Urban Planning
2024 • Volume 9 • Article 8674
https://doi.org/10.17645/up.8674

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Open Access Journal

Temporalities of Arrival: Burundian Barbershops as an Arrival Infrastructure in a South African Township

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Submitted: 13 May 2024 **Accepted:** 11 September 2024 **Published:** 9 December 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Urban In/Formalities: How Arrival Infrastructures Shape Newcomers' Access To Resources" edited by Heike Hanhörster (Technical University Berlin), Martina Bovo (IUAV University of Venice / Politecnico di Milano), Miriam Neßler (Technical University Berlin), and Susanne Wessendorf (Coventry University), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/up.i396

Abstract

Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa have contributed to the diversity of the informal economy in urban South Africa. However, they have faced xenophobic violence and discrimination in urban spaces such as townships, which were previously designated only for Black people during apartheid. This article explores how arrival infrastructures in the township informal economy have enabled or hindered economic opportunities for those who have newly come to South Africa. Based on qualitative research on practices of solidarity and conviviality with migrant informal traders from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Malawi in the township of Umlazi in Durban, South Africa, in 2023, the article specifically focuses on Burundian migrants' barber businesses as a node in the arrival infrastructure. These barbershops act as informal social spaces that provide access to "connectors" who help with networks to acquire labour, social, and material resources. These include local knowledge and information about new locations to construct a barber business or introductions to property owners. This article argues, however, that informal market and business spaces are often temporary for migrants who are always on the move, continually arriving and re-negotiating their belonging due to multiple waves and threats of xenophobic violence. Therefore, the barber business represents a temporary structure for futuring in uncertain times.

Keywords

arrival infrastructure; barbershop; Burundian; informal economy; migration; South Africa

1. Introduction

Emmanuel is a 27-year-old man who fled his country of Burundi for South Africa. To avoid being caught by police while crossing borders, he hid in the tyre compartment of a long-distance truck, travelling via Tanzania,

Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. His only contact in South Africa was a distant cousin in Cape Town, who guided him through the journey using Facebook Messenger on a cell phone. He narrated how he navigated his way around after arrival:

> When I finally got to South Africa from Burundi, after days of travelling, the truck left me at Manguzi, [a small rural town in northern KwaZulu-Natal], but I could not understand nor speak isiZulu [which is commonly spoken there]. My cousin told me not to call him again now that I had arrived, and that I should go to the mosque and ask for help—that they would even give me a job like washing dishes in a restaurant, working as a car guard, or in a salon. He said I could choose any job from what they give me. He said that now that I am in South Africa, his job was done. Looking around, I heard a call from the mosque for afternoon prayers because we are Muslim. I followed the sound of the call down the road, but I could never see nor reach the mosque.
>
> At night, the police found me where the truck had left me. I had 30 US dollars, which I gave them along with my passport. After driving around, they bought me food [with the money], and took me to a taxi rank where there were a lot of [shipping] containers used for informal shops like salons and barbershops. They left me at the door of a container where I slept. Now that I can understand English, I can recall that they kept asking me how they could help. In the morning, people started to open and set up their businesses, and I finally found someone I could talk to in Kirundi or Swahili. He said he would connect me [*uzongixhumanisa* in isiZulu] to someone working alone in a barbershop in Durban who could give me a job, and if he agreed, he would give me transport money….[Eventually] I moved to Durban and started working at the market as a barber. During my working hours and after work, I met other guys from Burundi who had spent more time in South Africa, and we would discuss other job and business opportunities together.

Speaking to one of the authors of this article, Nomkhosi Mbatha, in isiZulu, a South African language that he learned after arriving in South Africa, this translated narrative describes how he left Burundi without many contacts or plans. Upon arrival in South Africa, unfortunately his cousin cut ties with him. However, the police, from whom he had tried to run away, actually helped Emmanuel by buying him food with the money he had handed over, and by taking him to a market where he would find other Burundians. This encounter with the police initiated a process for him: He met someone who helped him work in a barbershop, and from there he met other Burundians who later helped him find a better-paying job. His daily interactions in the market with other Burundians helped him access resources and information. "One of the guys got me a Congolese driver's licence, and that is when I got a job delivering pizza—until [I had an] accident, which forced me to return to the barber business," he said.

