Opting to Settle in a Small African Town

A Case Study of Refugees in Towns
Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown), South Africa

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Contents

Cover: Rhodes University, in the foreground, is an anchor institution for much of the economic and social life of the small South African town of Makhanda. All photos by the author.

Location

Makhanda is located in southeastern South Africa, far away from borders—meaning it is not typically a first destination for migrants—and far away from the major urban hubs of Johannesburg or Cape Town, meaning it is less desirable for migrants searching for jobs.
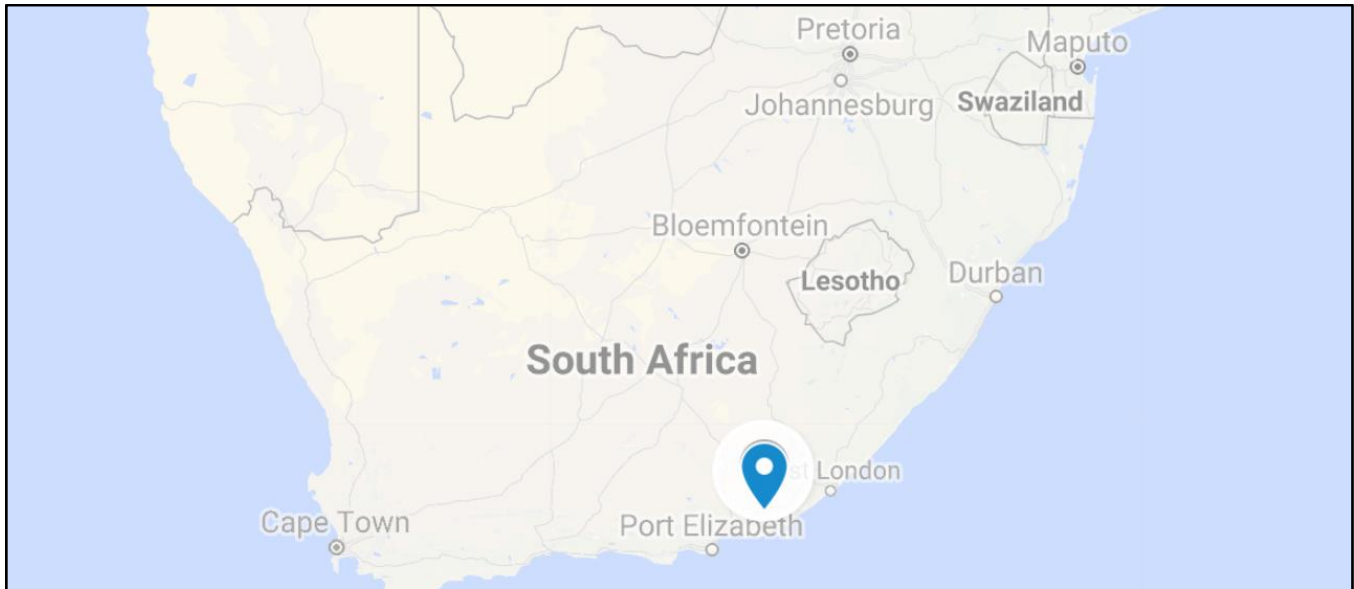
Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) is a small town with less than a 3.5 mi (5.6 km) diameter.
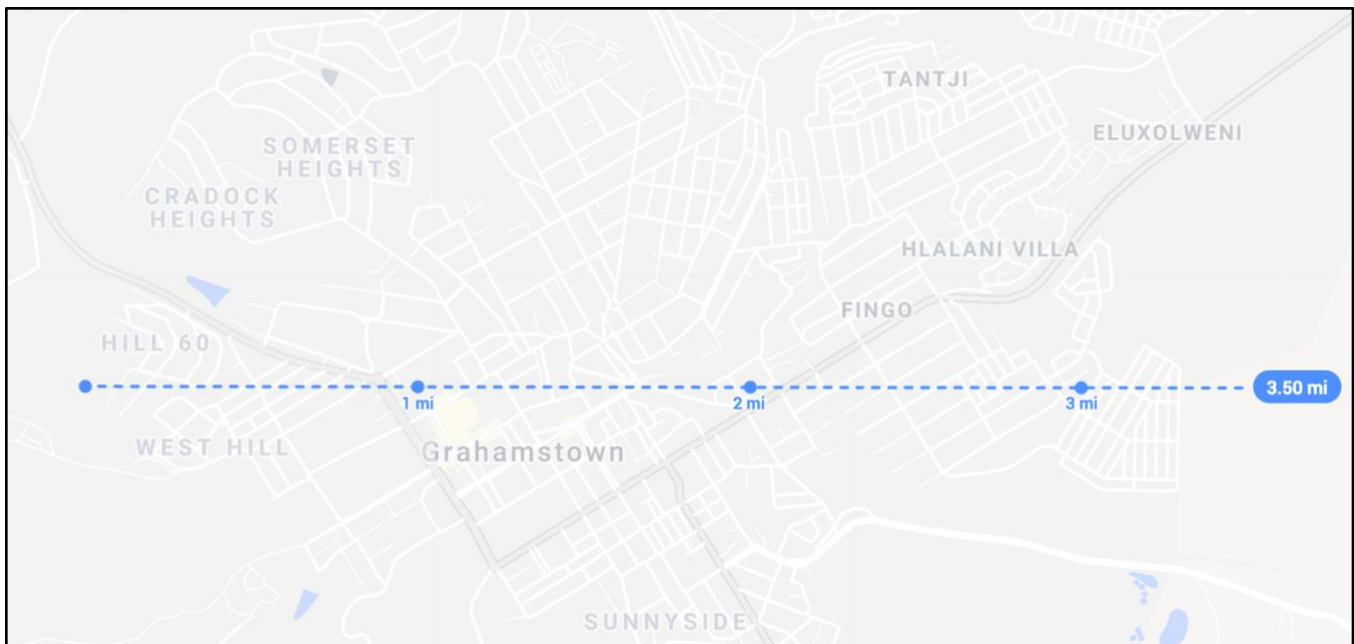
For more background on migration in Makhanda and South Africa, continue to the appendices.

