Johannesburg, and the treatment of African migrants in these places, we are led to ask whether the ‘anxieties’ experienced by actors at the border ‘play out in the internal spaces of nation-states, notably urban environments where divisions and conflict between communities and people invoke metaphors of state borders’ (Cons and Sanyal, 2013: 6) through the politics of recognition and exclusion (Middleton, 2013). Viewed from the prism of the SADC regional integration project, is Beitbridge a ‘site of closure’ (Shneiderman, 2013: 27) or a site of connection (Johnson et al., 2011) through which free cross-border movement of people is discouraged and/or encouraged, and for which groups of migrants? How are African migrants treated at South Africa’s borders such as the Beitbridge and the inner city of Johannesburg? Are some classes of African migrants treated better, to the extent that non-SADC citizens are excluded?

We emphasize the existence of a border at the Beitbridge border post and another or several others in or on the way to the inner city of Johannesburg. This deserves further consideration. The starting point is that ‘borders are enacted, materialized and *performed* in a variety of ways’<sup>3</sup> and that these ‘performative aspects of borders’ can be operationalized by ‘state and non-state actors’ (Johnson et al., 2011: 62). For this reason, we conceptually locate this paper within debates and the literature around the dynamics, functions, nature and purposes of borders. Coleman (2007: 64) shows that in the case of the US–Mexico border ‘there has been a marked increase in immigration policing operations away from the borders in the interior’, such that ‘these new spaces of immigration geopolitics suggest that the border – and border enforcement – is increasingly everywhere’. For this reason, the idea that ‘borders are everywhere’ (Balibar, cited in Johnson et al., 2011: 61) – ‘that the sovereign state’s loci of bordering practices can no longer

be isolated to the lines of a political map of states' – has gained tremendous currency, but is also quite a departure from traditional border studies (Johnson et al., 2011: 61).

This suggests that 'borders are never to be found *only* in border areas but are also located in wider social practice/discourse all around societies, and increasingly in relation to global space'<sup>4</sup> (Johnson et al., 2011: 63). Borders are not simply ordinary zones at the margins of nation-states (Cons and Sanyal, 2013), but are institutions whose processes 'are "displaced" to the "centers" in different ways' (Cons and Sanyal, 2013: 6). Therefore, in the present case we consider bordering and rebordering practices that accompany African migrants as they cross the physical boundary at the periphery (Beitbridge border) and make the journey into the centre of the host country (Johannesburg inner city). The attempt will be made to show this from the experiences of African migrants to/in South Africa; from the point/time they arrive at the physical border – the marker of sovereign jurisdiction (Novak, 2011) – through their journey to the centre.

Since the question of *where* the border is 'located' seems to be settled, the related question of who operationalizes its functions is important. Coleman's (2007: 64) evidence regarding the US–Mexico border and the way in which immigration policing operations have increasingly been displaced into the interior takes the borders up to 'the municipal scale and way from the margins of the state'. This suggests that operationalizing the functions of the border or bordering 'is not always the business of the state. Ordinary people are increasingly involved in the business of bordering' (Johnson et al., 2011: 67), which Rumford (cited in Johnson et al., 2011: 67) calls 'borderwork'. What this means is that bordering can be performed by state and non-state actors such that 'these practices condense in the contested idea of citizenship that brings together state, power, control, social responsibilities and possibilities' (Johnson et al., 2011: 62). Linked to bordering is the concept of rebordering, whose characteristics tend to reinforce border effects (Durand, 2015: 309). We will return to the concepts of bordering and rebordering in the following section. It will thus be shown and argued from the interview data that bordering and rebordering against African migrants occurs through the agency of state institutions represented by the police, the army, the Johannesburg Metropolitan Trading Company (JMTC), individuals occupying official positions in those institutions, as well as ordinary South African citizens, who express hostility and negative sentiments towards the migrants.

Against this backdrop, this paper expands the debate on and contributes towards a better understanding of how life at the border makes a true reflection of the macro processes of ordering, controlling and pushing out of space those who are regarded as undesirable migrants or outsiders. It does so by arguing that the novel social, economic and political patterns that transpire at the Beitbridge border post, which 'separate' South Africa and Zimbabwe, are an introduction to the migrants from other parts of Africa (hereafter African migrants) of what they would later experience in the inner city of Johannesburg – the centre. In pursuit of the research questions, we consider the conceptual frameworks after this introduction. We follow this up with a discussion of how the data was collected and analysed. In the process, we demonstrate how the Beitbridge border is a site of closure barring African migrants, and where the practices performed there are found to be played out in the Johannesburg inner city too. We also show how this reflects on regional integration in the SADC. We then conclude with the suggestion that what transpires at the Beitbridge border is an introduction to the other 'borders' that African migrants have to continually cross on their journey to and in the inner city of Johannesburg. Thus, even after they have 'settled' in their destination, borders follow the African migrants everywhere. This raises questions as to whether or not regional integration in the SADC is a long way from taking root, especially at the grassroots level.

## **On borders, bordering and rebordering**

Borders serve a material and symbolic function, suggesting that they ‘can have a very obvious presence and even where visually indistinct, they are typically the bearers of a wider symbolism’ (Anderson and O’Dowd, 1999: 595). Whether materially or symbolically manifest, borders signify “‘that which binds,” a place of friction or meeting where alterity is negotiated [... they] are a kind of space where the relationship with otherness can be developed in such a way as to allow for identity-building and place-making’ (Szary, 2015: 36). Viewed thus, a border or bordering is ‘putting distance in proximity’ (Groupe Frontière et al., cited in Szary, 2015: 36). The idea of inserting distance to proximity suggests that borders can be opened up and unwanted elements or the *other* can enter, and when they do, there is need to close down the border ‘in order to ensure the security of those flows through control and filtering’ (Szary, 2015: 40). In this context, the opening up of any border is debordering, and the concomitant attempt to close down the same is called rebordering (Szary, 2015). Because ‘it follows that any given border or boundary is undergoing both opening and closing processes at the same time in the same place’ (Szary, 2015: 40), it’s suggested that the border is a symbolic discipline of belonging and an exercise of control and power over the *other* or foreign poor body.

With this in mind, we analyse the bordering and rebordering of African migrants in contemporary South Africa. We attempt to show that by crossing into the country, the African migrants who enter at the Beitbridge border would have ‘committed’ the offence of debordering. The migrants may thus be followed up in order to add distance to their being in South Africa, in an attempt to emphasize that they are the foreign body. We consider this to be an act of rebordering. This means that ‘border crossings are no longer controlled when a line is crossed’, but borders are ‘becoming a set of discontinuous dots’ (Bonditti, cited in Szary, 2015: 41), ‘which lead us to shift our thinking from the place of border encounters to the spatialization of the complex interactions that comprise the bordering act’ (Szary, 2015: 41). In this case, we attempt to respond to the question; is territorialization being symbolically played by agents other than immigration officials, such as ordinary individuals, and what implications does this have on the SADC regional integration project?