Emmanuel's narrative is one example of the many different and difficult journeys that migrants from African countries take to South African cities, seeking asylum and better opportunities. His story is also an example of how migrants often become connected to a new place on arrival through the informal economy in urban townships where they pursue livelihoods, share information, and access financial, material, and social resources. In this article, we will describe the significance of the Burundian barbershop as a key node within this "arrival infrastructure" in the informal economy of the urban township of Umlazi. This is significant given the existence of xenophobia in township spaces, which have been described as unwelcoming to migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. We focus on three aspects of Burundian men's barbershops in this arrival

infrastructure: as important spaces for social mobility and solidarity, which allow migrant men to access informal networks and business opportunities in this potentially hostile community; as spaces of "informality" which allow for different kinds of connections, inventive relations, and entrepreneurial endeavours; and as temporary structures for futuring in uncertain times.

2. Migrant Context in South Africa

South Africa is a major destination for migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Burundi is part of the East African Community and remains stuck in cycles of war. South Africa played a role in peace and conflict resolution in Burundi (Boshoff et al., 2010), and, between the end of apartheid in 1994 and 2001, approximately 2,000 Burundians applied for refugee status in South Africa (Crush et al., 2005). After apartheid, South Africa passed the Refugees Act in 1998, which was "compatible with international refugee and human rights law" (Khan et al., 2021, p. 50). However, despite the policy for refugees to live in communities rather than be placed in camps, asylum seekers are left in "limbo," facing long delays or obstacles in acquiring refugee status or renewing papers. This liminality renders them vulnerable, and unable to access formal healthcare, employment, and social grants (Alfaro-Velcamp et al., 2017; Hoag, 2010; Khan et al., 2021; Moyo & Botha, 2022; Sutton et al., 2011). While the actual refugee statistics cannot be fully ascertained due to irregular migration, the UNHCR (2024) reports that around 9,900 Burundian refugees currently live in South Africa.

Because they lack access to formal employment and face challenges in acquiring or renewing documentation, migrants often turn to building livelihoods in informal economic spaces (Akintola & Akintola, 2015; Sidzatane & Maharaj, 2013), which, however, also exposes them to xenophobic violence (Crush & Ramachandran, 2010; Tawodzera & Crush, 2023), often termed "Afrophobia" (Neocosmos, 2010; B. Nyamnjoh, 2016) due to the racialized discrimination towards African migrants. Xenophobic incidents reported in the Umlazi township include attacks on Congolese, Burundian, and other migrants, and the continued use of derogatory names (Magwaza, 2018; Rulashe, 2019).

3. Migrant Infrastructures

In recent literature, the term "migrant infrastructure" has been used to describe the institutions and actors that facilitate mobility (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014), and the "'moorings,' or physical and organisational architectures, responsible for structuring, mobilising and giving meaning to movement through their particular arrangements" (Lin et al., 2017, p. 167). Xiang and Lindquist (2014) define different infrastructures in the migration process as social, commercial, regulatory, technological, and humanitarian. Kathiravelu (2021, p. 647) argues that such infrastructures are not "neutral intermediaries," and emphasises an examination of "infrastructural injustice" to acknowledge the "effect on social, material and political outcomes." Reflecting on infrastructural justice is particularly important for the lives of irregular and illegalised migrants in South Africa, who rely on informal urban spaces of arrival.

"Arrival infrastructures" have been defined as "those parts of the urban fabric within which newcomers become entangled on arrival, and where their future local or translocal social mobilities are produced as much as negotiated" (Meeus et al., 2019, p. 1). Although earlier literature focused on the role of migrant networks in cities, Wessendorf and Gembus (2024, p. 2) argue that more work needs to focus on "place-based opportunity structures" because "where someone arrives matters hugely regarding the potential of forming social relations."

We focus on the urban scale as important for a "politics of place" in enacting migrant solidarity (Bauder, 2020) and for access to support (Darling, 2021; Zill, 2023). In South Africa, the concept of arrival infrastructures has been helpful in describing, in the work of Nyakabawu (2023), how Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town access resources, accommodation, job openings, internet access, and social support. However, drawing from Felder et al.'s (2020) notion of this "Janus-faced" aspect of arrival infrastructures, Nyakabawu (2023) also offers examples of how such networks can be dangerous for vulnerable migrant newcomers due to misplaced trust, including unexpected charges for accommodation or exposure to drug addiction, resulting in homelessness and food insecurity.