Map imagery © Google 2019.

Introduction

At the height of Zimbabwe's economic meltdown in 2008, Josia left Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city, for Francistown, Botswana's second capital. He had just lost his job as the city's retrenched workers struggled to stay afloat. The first child in a family of three, and the breadwinner of the family, he could not endure the pain of seeing his siblings go to bed hungry. With no money to pay their school fees, his younger sister and brother would eventually be forced out of school in the coming semester. For two years Josia worked hard in the booming construction industry of Francistown and managed to keep his siblings in school through the remittances he was sending them. However, he was always playing cat-and-mouse with Botswana police and immigration officials as permits to legalize his stay in the country were difficult to obtain.

Eventually, he got tired of being harassed by officials in Botswana and he decided to move to Johannesburg, South Africa, where two of his friends had settled and with whom he'd kept in touch through WhatsApp and Facebook. Within a week of arriving in Johannesburg, he obtained an asylum-seeker permit and started working as a waiter at an upmarket restaurant in the city. He continued to wire money home to his siblings and within two years managed to save enough money to start a business of his own. But while he admired the vibe and buzz of the big city, he was skeptical of his chances of making it in the highly competitive environment of Johannesburg. So, he moved to the smaller city of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape Province. There he learned of an even smaller town named Makhanda[1] where he thought he could thrive. He decided to try his options there.

Josia's story is one of many similar trajectories I encountered in my research for this report. I was interested in how the immigrants in Makhanda made the decision to move to this smaller town, and how well have they integrated compared to the larger cities they first arrived at. In South Africa, larger metropolitan areas like Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban are the preferred destinations for immigrants while most people outside South Africa have never heard of Makhanda. Only students, like myself, who came directly from neighboring countries to Makhanda to attend Rhodes University would know where this city is. This report will explore the decisions of migrants to come to this small town, their impact on the town's businesses and social life, and how their experiences differ from migrants trying to integrate to South Africa's large cities.