## **Theoretical approach and the application of regional integration to the SADC integration project**

The question of whether South Africa (and any other Southern African state) is an integral part of the SADC regional integration project seems commonsensical. But it is essential to ask because it provides a prism through which the bordering and rebordering of African migrants at the border (Beitbridge) and the centre (Johannesburg inner city) can be analysed. It assists in underscoring the tensions between South African immigration policy and practice, and the SADC regional integration project. The question thus illuminates the way in which the case study in question reflects on the practice and practicalities of the Southern African integration. Besides this, the question enables us to base our argument on appropriate theoretical grounding, in relevant perspectives on regional integration. We therefore start our theoretical considerations by asking: Why do states in Southern Africa seek to integrate? What benefits does integration promise? We extend this same question globally, to enable us to establish our examination of the SADC project in the context of, and engage in, universal abstractions on regional integration.

The importance of the SADC regional integration project is tied to the position of the African Union (AU) regarding, among others, migration, regional integration and development on the continent. Through the Treaty for the Establishment of the African Economic Community (AEC) of 1991, or Abuja Treaty, the AU aims for continental integration as a strategy for, among

other things, the promotion of economic, social and cultural development through the economic integration of Africa's regions in order to increase endogenously driven development and self-sufficiency (Abuja Treaty, 1991: Article 4.1). The AEC should create a framework for continental development through the mobilization of Africa's human resources and materials. Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) serve as building blocks of the continental economic community and are the means through which this will be attained. Migration and, particularly, free movement of labour and the exchange of skilled human resources constitutes a key tenet of the continental integration project (Abuja Treaty, 1991: Article 6(e); Article 71(e)). Accordingly, the AU has recognized eight such RECs across Africa, among which is the SADC, to move Africa towards the AEC.<sup>5</sup> The Abuja Treaty allows AU members to gradually remove obstacles to the free movement of the cited four factors of production and give citizens of member states the right of residence and establishment in second AU states. Accomplishing free movement of persons, along with the other factors such as capital, in the SADC region, therefore, contributes to the realization of the AU's goals of continental integration. The opposite contradicts the goals of the AU, to which all African states voluntarily subscribe, for African unity.

In working towards its regional integration objectives, the 16-member state SADC commits to developing 'policies aimed at the progressive elimination of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labor, goods and services, and of the people of the Region generally, among Member States' (Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992: Article 5.2.d: 6).<sup>6</sup> The 2005 Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC is the legal instrument designed to implement the provisions of the SADC Treaty (Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992: Article 10.3) on the movement of persons in the region. The Protocol commits to support, assist and promote the AU's efforts to eventually establish an AEC through, among other things, free movement of persons (Southern African Development Community, 2005: 1). The Protocol's overall objective is to develop policies that progressively eliminate obstacles to human mobility into and within SADC members' territories (Southern African Development Community, 2005: 3). Only six SADC states (Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia) have so far ratified the Facilitation of Movement Protocol (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2016). It is, therefore, not yet in force because the SADC has not reached the required two-thirds majority threshold of member-state ratifications. In the absence of a protocol to govern regional labour migration, national laws of respective SADC states regulate migration in the region (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2013). However, the region is showing commitment to, especially, regional free movement of labour through the formulation of the SADC Regional Labour Migration Action Plan 2013–2015, which member states agreed to extend to 2019, at the 2015 Ministerial Migration Dialogue for Southern Africa (MIDSA) in Victoria Falls Town, Zimbabwe. Further, the region has formulated the 2014 Regional Labour Migration Policy Framework, which member states have signed and are currently considering for ratification (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2016).

Even so, it is also perfectly understood that South Africa reserves the right to manage its domestic migration and immigration policies, over and above 'facilitating' the entry of African migrants into its territory. But, by virtue of its voluntary ratification of the 2005 Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC (besides being a member of SADC), South Africa demonstrates commitment to the SADC's objectives (see also Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992, Preamble). In keeping with the SADC instruments that it has ratified, South Africa (indeed any other member state of the SADC) demonstrates consistent commitment to the instruments and the regional objective of promoting integration when it domesticates such legislation (see Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992, Article 5.2. a. to j.). This suggests that South Africa, and indeed the other five member states that have ratified the 2005 Protocol on

the Facilitation of Movement of Persons, have the obligation of ensuring it is implemented and that the ultimate goal to integrate Southern Africa succeeds.

Moreover, at a universal and theoretical level, studies of regional integration point to the fact that, by virtue of joining a REC, a state simultaneously and volitionally trades off or surrenders aspects of its sovereignty. This happens through a transfer of some aspects of that sovereignty contained in, among others, the state's domestic policy sphere to supra-national authority/institutions or the REC (see e.g. Mattli, 2000; Van Langenhove, 2011). Supra-national regions make the list of Van Langenhove's (2011: 54) 'new competitors' of nation-states. In the contemporary global political economy, the basic unit of governance is no longer the state. Instead, multiple actors at various levels make up layers of governance which share power between them. Analytically, therefore, the nation-state could be seen as delegating some of its functions (e.g. as far as concerns this paper, the governance of migration) upwards, to supra-national regional levels. Many and various ways exist in which scholars define a supra-national region. Geographers, for instance, distinguish between regional realms such as Europe, North America, Russia, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, etc. Some economists use a mix of geographical proximity and cultural unity to construct world regions primarily based on religion.

However, such classifications do not pass the scientific test of classification according to Van Langenhove (2011: 54), as no 'natural' regions exist but only discourses in which geographical areas are referred to as 'regions'. Though supra-national regions only exist discursively, their formal level of integration often serves as the basis of their characterization. This formal existence is expressed through regional institutions and agreements that set out economic or security frameworks or arrangements or, indeed, other forms of regional cooperation or integration. Therefore, in the case of the SADC region, the 1992 Declaration and Treaty of the SADC constitutes the primary instrument through which the supra-national region to which the countries which are geographically located in Southern Africa (including a couple on the Indian Ocean but proximate to the African continental landmass) formally express and characterize their formal level integration. Thus, in ratifying the SADC Treaty, wherein member states commit to, among other things, 'harmonise political and socio-economic policies and plans' (Declaration and Treaty of the SADC, 1992, Article 5.2.a: 6), the members invariably commit to surrendering aspects of their domestic policies and transfer them to the supra-national authority/organization, SADC. The state parties do this so that their respective domestic policies would be harmonized, and for the policies to be consistent with those of the supra-national authority/organization. Looked at another way, the reason the United Kingdom voted to exit from the European Union (EU) in 2016 was because it wanted to regain the sovereign control of its domestic migration policy, some aspects of which it had surrendered to the supra-national authority/organization in Brussels – the EU (Mason, 2016). It is in this context that a comment on South Africa's immigration trajectory deserves brief discussion.