In this article, we also build on Simone's (2004) concept of "people as infrastructure," to describe the emerging "social compositions" (p. 411) and collaborative ways in which diverse people connect and seek opportunities in Johannesburg. Newcomers are a part of the fabric of cities, where, he argues, they "have an opportunity to use their working-out arrangements for coexisting with others, both new and old residents, as a platform on which to initiate new entrepreneurial activities and residential practices" (Simone, 2011, p. 386). Therefore, rather than focusing on terms such as social capital or networks, the notion of social infrastructure can help conceptualise the "flows, movements, congestions and internments of people and things" (McFarlane & Silver, 2017, p. 463) within these nodes and spaces of arrival.

Arrival infrastructures are also material; for example, the barbershop itself, as we show, is set up in "containers," or else made of tin and boards or tents, and can be taken down and moved around (Sibeko, 2020). Meeus et al. (2020, p. 16) allude to how the infrastructure of an "improvised 'shipping container'" is visible as a sign of their "permanent temporariness." The welcoming set up of barbershops, as we will show, also facilitates meetings and the exchange of information; this follows Hans and Hanhörster's (2020, p. 80) emphasis on how the transfer of resources requires in-person "encounters" and "physical proximity." At the same time, digital infrastructures such as cell phones and internet access also play an essential role for newcomers to access information and resources (Hans, 2023; Nalbandian & Dreher, 2023; Wessendorf, 2022; Wessendorf & Gembus, 2024).

4. "Informal" Arrival Infrastructures and the Potential for Solidarity

Wessendorf and Gembus (2024, pp. 5–6), writing on the European context, offer examples of both formal and informal arrival infrastructures; formal infrastructures, they write, might include "educational settings, libraries, community centres, sports facilities and places of worship," while more informal spaces could be "cafés, hairdressers or nail salons," which are also often migrant-run businesses (Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020). Hall et al. (2017, p. 5) also show how "micro-economies" of diverse neighbourhoods in the UK create spaces for migrants to "land" themselves and access "institutional and public spaces that provide various forms of care and association" (Hall et al., 2017, p. 9).

However, in the township studied in this research, Umlazi, spatial inequality, dense urbanisation, lack of formal municipal support, and challenges in accessing permits and employment make migrant arrival infrastructures more informalized, temporary, unpredictable, and yet also even more important for survival. Meeus et al. (2020, p 15) describe a "dialectical" relation of arrival infrastructures, built "simultaneously and interdependently 'from above' and 'from below.'" Various actors, resources, and material and social compositions emerge within the informal economy "from below," in the way newcomers try to access friendships, resources, and hospitality.

Hence, Simone (2011, p. 2) describes "collective orientations to both the local and the translocal that are not easily mediated through conventional forms of organization and planning." The workings of this formality and informality in Johannesburg's Park Station neighbourhood have been described by Zack and Landau (2022) as a fluid "enclave entrepot" where "migrant entrepreneurs…transform parts of the city into a migrant-run mobility infrastructure." This scene includes a diverse range of actors such as "transport operators, smugglers, government officials and police officers operating at or beyond the law's edge" (Zack & Landau, 2022, p. 2339). In another example, using an infrastructural and "multi-scalar" examination of migrant shops and public spaces in Bellville, Cape Town, Tayob (2019, p. 51) describes "the porosity between formality and informality, where the seemingly local spaces of this informal trade are not restricted to the specific site." The transfer of migrant remittances from South Africa also reveals the intersection of "formal" and "informal" systems in migrant banking, digital, and remittance infrastructures (Cirolia et al., 2022).

Therefore, if "where someone arrives matters" (Wessendorf & Gembus, 2024, p. 2), informal economic spaces in Umlazi can facilitate and orientate newcomers towards business niches and offer protection and social support. As Bovo (2020, p. 27) argues, the informality "is what makes a certain space immediately accessible, and also what allows the transit through it." Economic spaces in South Africa can also facilitate sharing and transactions with and between migrant communities (Maringira & Vuninga, 2022; Mbatha & Koskimaki, 2023; Moyo & Zanker, 2020). As we have argued elsewhere (Mbatha & Koskimaki, 2023), the informality of such spaces allows for conviviality and solidarity to emerge through creating infrastructures of friendship through sharing and trust between migrants and others.