Along with the comment on this trajectory, we briefly state the extent to which South Africa incorporates SADC legislation into its domestic immigration policy. We do this also in an attempt to steer away from the grossly misleading trap of taking the policies/legislation of the SADC at face value; that they should trump and be fully expressed in the sovereign policies/legislation of the government of South Africa (or indeed any other member state). South Africa undoubtedly supports the free movement of goods, capital and services as prescribed in the 1996 Protocol on Trade in the SADC and the 2012 SADC Protocol on Trade in Services. The free mobility of these factors is necessary for the economic growth of South Africa. It also helps maintain South Africa's position as economic hegemon in Southern Africa. However, South Africa is simultaneously less willing to extend the same freedoms of movement that it promotes for goods, capital and services to the movement of people (Hirsch, 2018). This

seems to suggest that integration is not a social construct in SADC terms, but is essentially an economic one. Differently stated, SADC regional integration seems to be understood as only applying to the unrestricted movement of goods and capital and not people.

We assert that economic integration in reality is about the physical movement of bodies across space – it must of necessity involve the free movement of people in space. In which case, there can be no true economic integration if the movement of people is restricted. In this way, economic trade integration should be seen to imply symbolic and relational processes of social inclusion and/or integration. When there is evidence of exclusion, especially when these come from actions and/or policies of a SADC member state, it means that there is disintegration instead of integration, and exclusion instead of inclusion. This is where we locate this discussion and advance that if South Africa is less willing to promote the free movement of people in the SADC, it contradicts the fact that it has ratified the Protocol for the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC. That South Africa has reservations when it comes to free movement of people in the SADC is illustrated by its restrictionist immigration regime. A major change in this regime only occurred in 2002 through the replacement of apartheid immigration legislation such as the Aliens Control Act, 1991 (Republic of South Africa, 1991). The change was implemented in the form of the Immigration Act, 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002) (Crush et al., 2006). A review of Immigration Acts and Amendment Bills introduced between 2007 and 2014 further suggests that, while committing to the efficient processing of permits to foreign nationals, South Africa seems to be simultaneously tightening entry or stay conditions for them (see Republic of South Africa, 2007; Republic of South Africa, 2010; Republic of South Africa, 2011).

This otherwise suggests that the human mobility-related policies of the SADC and AU – and, therefore, the integration projects – are superimposed on a South African immigration regime that is less ready to accept the goal of free movement of people. The result is the friction and tension that this case study illuminates. Precisely because South Africa is a SADC member state, and without conflating South African immigration policies and those of the SADC and AU, it is possible to comment on how this reflects on the SADC regional project. Therefore, having expanded our conceptualization of regional integration, discussion of empirical material in the following sections vis-a-vis the actions and policies of South Africa should not be seen as passing parsimonious judgements, but as an illumination of the actual issues which obtain on the ground. These matters either promote regional integration or militate against it. For which reason, given the background on African migrants, borders and bordering, the SADC regional integration project and South Africa's immigration regime discussed here, we now move on to how the data was collected. This is followed by a discussion of the empirical material on the case of Beitbridge border and Johannesburg inner city, in an attempt to examine the insights it throws on the research questions.

## **Methods**

To the best of our knowledge, ours is a first among many attempts to highlight the interplay between borders – particularly bordering and rebordering practices – and the implications for regional integration especially in Southern, if not the whole of, Africa. As demonstrated in the theoretical formulation above, our approach incorporates both theoretical attempts to characterize borders and the way in which they relate to regional integration on one hand, and empirical evidence of the practice and practicalities of bordering and rebordering and implications for the SADC integration project on the other hand. For this reason, we hold the exploratory design as most appropriate to the task. We attempt to provide basic but thorough insights into research that would then require an extensive and large-scale effort such as a survey to permit a comprehensive understanding of bordering and rebordering and the impact on the

integration of a region comprising 16 sovereign nation-states. Thus, besides secondary data gathered through a thorough review of the literature on human mobility, borders and regional integration, qualitative primary data was obtained from face-to-face interviews and participant observations. We conducted the interviews between February 2012 and July 2013 in an attempt to capture, as much as possible, the daily occurrences and activities involving border crossings at Beitbridge border. We interviewed a total of 60 African migrants from six SADC states (the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe), and two from outside the SADC region (Somalia and Ethiopia).

Apart from their respective countries being members of SADC, the respondents from the six SADC countries were suitable for inclusion in the study for three reasons. With the sole exception of the DRC, these countries constitute part of the historical regional labour migration system (and) through which countries like Malawi and Mozambique, for example, traditionally supplied labour to South Africa's mining and agricultural sectors (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014). Also, most informal cross-border traders from these countries largely sourced their merchandise from, and also exported from their countries to South Africa. In the process they, along with other types of migrants, mostly used the Beitbridge border to enter and exit South Africa. The Somalian and Ethiopian migrants provided comparison and also migrated to South Africa through Beitbridge, like SADC citizens. These people originated from major migrant-sending African countries outside the SADC; attitudes towards them and the way in which their communities are treated in South Africa provided a rich comparative with SADC-region citizens.

We first interviewed the migrants at the Beitbridge border between February and August 2012, and later in the inner city of Johannesburg between April and July 2013. The respondents were chosen on the basis of their final destination, Johannesburg, as the study focused on a comparative analysis of occurrences and border practices at the Beitbridge and the inner city of Johannesburg. On average, the interviews lasted 40 to 55 minutes. Respondents were generally open to being interviewed, after they were assured the research was purely academic. The interviews focused on reasons for migration to South Africa and migrants' experiences of discrimination, exclusion, hostility and xenophobia at Beitbridge and in Johannesburg inner city. The deployment of interviews was based on the need to understand social reality in its natural setting and 'attempting to make sense of, or to interpret the phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 3). The inner city of Johannesburg was chosen because it is the capital of Gauteng Province, South Africa's richest province (Wray, 2014). Additionally, 7.1% of Gauteng's population constitutes immigrants (Stats SA, 2012), with 82% of these originating from the SADC region (Gauteng City-Region Observatory, 2013). In addition, Johannesburg is the commercial capital of South Africa and the hub of migration from the Southern part of, and the rest of, Africa. Hence, for this reason, Johannesburg is referred to as 'a quintessentially migrant city' (Crush, 2008: 280). Beitbridge, on the other hand, is the busiest land border that links South Africa to the rest of the African continent (Khumalo, 2014) and the route most used by migrants and informal cross-border traders in and out of South Africa. Indeed, the fact that Beitbridge is the busiest port of entry to South Africa is underlined by the agreement between the two countries to build infrastructure for a one-stop border post, so as to reduce delays, given the volume of cross-border traffic. This was highlighted in the meeting between the then presidents of South Africa and Zimbabwe, Jacob Zuma and Robert Mugabe respectively, in 2017 (Mahlangu, 2017). Data was manually analysed by establishing, connecting and explaining themes that emerged from the interviews.



## **Beitbridge border post: A site of closure or a SADC site of connection?**

The following discussion of results is based on the case study of the Beitbridge border and the inner city of Johannesburg. We make no claim that these results can be extrapolated to other ports of entry/exit and other parts of South Africa. They may thus not be taken to be representative of all African migrants intending to migrate to or currently in South Africa. Rather, the findings, as discussed here, are context specific. Two groups of South African state agents were alleged to exhibit xenophobic and exclusivist tendencies towards African migrants at the Beitbridge border. The first group were immigration officials. It was reported that these officials constantly insulted African migrants for simple things such as failing to stand properly in a straight queue when filling in immigration formalities or 'for making too much noise in South Africa' (Interview with Malawian man, April 2012). While it is clearly understood that the checking of travel documents for travellers is standard immigration procedure globally, African migrants interviewed in this study were of the view that there appeared to be a specific negative sentiment reserved for them. They argued that there was no need for immigration officials to be negative and hostile towards migrants who were simply queuing for immigration formalities (Interview with a Zimbabwean woman, May 2012). According to the respondents, the message being communicated was that they were not wanted in the country. This is significant because it demonstrates the hostility against African migrants. Well before their documents are inspected, African migrants are symbolically told that they should not be coming to South Africa. Because of this, the interviewees argued that they did not deserve the harassment and humiliation, especially because they had the 'correct travel documentation and had not committed any criminal offences' (Interview with a Zimbabwean woman, May 2012). The fact that African migrants, and especially these from the SADC region, as illustrated by Zimbabweans and Malawians, among others, suffered such exclusion, severely assaults the very idea of the promotion of free movement of people in the region (see e.g. Declaration and Treaty establishing the SADC, 1992; Southern African Development Community, 2005).

The second group of state agents included the police and army. The African migrants we interviewed claimed these officials were xenophobic. For example, a Zimbabwean cross-border trader claimed that in 2009 he had had his passport properly stamped at the border and was admitted into South Africa, only to be stopped on three different occasions the same day on the South African side of the border by the army and police. He asserted that the officers harassed and threatened to arrest and send him back to Zimbabwe. In this, we see the 'border' following the Zimbabwean migrant. It was not enough that his passport had a stamp showing admittance to South Africa. He had to 'cross' three more borders the same day, after the physical border at Beitbridge. Furthermore, respondents indicated that they were treated the same way, even if they were documented migrants or not (Interview with a Zimbabwean woman, May 2012). In order to avoid harassment and humiliation, they bribed immigration officials even though they possessed valid immigration documents (Interview with Tanzanian man, May 2012). Again, just like the case of the Zimbabwean man in the preceding paragraph, these experiences clearly demonstrate that 'borders' always followed African migrants. This further shows extra-legal efforts targeted at African migrants, who are also SADC citizens. This contradicts the basic principle of integration in the region as immortalized in the Declaration and Treaty of SADC, 1992 and the Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC.

The African migrants from outside the SADC region reported similar experiences. The Somali respondent, who was looking to seek refuge in South Africa, for instance, declared,

My brother, life is difficult here at the border. I have been here for close to ten days now waiting for papers to confirm my application as a refugee so that I can cross to South Africa. Even

though it's a problem that I have to wait for so long, the real issue is that the Immigration officials and the police are hostile. They have told us to go back to Somalia because South Africa has its own problems, which means in other words we are not welcome. This is why when these officials appear or pass by, we automatically demonstrate the maximum, even if it is no true respect for them. I have travelled through many countries to reach this border; I have not experienced this sort of treatment. Since I am here and cannot go back to Somalia, I may as well soldier on, it is nearly impossible to legally enter South Africa. (Interview with a Somalian man, Beitbridge, May 2012)

Although the Somali respondent does not represent SADC citizens, their story resonates with the experiences of some Zimbabwean asylum seekers who were interviewed as part of this study. The implication of the insights from the following respondent is that although they had opted for a legal way to attempt to enter South Africa, they still 'suffered ill treatment and harassment' (Interview with a Zimbabwean man, April 2012). We could not confirm reports that some of the asylum seekers from African countries were turned away at Beitbridge border. We were informed, nonetheless, that such immigrants tended to resort to using the services of human smugglers to enter South Africa. Turning away asylum seekers such as the Somali national and asking them to return to their countries contravenes South Africa's Refugees Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998) and especially the right of non-refoulement (in which an asylum seeker cannot be returned to their country of origin until their application has been determined) (Republic of South Africa, 1998, Sections 2(2) and 21(4)). This is besides the commitment in the Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC by member states to uphold international instruments such as the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, and the SADC's own 1998 Declaration on Refugee Protection within Southern Africa. These international, continental and regional instruments are consistent with SADC member states' (including South Africa) commitment to observing universal human rights.

Beyond a human rights perspective relating to the principle of non-refoulement, the returning of asylum seekers, especially originating from within the SADC region, back to the country from which they flee persecution is antithetical to the very idea of integration. It runs counter to the principle that 'member states undertake to adopt adequate measures to promote the achievement of the objectives of SADC and shall refrain from taking any measure likely to jeopardise the sustenance of its principles, the achievement of its objectives and the implementation of the provisions of this Treaty' (Declaration and Treaty of SADC, 1992, Article 6: 6). We argue that returning asylum seekers back to the place of danger fails to protect SADC citizens and is also an act of shutting the border against them. This is diametrically opposed to the regional integration project of the SADC. To continue the illustration that Beitbridge border was a site of closure, two respondents, a Zambian and Zimbabwean, who had been working in South Africa for over four years at the time we interviewed them, explained that it did not matter how long one had worked in the country. As long as they were African migrants, immigration officials harassed and humiliated them.

The respondents claimed that sometimes immigration officials told them how they were 'crowding and making South Africa dirty' (Interview with a Zambian man, June 2012). The respondents claimed that travelling back to South Africa after a holiday in their countries of origin 'always felt like one was going there for the first time, one felt nervous of being degraded, sometimes in front of their children' (Interview with a Zambian man, June 2012). These cases further demonstrate that legal immigration documents were not always enough evidence of legal admittance into South Africa. The migrants had to 'cross' other borders as well. In this case, the border was a social or political practice, in the form a xenophobic discourse. This is consistent

with the observation by Johnson et al. (2011), that social discourse and practice can constitute bordering.