Arrival infrastructures are therefore spaces where migrant solidarity can be enacted as well as contested. Migrant solidarity research has examined various practices and policies of inclusion at the urban scale, in North American contexts as well as in European cities after the "refugee crisis" (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2019; Bauder, 2020, 2021; Darling, 2021). Such spaces help give rise to what Meeus (2017, p. 100) describes as "infrastructures of solidarity," while Hans (2023, p. 387) emphasises how this solidarity in arrival infrastructures arises out of "the sense of connection brought about by collective migration histories, shared experiences of everyday life."

Due to the relative lack of municipal support for migrants in cities (Landau et al., 2011), the South African context of migrant solidarity differs in many ways (Koskimaki & Mazani, in press). Examples include "instrumental" and "contingent" solidarity within migrant communities (Rugunanan, 2022), and solidarity and conviviality as a survival strategy (Chekero, 2023; H. M. Nyamnjoh, 2017), often involving localised vocabularies of support, hospitality, and cohesion (Bauder et al., 2023; Chekero & Morreira, 2020; Mbatha & Koskimaki, 2023). Solidarity between migrant communities finds ways to emerge in arrival infrastructures through knowledge sharing and friendship; Makanda's (2021, p. 128) research in Yeoville, for example, explores how Burundian, Congolese, and other migrants "know one another in their neighbourhood and report to one another any new arrivals," with one participant sharing, "as neighbours, we develop friendship with newcomers on how best we can help each other." At the same time, newcomers have to navigate around formal and informal networks and sometimes "unspoken" social worlds of their businesses.

Finally, Meeus et al. (2019, p. 14) write that "arrival in the arrival infrastructure is always temporary, but its length is in negotiation." As we will show, while barbershops are spaces of potential solidarity for newcomers, their informality also poses challenges for migrants arriving and hoping to stay. Migrant

temporality literature has shown how waithood and liminality create uncertainty, waithood, and disruption in the life course (Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths et al., 2013). In South Africa, migrants in urban South Africa often "shun" solidarity, avoiding obligations and social intimacies (Landau, 2019), forging mere "communities of convenience" (Landau, 2017) due to the temporariness and vulnerability of migrant life. Migrant experiences of liminality also engender new kinds of strategies of survival in South Africa (Kihato, 2013; Machinya, 2020; Mbatha & Koskimaki, 2021; Nyakabawu, 2021). Conceptually, barbershops as social and material arrival infrastructures are temporary, as they are being broken down, built and rebuilt, and moved around. Newcomers navigate "futuring vectors" through the barbershop "that point towards potential, desirable or undesirable future becomings" (Meeus et al., 2020, p. 15). They may be forced or compelled to continually move their barbershops around for safety or due to shifting opportunities. Given this background, we describe the way in which barbershops in Umlazi are temporal nodes in the arrival infrastructure for many migrants as they arrive and navigate through the spaces of Umlazi.

5. Barbershops

Barbershops have been written about in various geographic contexts as spaces of sociality and networking. Literature in the US has described the role that barbershops play in African-American contexts (Harris, 2017; Marberry, 2005), as places where Black men are free to escape social expectations (Bozeman, 2009). The everyday conversations and social exchanges between barbers, customers, and young men in these spaces are based on a culture of inclusion (Alexander, 2003; Shabazz, 2016) and serve to share information and knowledge (Ellams, 2021; Nedd, 2010). In South Africa, men's barbershops and women's salons have contributed to townships due to their accessibility and artistic displays of popular trends (Sibeko, 2020). In her research in Johannesburg's Bree Street, Matsipa (2017, p. 41) argues that migrant women's salons allow for dynamic entrepreneurship and "zones of intimacy, care, and economic and cultural exchange." Migrant salons and barbershops in Cape Town have become convivial spaces for migrants (Maringira & Vuninga, 2022; Murara, 2020) and create opportunities to participate in economic social spaces and attract South African customers (Koelble, 2003; Maringira & Vuninga, 2022).

The barbershops that we describe in Umlazi are either shack-type structures that are made out of timber and iron, shipping containers that are fitted with furniture and converted into a barbershop, or foldable tents made out of waterproof material. Many Burundian barbershop businesses are highly visible in Umlazi due to their signage walls filled with painted faces with different haircuts or posters of well-known international musicians and actors such as Will Smith or 50 Cent. Burundian men use the spaces to teach newcomers the art of cutting hair, which allows them to develop and pursue livelihoods. Barbershops are also spaces where men can express masculinity and socialise together regardless of their social position, and often taxi drivers, professionals, or unemployed men can be found there for haircuts.