Beitbridge border was thus a site of closure for these migrants, despite having the legal right to work and stay in South Africa. The respondents said that they were never certain if they would 'successfully cross the border at any given time on their way back to South Africa' (Interview with a Zimbabwean man, June 2012). From these responses, we see the obsession of the South African government agents to keep out African migrants. It is paradoxical that government issued work permits to African migrants and yet its agents harass the same people who had legitimate immigration documents. This paradox can be explained by the observation made earlier that South African immigration policy seems to be increasingly restricting entry/stay into the country (see previous section; see also e.g. Republic of South Africa, 2007; Republic of South Africa, 2011; Republic of South Africa, 2014). Most significantly, the documented migrants who were legally resident and working in South Africa but subjected to harassment were, in this case, SADC citizens. To this can be added the case of informal cross-border traders, whom we also interviewed.

Before discussing whether or not informal cross-border traders were allowed to trade during their stay in South Africa, it is relevant to outline Peberdy's (2002) classification of the informal cross-border traders of the SADC region, who travel to South Africa. Five classes of such traders can be identified. First are traders who travelled to South Africa for short periods of time ranging from one to four days. These buy goods from wholesalers and retailers for resale in their country of origin. Second are traders who travelled to South Africa for one to two weeks, to sell their goods in informal and retail outlets. Such traders used the money realized from selling their products to buy goods that they took back to their countries of origin for resale. Third are traders who travelled to South Africa and other SADC countries for the purpose of buying and selling goods. Fourth are those traders who only brought goods to South Africa for sale; fifth are South African traders who travelled to many SADC countries to sell a variety of goods (Peberdy, 2002).

We were able to interview informal cross-border traders who fell into categories one to three of this classification. These traders were given 90-day visitors' visas at Beitbridge border (Interview with a Zimbabwean cross-border trader, 15 May 2012). For the traders in category one, who simply came to South Africa to buy goods for resale, there was no need for business or trading permits. They were like shoppers (Peberdy, 2002). Like the first category, this study established that the second and third classes of informal cross-border traders mostly sold their goods in informal markets where business permits were not required; as long as they had the 90-day visitors' visas (Interview with a Zambian cross-border trader, 18 May 2012). The visitors' visas, however, did not protect their holders from harassment during their stay in South Africa on these permits (Interview with Zimbabwean cross-border trader, 15 May 2012). The observation we make that Beitbridge is presently a site of closure as opposed to a site of connection for some SADC citizens (as well as others from African countries outside the SADC region) suggests that border practices at the Beitbridge border could be generally taken to reflect negatively on the SADC integration project in as far as the free movement of regional citizens is concerned. Given that some African migrants in this case study were informal cross-border traders, the Beitbridge border would have been expected to be a site of connection for them, or at least those who possessed legitimate immigration documents, to freely move from one member state to another. In addition to the evidence presented in the foregoing, the exclusion against African migrants at the Beitbridge border was found to be reproduced in the inner city of Johannesburg, as the evidence from respondents there shows in the next section.

## The relational reproduction of bordering and rebordering in Johannesburg inner city: Implications for SADC regional integration

The exclusivist border practices against African migrants at Beitbridge border were also found to play out in Johannesburg inner city. Differently stated, a relational reproduction of practices at Beitbridge border was evident in Johannesburg inner city. That is, the acts of exclusion at the border as well as the politics of (non-)recognition followed some of the African migrants from the port of entry to their destination, the inner city of Johannesburg. We followed up with the Congolese, Malawian, Mozambican, Tanzanian, Zimbabwean and Somali respondents to the inner city of Johannesburg. We discovered that they established small businesses in the city, at the lower end of the retailing chain. The African migrants sold different types of goods and some even operated convenience stores. These claimed that ordinary South African citizens looted their 'goods without paying', telling them to go back to their countries, as they did not deserve to be in South Africa (Interview with a Mozambican woman, June 2013). In this, not only do we see ordinary people engaged in erecting borders against African migrants, but also that these experiences in the inner city of Johannesburg are similar to the encounters and experiences that the migrants had at Beitbridge border with state agents.

From this, the question might, however, arise: how do non-state actors or ordinary South Africans impose the border on foreign nationals, when one has to have the institutional authority in order to impose control? We respond by referring to the way in which we earlier conceptualized the *border* – as a notion that exceeds the understanding that it is a simple physical line of separation between nation-states encompassing a territory over which the state exercises authority. The border can also be enacted in other various ways, and operationalized by non-state actors too; to an extent where it can occur away from the physical border (on the periphery of the nation-state), in the interior and located in wider social discourse in society where it can also be symbolic and promote identity building. What appears to be as simple as locals telling foreign nationals to go back to their countries is, in fact, an act of bordering. It is, to use the words of Groupe Frontière et al. (cited in Szary, 2015: 36), adding distance to proximity. This amplifies our discussion in the preceding section that we consider the border beyond a physical or theoretical construct, to also include the identification of belonging and non-belonging as acts of bordering. Those who belong elevate themselves to a higher social status than those who do not, such as by declaring that the latter must go back to wherever they come from.

The African migrants we interviewed revealed that they found it difficult to register business in Johannesburg inner city. Those who traded on the streets of Johannesburg inner city (especially the Congolese, Malawians, Zambians and Zimbabweans) claimed that life was difficult because it was almost impossible to obtain a residence permit or to be allocated trading stalls whenever they applied for them, at the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) and the JMTC, respectively. The views of a Tanzanian migrant street trader in Johannesburg inner city are instructive in this regard and in relation to claims of discrimination and xenophobia,

When I applied for a trading stall at the Johannesburg Metropolitan Trading Company, the officials were hostile and told me that I did not qualify. But I can tell you that I have a valid passport. The only conclusion that I can make is that those officials are xenophobic and thus discriminated against me. This explains why up to today, I do not have a trading stall and have since given up. It is such a difficult thing to engage in an honest small business here in Johannesburg inner city. (Interview with Tanzanian immigrant street trader, Johannesburg inner city, June 2013)

The Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD), whose officers patrolled the streets of Johannesburg inner city, also reportedly made life difficult for the African migrants. Some of the African traders said they had to bribe JMPD officers to secure the right to trade on the streets (Interview with DRC street trader, June 2013). In a similar context, a female Zimbabwean trader in Johannesburg inner city declared that

Whether one has valid travel documents or not does not matter, because if you ever try to argue with the police, they tear up your passport or threaten to tear it up. As a result, African migrants in Johannesburg inner city are vulnerable. They are at the complete mercy of the police. Police do not get arrested if they tear up one's passport, but when the victim reports to the police, they will not be listened to. If anything, they will be arrested for being an illegal immigrant by the same police who would have torn the passport. As a result, when the police harass and humiliate us, we just soldier on, because one is afraid to challenge them, as they will get angry and destroy the only documents we have. So, this is the life here in the streets of Johannesburg inner city my brother; it is tough. (Interview with Zimbabwean immigrant street trader, Johannesburg inner city, June, 2013)