6. Research in the Umlazi Township

Umlazi is a township that is situated in KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, which is a port city on the east coast of South Africa. The township was a reserve for Black people during the apartheid's government Group Areas Act (1950), which enforced segregation and designated residential areas according to race. After 1994, it became a diverse residential area with high levels of crime, unemployment, and poverty. There is a visible gap between the middle-class residents and the poor, with a lack of service delivery, crime, and vandalization of

state infrastructures (Mottiar, 2021). The majority of residents in Umlazi are isiZulu-speaking South Africans and other South African ethnic groups such as amaXhosa. It also is home to a large number of migrants from the African continent and South Asia. Many migrant research participants shared concerns about violence and xenophobia, which have also been highlighted in media reports and studies discussing unemployment in Umlazi (Magwaza & Ntini, 2020). Some outbreaks of violence are motivated by crime, discrimination, and scapegoating of migrants for social ills (Rulashe, 2019).

This article is based on ethnographic research of the first author, Nomkhosi Mbatha, with migrants as well as South Africans in the informal economic spaces of Umlazi. The broader research topic focused on practices of solidarity among migrants from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Malawi, and Somalia in Cape Town and Durban. The study received ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape, where we work and study, and the Toronto Metropolitan University, which is hosting the project that funded this research. From this research, we focus on narratives and experiences of Burundian barbers in 2023 and 2024, whose names have been changed to protect their identities. As a South African isiZulu-speaking woman from Umlazi, Mbatha had to negotiate her positionality in masculine migrant spaces. She approached participants in the barbershops using English as a language of communication but found that many migrants preferred to communicate in isiZulu and expressed that they struggled more with English. Data for this article was obtained through Mbatha's interviews and observations in several barbershops that are situated by a train station, road intersection, and schools. Mostly frequented by both South African and migrant men, they emerged as spaces of sociality, where people would stop and greet or even share a beer or cold drink over conversation about families, the expansion of their businesses, available accommodation, reflections on previous soccer matches, or what had happened in the tavern where they normally congregate during weekends to share beers.

7. Connectors in the Township

Migrant infrastructures are composed of social networks, civil society, state departments, technology (Xiang & Lindquist, 2014), as well as "brokers," which Lindquist et al. (2012) refer to as state officials and migrants themselves who mediate between different parties. In an arrival infrastructure, Hanhörster and Wessendorf (2020, p. 4) refer specifically to "arrival brokers" who "take on an instrumental role in newcomers' settlement" and who might have "arrival expertise and be willing to help" (Wessendorf & Gembus, 2024). In the context of Umlazi, we find the term broker is less useful due to the informality of their services and exchanges; we rather propose the term "connector," drawing from "*abantu abanoconnection*" in isiZulu, which participants used to refer to "people with connections" who "make things happen" and can be trusted. This trust can be observed through their regular customers, who would stop by to pay their debts or ask the Burundian barbers to look after their belongings. On one occasion, Mbatha observed a barber babysitting a local boy child who had been left by his mother while waiting his turn.

Enzo is a Burundian barber who has lived in South Africa for over 15 years. The barbershop provided him social mobility, as it allowed him to build his business over time and then in turn help newcomers. His work in helping other migrants led to him being referred to as a connector. When he first arrived in South Africa, he built his network with another man who has since retired. When Enzo's barbershop tent hosted four other barbers, he helped set up another tent next to his to accommodate the newcomers. At the time of research, five other barbershop tents were operating nearby, but research did not show much competition amongst

them. Rather, they worked together and supported each other to stay safe and grow their businesses. Enzo was trusted partly due to his being more established. He often helps other Burundian barbers when they have challenges and face hostility. For instance, Enzo shared news about a gang that demanded money for a rental. He also connected them to a prominent businessman, who one participant described as having "been to Burundi and Tanzania so we can speak Swahili with him. He knows the challenges we have experienced and has seen what our country is like. So, he said we can use this space, and he is friendly." Because this businessman is highly revered in the township, Enzo and the other Burundian barbers shared that they felt some sort of social protection in that space.

However, despite the permanence that Enzo tried to create by setting up the shop in well-decorated and furnished containers, he and others had to move the shops continually due to exposure to violence. He shared that due to the growing number of Burundians in the area, they faced a xenophobic attack and had to move out of the containers to more makeshift and mobile tents. He explained:

> We saved some money and got containers. The community here burned them during the xenophobic attacks, but we were able to recover and move them to a different site. Because there was no other business next to us, they burned them to the ground, and that is when we saw that working in the tents was better.

Since arriving at the area, the group of Burundian barbers changed spots three times due to xenophobic outbreaks. They explain that they still return because this is their business.

Clement is another "connector" who has been living in South Africa for almost 10 years. He mentioned that "if a person comes to us and tells us that he is new and is looking for a job, we give him a job. But if we are full, we refer him to others." Clement's arrival was also facilitated by a range of connectors. Enzo confirmed this in a follow-up interview, saying that "a person you first meet upon arrival has an obligation to help you, either with accommodation, food, or a job."

While many migrants usually receive help from their own countrymen, Clement had established contact with Tanzanians prior to leaving home through his uncle who had lived in Tanzania, and who also facilitated his move to South Africa. When he worked as a barber in the city centre, he met a lot of customers from the township who encouraged him to move there, after which he was introduced to a man they call "uBaba" as a sign of respect, who is a South African from Umlazi. He explained:

> We used to work in town when we arrived. There were many customers from this area who asked us, why don't we go to the township. Someone shared information with us, and we met uBaba, who set up this place for us. We came to the township because our customers wanted us to.

He was called uBaba, meaning "father," during the interviews to protect his identity as a person who has procured spaces for the barbershops operated by Clement's network.

Clement's network included Alex, Yves, and Yusuf, three new young men in their early 20s who had just arrived in South Africa, and did not communicate well in English or isiZulu. Clement had been able to provide work for them; for example, Alex and Yves work about 500 meters away from him, and Yusuf works about three

kilometres away. Alex and Yves' shack is a new construction set up in between other businesses, and Clement made sure that their business was close to a bus stop and busy T-junction with high foot traffic. Clement also arranged a space for Yusuf via a homeowner who agreed for the barbershop tent to be placed in front of their house. After six months, Yusuf's tent was no longer there, and in its place was a small shack made out of bricks and connected to the house's fence. There, two new Burundian barbers, also in Clement's network, had set up a shop. A constructed shack is deemed more profitable for homeowners because it assures them income once it is leased to migrants, and it is more protected from crime and violence. Bricks are also a sign of greater permanence; however, any barbershop is temporary. The tent is a reflection of their temporality because it can be burnt down, or the migrants may have to vacate at short notice.

We return to Emmanuel's narrative in the article's introduction. His experience showed how he accessed support through such arrival "connectors." As he shared, he had met some men in an encounter at the market, who then connected him with someone in Durban. He also received help from the police, who despite being part of the formal township regulation, did not inquire about his "legality," but rather assisted him in finding food and meeting other migrants. The man who helped him acquire a Congolese driver's license also acted as a connector because he had to contact various actors who would help Emmanuel get the license to get the job. While he did not provide explicit information as to how he acquired it, it is challenging and expensive to receive a South African driver's license, and the Congolese driver's license would help him to more easily and quickly get a driving job. Emmanuel's current barbershop is behind a school; he explained that he had to get the permission of the school principal to set up shop there. However, like Enzo, Emmanuel remained in a liminal space and was constantly having to renegotiate his sense of belonging. He shared that he is planning to leave because of crime in the area, as he has been attacked twice in his shop. Emmanuel seemed to be separated from Clement's or Enzo's networks, which experience a certain degree of protection by other connectors because of their financial and social status.

The lack of social protection creates a life of always being on the move and arriving. The barbershop is temporary because of its vulnerability to vandalism and crimes, often motivated by xenophobia. Emmanuel has anticipated moving several times due to the violence from local thieves who have attacked him twice and left him for dead. He feels uneasy because at any time he might get robbed, and he worries about how he would recover his money and assets, such as cutting machines and cell phones. The option of starting over somewhere else has always lingered in his mind, and opportunities have been presented by men in his network that are outside Durban elsewhere in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. On the other hand, Enzo and the other barbers feel protection from connectors. This can be regarded as a "solution for temporary presences," which allows them to engage and "diversify other futuring vectors" (Meeus et al., 2020, pp. 16–17). The informality of the urban space also therefore shapes this life of temporariness for migrants (Darling, 2017).