We see from the interview responses cited above that, first, contradictions exist between SADC legislations and aspirations, South Africa's immigration policy/legislation, and the practices of law enforcement officers in Johannesburg inner city. Second, striking parallels between what occurs at Beitbridge border and in Johannesburg inner city. Regarding the first observation, it was apparently difficult for African migrants to acquire various categories of resident permits. This is not difficult to see why particularly, because the review of South Africa's post-1994 immigration policy showed a general trend towards a migration regime that is selective and restrictive against African migrants. The conflict between SADC protocols and policies and South African immigration policy is clearly evident. The contradiction can be seen between the Southern African Development Community (2005); South Africa's Immigration Act, 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002); Immigration Act, 2007 (Republic of South Africa, 2007), Immigration Amendment Bill of 2010 (Republic of South Africa, 2010); Immigration Amendment Act, 2011 (Republic of South Africa, 2011) and Immigration Regulations, 2014 (Republic of South Africa, 2014).

Regarding the parallel between occurrences at the Beitbridge border and the inner city of Johannesburg, it was established that African migrants were harassed in the inner city of Johannesburg just as was the case at the Beitbridge border. According to the respondents, only those who bribed state agents survived harassment until the next time they encountered these officials. Thus, the efforts at the Beitbridge border and the inner city of Johannesburg to exclude African migrants created sites for corruption in which immigration officials, the police and the army determined and seemed to control the nature, extent and rhythm of the illicit transactions with some vulnerable African migrants. Some African migrants at the Beitbridge border were reportedly denied entry into South Africa and those who made it into the inner city of Johannesburg claimed that they were denied opportunities to engage in economic activities such as trading on the streets.

The African migrants who were denied entry into South Africa at the Beitbridge border reportedly used illegal means such as jumping borders or bribing officials to enter the country. In the inner city of Johannesburg the African migrants who were denied trading stalls resorted to illegal trading on the streets, which was also confirmed by researchers' observations. They also reportedly bribed JMPD officers to let them operate on city streets and pavements. Some street traders in the inner city of Johannesburg said they were always on the run, painting a picture of the migrants 'jumping' the border at the inner city of Beitbridge into South Africa. At the Beitbridge border, an immigration official could illegally turn away an African immigrant, despite

them possessing valid travel documents, while the police in the inner city of Johannesburg could arbitrarily arrest documented African migrants. The insults that African migrants suffered at the border – such as being told that they were crowding and making South Africa dirty – were similar to those they suffered in the inner city of Johannesburg, where they were told to go back to their countries. The foregoing suggests the existence of bordering and rebordering practices against African migrants. Whereas a physical border accompanied by actual and symbolic processes of exclusion existed at Beitbridge, such a border did not exist in the inner city of Johannesburg. However, there were actions that led to discrimination and exclusion, just as the case was at the physical border at Beitbridge.

However, we are aware of a study by Coplan (2010), of the South Africa–Lesotho borders, which suggests that there were differences in the way that local officials dealt with the over-regulation of the central government. In fact, Coplan (2010: 62) asserts that ‘the Basotho have their own version of the old Chinese adage, “Beijing is far”: *Pitoli ea hole* (“Pretoria is far”), meaning, that laws and regulations promulgated in the distant capital expressing the state’s fantasy projections of boundedness and sovereignty evaporate in the face of more practical and profitable arrangements on the border’. Coplan goes on to state that

the Free State–Lesotho border is essentially a business. While very little is at stake politically for either government, levies and fees large and small, official and unofficial, are charged wherever possible, and controls are kept just strict and visible enough to encourage crossers to pay to evade them, and just lax and unmonitored enough so that the business of evasion can be safely and invisibly transacted. (Coplan, cited in Coplan, 2010: 62)

First, ours is a case study of Beitbridge–Johannesburg relational bordering practices. And we made the point that it is not representative of all of South Africa’s borders. Second, and arising from the first, is that Coplan’s (2010) findings could be true because the border in question is a business and also because nothing is politically at stake between the two countries. Third, and to the best of our knowledge, the study by Coplan (2010) did not engage in a relational analysis of the bordering and rebordering at the actual border itself and the centre such as Johannesburg. For example, were the Basotho still convinced that ‘Beijing’ was far while in Johannesburg? Although delving deeper into these issues may yield a paper of its own, it is sufficient for the present purpose to state that our analysis arrives at a different conclusion, which is that state and non-state actors complement each other’s work in terms of maintaining and sustaining borders at different scales and locales. Based on the findings presented in the foregoing, the next section discusses migrant experiences that suggest a mismatch between the aspirations of the SADC to integrate Southern Africa and the realities on the ground in a member state.

## **Borders and bordering and the SADC regional integration project: A discussion of the findings**

As we proceed to discuss the implications of these findings for the SADC regional integration project, four equally important issues need contextualization. First is the issue of whether or not the African migrants who were interviewed actually possessed all the necessary immigration and other legal documents required of them, to be legally present in South Africa and to conduct business in Johannesburg inner city. Second, whether they were allowed to trade in the country or only to look for employment. Third, whether or not the relation of the experiences of African migrants can actually be ascribed to actual police or government officials’ conduct. Related to this, and to the point made earlier in this paper about the right reserved by South Africa to control and manage its borders, migration and immigration, is, fourth, the understanding of

factors that generate the alleged xenophobic and exclusivist tendencies exhibited by state agents towards African migrants.

Regarding the first issue, some African migrants had resident permits that allowed them not only to run private businesses but also look for employment and work, if they so wished (DHA, 2017). The fact that possessing such permits did not provide the migrants any form of protection from exclusion constitutes the core of our argument regarding the issue of bordering and rebordering practices and policies that work against the SADC regional integration project. This is because migrants with valid immigration documents that permit them to engage in productive employment in a second member state of a REC form part of the labour force in that country and the region. This being the case, we showed earlier that labour constituted a factor of production for which freedom of movement is essential to the realization of integration (see section on theoretical considerations; see also Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014). The case for this can also be made from the experience of the EU, where free movement of labour (and capital, goods and services) is enshrined in the European Community (EC) Treaty, constitutes a fundamental principle of the EU and forms the basis of the Single Market (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2014: 54). The architects of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (1992, Article 5.2.d) had this in mind in stating that the SADC would achieve its regional integration objectives by, among other things, developing policies ‘aimed at the progressive elimination of obstacles to the free movement of capital and labour, goods and services, and of the people of the Region generally, among Member States’. In fact, the Southern African Development Community (2005), which South Africa has already ratified, implements the cited objective of the SADC: that is, eliminating obstacles to free movement of factors, including labour (Nshimbi and Fioramonti, 2013: 79).