8. Resources

Hobfoll (2011, p. 339, as cited in Phillimore et al., 2018, p. 217) defines resources as "objects, personal characteristics or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources." These conduits are the focus of this section on the kinds of resources that are valued in Umlazi. In the migrant context, "arrival resources" can be "social, economic, and cultural," and are often transferred to newcomers by more established migrants (Wessendorf,

2022). Examples are "housing, education, health services and social networks" (Wessendorf & Gembus, 2024, p. 3; see also Hanhörster & Wessendorf, 2020). The "transfer" of such resources is also often mediated through "encounters," which Hans and Hanhörster (2020, p. 80) describe as "unexpected and spontaneous social interactions in (semi-)public spaces."

When we compare the resources described in some European infrastructures of arrival, such as Wessendorf's discussion of the library and other institutions, with the ones in Umlazi, we cannot compare the same space, whether formal or informal. A library in Umlazi is a meeting place for school children to find books for homework and has no access to the internet. Many shopkeepers in Umlazi work behind burglar bars to protect themselves from crime. Community centres that had been set up by the municipality are accessible; however, migrants were not found around them. Resources provided by the state did not serve migrant needs. In the absence of formal access to resources, a barbershop has become a welcoming space of solidarity for migrants to access social connections, informal accommodation, employment information, language learning, understanding of social relations, and digital infrastructures.

Information is a valuable resource and currency to the migrants who arrive in the township. One of the most important resources for migrants is informal job and skills acquisition. Both Emmanuel and Enzo's arrival narrative revealed that they came into the township with no barbering skills; however, the skill and knowledge to do so was provided by those with arrival expertise. Everyone has a role in sustaining the business that will help other newcomers in the future. Barbershops and other migrant businesses require trust and solidarities created with other migrants and South Africans. For instance, Clement has vocational skills, which include bricklaying. However, there is an unspoken notion that certain construction businesses like bricklaying are reserved for Malawians, whom the locals trust and support in that field, while Zimbabweans often venture into welding. This information helps newcomers filter into businesses that are conducted by their countrymen. Again, migrants learn to navigate the boundaries of respect to allow each community to prosper within a business opportunity they have identified. Clement clarified that these boundaries are also shaped by language barriers; when migrants arrive, they usually prefer to speak their home language. Once a person can fully comprehend the township language of isiZulu, they can negotiate to join a craftsmanship of their choice.

Accommodation and access to business spaces are not always visible and thus require access to these networks or "encounters." While it may be easy for local people to find accommodation, migrants find accommodation through networks and word of mouth. Some landlords who lease to migrants operate behind the scenes to protect themselves from violence and harsh judgement from local people. This follows Hans and Hanhörster's (2020) emphasis on the encounter and physical proximity for facilitating resource transfers. For instance, Clement and other barbers in his shop obtained accommodation through a Mozambican-heritage man named Ricci, whose South African mother owned flatlets in the township. At barbershops, Mbatha observed discussions about the rates and safety of available rentals.

Cell phones are an essential arrival and navigational digital resource. For instance, Enzo mentioned that he could fix phones, and some of the old broken phones came in handy for newcomers who did not have phones. The phone contributes to the safety of newcomers. Another use of phones involves the sharing of photographs of the destination, which, however, can also be misleading. Emmanuel shared that on his journey to South Africa, "I thought Maputo was Durban because of the tall buildings and the beaches because of the pictures

I had in my phone, until I was told it's not." Also, internet and data connection are not a freely accessible resource in the township, and many times migrants struggle to access these due to high-priced data plans. Burner phones and old mobile phones are also often used to limit unexpected data costs and for protection against thieves who steal phones.

Finally, phones are used for other social connections, such as simply playing music. Similar to Murara's (2020) research on Congolese and Rwandan sociality in salons in Cape Town, music (in this case played on the cell phone's radio) can attract customers and mark the barbershop's presence. People sit together, talk, and listen to music, sharing information and personal stories. Clive and Yves play a lot of music to distinguish themselves from the businesses around them. Since they have not mastered the isiZulu language, the music promotes their establishment. While the world has gravitated towards the use of applications like Spotify and iTunes to play music, old cell phones without these applications are used for storing music and connecting to portable speakers.

Mbatha observed that a migrant's ability to speak isiZulu seemed to indicate deeper belonging. Not being able to grasp isiZulu meant one was still new. Migrants also use Google Translate and other translation apps on their phones to learn the language and communicate. Yusuf, as a Burundian newcomer, was working alone in a tent that was placed in one of the intersections. He had been struggling to communicate in isiZulu with his clients and with other businesses, as well as ride on public transport and shop without any difficulties:

> Because I have to ask people what haircut style they want, if there is a word I do not understand, I use Google Translate. I am in KwaZulu-Natal—I am forced to use Google Translate to communicate in IsiZulu, and it also helps me to build relationships with other people.

Knowing isiZulu and being able to respond provides him with access to further information and knowledge about surroundings that can only be obtainable from locals. Using Google Translate helps him understand the language better in the absence of language learning centres, which are not available in the township.

Cell phone communication applications are another important digital resource that facilitates migrant arrival. WhatsApp was important for the expansion of Clement and Enzo's network, as well as to assist those who had legal challenges. Clement shared how a newcomer was arrested, and the members of their WhatsApp group communicated that money was needed for legal fees. WhatsApp was also used to welcome newcomers and provide information about resources. Emmanuel's travel journey, cited in this introduction, was facilitated via Facebook Messenger. He maintained communication with his contact using the application on the cell phone even without access to a local SIM card. Although the cell phone may appear to serve different purposes for these men, what is more important is that they are able to use it to familiarise themselves with the nuances of the township, seek help from their networks, and be able to provide guidance.

Resources that are provided to migrants during the arrival process are critical in shaping how or whether they will settle into the township life or move onwards to other destinations. Accommodation that is offered by different landlords exposes migrants to township culture and social dynamics, in that Burundians and other migrants share rented rooms with South Africans, which helps them to learn isiZulu and form friendships. Friendships formed with locals outside of work help them to understand the taxi routes, the best places to start another business in areas with high foot traffic, and which WhatsApp groups to join to learn about crime and

get notified of any looming xenophobic outbreaks. Acquiring such resources creates a sense of belonging. Also, Burundians share information and other resources amongst themselves, which highlights shared experiences and arrival-specific knowledge (Hans, 2023, p. 387) critical for overcoming a life of precarity.

9. Conclusion

The barbershops operated by Burundians in Umlazi act as material and social arrival infrastructures, that help to create a sense of belonging for migrants, in addition to creating a space to access resources and solidarity. This article shows that arrival infrastructures emerge in different ways in different urban contexts. Unlike some of the more formal arrival infrastructures described in European cities or urban centres, in the townships, newcomers access solidarity and resources through more informal spaces. The process of arrival may seem informal, but newcomers become embedded in formalised relations, such as those with the connectors who assist migrants in accessing or pursuing their entrepreneurial endeavours.

The barbershop is a node within this arrival infrastructure that transforms the material conditions of migrants through economic opportunities and social protection for their livelihoods. Building connections and solidarity with South African locals and more established migrants helped to facilitate the transfer of resources for Burundians. Being a migrant or South African connector in the arrival process means fulfilling the obligation of linking newcomers to new jobs and other economic activities. Such activities also act as an investment into barbering skills for the newly arrived migrants who do not have these skill sets. In addition to helping them maintain their livelihoods, these connections afford them social protection to continuously run the barbershop. Some migrants access technology to navigate other positionalities, like learning the local language, finding safe passage, and accessing new networks.

However, the barbershop is also an example of permanent temporariness. Meeus et al. (2019) write that "arrival in the arrival infrastructure is always temporary, but its length is in negotiation." In Umlazi, this research with Burundian migrants shows how they have never truly arrived, because of the different waves of xenophobic attacks and crime that compel them to always renegotiate their belonging, move on, and start over again. Information is a valuable currency that strategically helps migrants to overcome this uncertainty. As informal as they are, these infrastructures are also embedded in a created formality, negotiated through encounters with various actors who play different roles in the township economy.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the participants of this research for sharing their experiences. We would also like to thank the thematic issue editors and anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback, which helped to shape this article.

Funding

This research was supported by the Urban Sanctuary, Migrant Solidarity and Hospitality in Global Perspective (Soli*City) partnership, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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