Concerning the second aspect, respondents disclosed that some migrants failed to get the necessary resident permits in the country. It is not difficult to see why. We made the argument earlier that the South African immigration policy was increasingly restrictive. This amounts to bordering against migrants and explains why our respondents claimed that it was very difficult to be granted such permits. We have thus argued, based on interview data, that this is also a way of bordering and exclusion. To this can also be added the issue of the different classes of cross-border traders who were interviewed at Beitbridge. The picture that emerges from the foregoing is one of exclusion, bordering and rebordering against migrants mainly from African countries as opposed to those migrating from other continents to South Africa. This point is amplified by Park and Rugunanan (2010: 1), who correctly observe that ‘while it is clearly the black African migrant in South Africa who suffers the brunt of violent xenophobic attacks, diverse populations of Asian migrants are becoming increasingly vulnerable and more susceptible to xenophobic attacks’. And this is why there have been reports of attacks against migrants from countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and India (Park and Rugunanan, 2010), indicating that other non-African groups undergo this painful treatment too. Nor are the Asian migrants in Johannesburg spared from targeted attacks on foreign nationals, apart from African migrants. Newspaper accounts of attacks on them in the Johannesburg business districts of Fordsburg and Mayfair, which are predominantly Indian and Muslim populated, exist (Munshi, 2013). Most reports, however, speak of them as targets of crime as well as harassment by corrupt state or metro officials seeking to extort bribes from them (Park and Rugunanan, 2010). They are thus vulnerable to such incidences as beatings, carjacking, murders, robberies and looting of their *spazas* (tuck shops) (Hosken, Dlamini and Nair, 2015; Suttner, 2018).

Therefore, there is no attempt to exceptionalize African migrants, but, given the fact that they are not the only ones in or who migrate to South Africa, their treatment borders on being targeted. For instance, available data indicates that with the exception of Zimbabwe and Nigeria,

countries outside Africa like India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the United Kingdom (UK) were issued with more temporary resident permits (TRP) by the DHA (Stats SA, 2015: 17) ahead of African countries.

Despite these documented migration realities, not all migrants are targeted in South Africa. Rather, it is only African migrants who are not treated well (Nyamnjoh, 2006), which we consider to amount to an exclusivist border practice. With this in mind, it appears as if the politics of race and/or ethnicity play an important role in the immigration debate in South Africa, especially considering that migrants from African countries seem to be targeted and portrayed as the 'bad ones' who need to be kept out of South Africa so as to maintain the security of the country. Other groups of migrants do not suffer the same condemnation and/or labelling. But, concerning the case of African migrants, it should be remembered that it is also axiomatic that, when a state engages in bordering and rebordering policies and politics in the name of security, this actually increases the insecurity of minority groups (Saleh, 2010), in this case African migrants. In the context of SADC, this is disintegration.

Third, there is no attempt in this paper to suggest that the experiences of African migrants with the police is a measure of actual and generalized police practices in South Africa. Rather, our point is context specific to the treatment of African migrants and this is consistent with our argument about exclusion, bordering and rebordering against African migrants, as elaborated in points one and two in the preceding paragraphs. It is possible that migrants from other countries have wonderful experiences of and treatment by the police, a comment which does not fall within the ambit of this paper. Regarding the fourth issue, authors such as Nyamnjoh (2006) and Oloruntoba (2018) locate the root cause of xenophobic sentiments against foreigners in South Africa in the globalization process and, specifically, the structure of accumulation in which all Africans are at the periphery. It is argued that so-called citizens of countries in which xenophobia manifests itself claim entitlement to privileged lives, while they perceive foreigners as posing a threat to attaining such lives (Oloruntoba, 2018). This argument is forcefully advanced by Nyamnjoh (2006, 2007), who argues that 'states and their hierarchy of "privileged" citizens believe in the coercive illusion of fixed and bounded locations, immigrants, diasporas, ethnic minorities and others who straddle borders are bound to feel like travellers in permanent transit' (Nyamnjoh, 2007: 73). The foreigners must, therefore, be ejected or deported to preserve privileges and maximize opportunities for indigenes. To Nyamnjoh (2006), globalization induces accelerated flows of capital, goods, information and migration. In turn, it only exacerbates insecurities and anxieties that generate greater obsession with belonging and citizenship.

Consequently, boundaries and differences are built or re-actualized through xenophobia and intolerance. This happens as local attitudes towards outsiders and foreigners are hardened and the state responds by tightening immigration regulations. This is further compounded by what Oloruntoba (2018) views as the absence of a pan-African identity, which manifests in narrow ethnic identities and ultimately narrow nationalism. This narrow nationalism is built on the artificial borders that divided and portioned Africa as a result of the Berlin Conference of 1884–85 (Miles, 2014), but which continues to be enforced by the post-independent African states and which fuel xenophobia and the enforcement of borders at different scales (Oloruntoba, 2018). And Nyamnjoh (2006: 14) argues that the general public, immigration officials, government authorities and the media in South Africa all share this obsession of enforcing such boundaries of opportunity, which in itself is indicative of the fact that migrants from other African countries are unwelcome.

However, such bordering and rebordering practices at the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and at the centre of South Africa in Johannesburg inner city, highlighted in the



foregoing seems to work against the SADC integration project. To illustrate, the African cross-border traders whom we interviewed indicated that they exported the goods they bought from wholesalers in and around the inner city of Johannesburg to their countries of origin and others in the SADC region.

Some Zimbabwean cross-border traders claimed that they not only operated businesses in the inner city of Johannesburg but also bought goods such as clothes and building materials which they resold in Zimbabwe. Similar claims were made by Malawians, Mozambicans and Tanzanians. Hailing from various member states in the SADC region, including Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, these cross-border traders demonstrate the transnational nature of their trade activities in the sense that their businesses spread out beyond South Africa, in a periodic mobile fashion. Such trading activities are actually consistent with the spirit and letter of the SADC and AU's legislations, policies and objectives regarding trade and regional integration (see e.g. Abuja Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community, 1991; Protocol on Trade in the Southern African Development Community, 1992). The only exception would seem to be the agents through which such trade and integration should be achieved: informal cross-border and migrant traders at South Africa's borders on the periphery and at the centre.

Otherwise, even informal cross-border and immigrant traders, among other migrants, *do* help 'strengthen and consolidate the long standing historical, social and cultural affinities and links among the people of the [SADC] region' (Declaration and Treaty of SADC, 1992, Article 5.h). Moreover, such regional instruments as the 2005 Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in the SADC, together with the 1996 Protocol on Trade in the SADC, are veritable regional integration instruments that could transform the Beitbridge into a site of connectivity, if exclusivist practices were not applied to regional grassroots actors such as African migrant traders. The continent-wide integration of Africa into the AEC is dependent on fully functional RECs, particularly the eight recognized by the AU to be the building blocks of the continental economic community. South Africa is a SADC and AU member and, by extension, part of the proposed AEC. Without undermining South Africa's sovereign prerogatives, we reiterate the view that African migrants and cross-border traders from the SADC region who import and export goods between their countries and South Africa can duly be considered to be contributing to (not only the South African economy but also) SADC and Africa's economic integration. Their activities promote functional interdependence, albeit informally, between South Africa and other SADC and African countries.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to illuminate the tensions between national legislative frameworks and regional integration initiatives – an ongoing debate and process in the SADC region and Africa. We did this by placing the border practices at the Beitbridge border and the inner city of Johannesburg in the context of the SADC regional integration project. The case of the Beitbridge border between South Africa and Zimbabwe suggests a continuation in the framing of an exclusivist territoriality of a nation-state. In this way, we rather attempt to further theoretical arguments that contest the fixity of borders as coded spaces (Balibar, 2004) by recounting the experiences of citizens of the member states of the SADC, otherwise SADC citizens, and their encounters with borders in that region. Our engagement with these issues points to the profound changes in the meaning of the concept *border*, in that, contemporaneously, the construction and reconstruction of borders or practices of bordering and rebordering exceed the preservation of the nation-state's sovereignty, and no longer entirely occurs at the periphery or outer limit of nation-state territories (Balibar, 2004). The practices are,

rather, dispersed and made manifest wherever the movement of people and other flows occur, such as in cities located inside a given nation-state's outer territorial boundaries.

In this regard, we have argued that the bordering and rebordering around African migrants as they enter South Africa and travel to the Johannesburg inner city is counterproductive to efforts aimed at integrating Southern Africa through the SADC regional integration project. Some of the people who were interviewed in the study had legal residence status in South Africa, yet they still suffered harassment and discrimination at the hands of state authorities and agents. This, we argued, worked against the principles of the 1992 Declaration and Treaty of the SADC and the 2005 Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons in SADC.

Again, it is clearly understood that South Africa has the right to control and manage its borders, migration and immigration. However, being an integral part of the SADC, the AU and the AU's envisaged AEC places on South Africa the obligation to promote the principles and expectations of these institutions. Moreover, the unavoidable surrender by a state of aspects of sovereignty over its domestic policies to a supra-national/regional organization that accompanies membership in such an organization is understood in regional integration theory. These points are relevant to raise because we see it as problematic to the SADC regional integration project that South Africa is keen to promote the movement of goods, capital and services, which enhances its economic hegemonic position in the region, but simultaneously erects borders against people from countries with which it trades. If South Africa is aware of the gains of economic integration through the promotion of the movement of goods, capital and services, it means that it understands the value of regional integration. Based on the various regional and international migration, trade, development and related instruments that South Africa has ratified, its border officials at Beitbridge border and Johannesburg inner city should treat migrants, refugees and asylum seekers – whether from the SADC region or beyond – with respect and dignity. African migrants place a responsibility on South Africa to treat them well, in the spirit of regional integration and the AU agenda to create the AEC as immortalized in the 1991 Abuja Treaty and on migration.

Notwithstanding, we are mindful of the fact that the imagination of regional integration in the SADC is limited by the realities of a power structure in the form of a nation-state within the context of the *longue duree* of coloniality in Africa. For instance, the advent of coloniality/modernity in Africa ensured uneven development and economic inequalities among the nation-states in Africa (Sjögren, 2015), thereby laying the ground for the challenges of regional integration at the level of migration of human beings. With this in mind, this paper should not be read as a condemnation of the South African government policies, or by extension those of other SADC states, *per se*, but rather an exposition and problematization of the basic issues that the SADC member states need to confront so as to achieve regional integration, based on the stated commitment to the SADC regional community and African nationhood integral to it. If the structure of coloniality sustains bordering and rebordering practices that militate against the realization of a SADC nationhood and a so-called post-colonial state keeps these intact is problematic, and this is the core of our argument and not condemnation.

If nothing else, it is refreshing to note that in 2017 the South African government developed a White Paper for International Migration for South Africa. This promises to dismantle the vestiges and power structures of coloniality in pursuit of a pan-Africanist migration policy and treatment of African and SADC citizens. This is aptly captured by the declaration that 'under colonialism and its apartheid manifestation, immigration linked to citizenship was strictly limited to persons deemed to be "Europeans". Africans were classified as "Natives" and consigned to the migrant labour system that maintained colonial economies across southern Africa'; and

although immigration policy was changed based on the 1999 White Paper on International Migration, it was ‘conspicuously silent on the need to manage historic migration flows from the SADC in a way that will break with the colonial past by promoting regional integration and industrial development’ (White Paper for International Migration for South Africa, 2017: 4).

As a result of this, the White Paper goes on to state that ‘because of our shared colonial history, the development gap between South Africa and its neighbours is larger than in any other region globally’ and therefore ‘the new policy seeks to address this historical and geographical reality and put forward policy interventions that would help enable South Africa, southern Africa and Africa’ (White Paper for International Migration for South Africa, 2017: 4), to contribute to an African nationhood, whose pillar is integration on all levels, including human mobility. This is exactly our argument that South Africa, through its immigration policies and border practices, should promote regional integration. It is expected that the proposals in the White Paper should become operational after 2019. It is hoped that these policies will be operationalized, beyond political rhetoric, such that they cascade from and confront disintegration practices at the material border to other symbolic borders that are maintained and enforced by both state and non-state actors.

## Notes

1. Beitbridge border was established by the Pretoria Convention of 1881, but later replaced by the London Convention of 1884 which drew and set the boundaries of the South African Republic (the Transvaal Republic) (Olson and Shadle, 1991: 367). The South African Republic became part of the Union of South Africa in 1910, while Beitbridge became part of Southern Rhodesia, which later became Zimbabwe at independence in 1980 (Olson and Shadle, 1991: 367).

Beitbridge border post occurs where the South African N1 Highway and the Zimbabwean A6 Highway are joined by the Alfred Beit Road Bridge, which was constructed in 1929 and has theoretically served the purpose of defining where the territorial extents of the two countries start and end and, by the same token, where citizens of both countries belong.

2. SADC is one of eight REC in Africa recognized by the African Union to serve as building blocs for continental integration (see Note 5) under section detailing theoretical considerations in this paper.

3. Italics in original.

4. Italics in original.

5. The eight RECs the AU has identified for this purpose include the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA). See <http://www.au.int/en/recs/> (accessed 26 November 2012).

6. The member states are Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

## Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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