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[1] Masinga, 2018.

Methodology

For this research, I first established a relationship with the interviewees by interacting with them for two months. Building this trust was important for them to open up about information they would not usually share with a stranger. This trust enabled me to have everyday conversations akin to those between people who know each other well. Of the 20 people I interviewed there were 10 men and 10 women. I also selected interviewees who work in different sectors and who came from different countries. These included Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Somalia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. I did not focus on their legal status unless they wanted to talk about it. The common denominator was that they were all immigrants living and working in Makhanda.

I told them I would not disclose their names or identifying information and explained the purposes of my research when we first met. Except for the waiters I interviewed at their workplaces after they finished work, most of the conversations took place during the day, at their business premises or after church services. Before conducting interviews, I reviewed reports, news articles, municipal data, and literature on migration in Makhanda. My research occurred in parts of the town where immigrants live and work: Fingo, Joza, and Tantji.

The Author's Position in the Town and Experience Researching this Case

I read John Steinberg's *A Man of Good Hope* which narrates the harrowing story of a Somali man named Asad Abdullahi who ended up settling in a small town in Eastern Cape, only to move again to Cape Town as he saw his uncle and business partner being gunned down. It was while reading this book that I really began to think of how immigrants make their decisions to move from one place to another, especially to these small towns that they do not know much about. I also began reflecting on my own decisions and route from Cape Town to Makhanda.
I arrived in Makhanda at the beginning of 2018 as a student at the local university. I had been living in South Africa for over seven years and was previously based in Cape Town. Prior to moving, colleagues and friends shared interesting stories about Makhanda with me. Some even wondered if I could survive in such a quiet and boring place. I therefore did a lot of research prior to moving here. I am living in a university residence but often walk around the town to familiarize myself with the people and the place.

As an immigrant student, I am aware of my biases. There is a certain way I see and talk about the host population that a local resident would not. I tend to compare my previous life in Cape Town with that of Makhanda. These are mostly unfair comparisons built on perceptions ingrained during the time I resided in Cape Town. Being aware of these biases, I test these notions in conversations with fellow students and local friends who caution me about my assumptions. After several months here, I am still making inroads and getting to know the local community.

The Urban Impact

The first immigrants to arrive in what they then named Grahamstown were the colonizers in 1812. The town was a small military outpost to safeguard the eastern frontier of the then British-controlled Cape Colony. It was named after Lieutenant Colonel John Graham who established the fort. However, these occupiers did not settle on vacant land as there were Xhosa communities living on it. That is why on 22 April 1819 the Battle of Grahamstown was fought between the British and the Xhosa led by Makana.[2] Interestingly, the city's most significant building is the controversial 1820 Settlers Monument on Gunfire Hill built in honor of the occupiers (seen on the cover picture).

Early colonial settlers in Makhanda, courtesy of Martin Plaut.

The Makhanda Railway Station is on the now-defunct network which used to connect the city to Port Alfred and Port Elizabeth and has the status of a provincial heritage site. The last train to pass through Makhanda was in 2009. People who came to work, study, and settle in the city in the past have great memories of the train station as it was where they first entered the city and felt a rush of optimism. Nowadays people can only access Makhanda by road. The most popular form of transport are the long-distance buses connecting the town to Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, and Pretoria.

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[2] Makana Municipality is now named after this leader. Makhanda and Makana are different spellings for the same name. Grahamstown was officially renamed Makhanda in 2018, but the municipality has always used the "Makana" spelling.

Over the years Makhanda has grown, however, its lack of a harbor has meant that it has been overtaken by East London and Port Elizabeth. The university remains its central attraction. However, immigrants have found their way to the city as they have done to most parts of South Africa. My desk review revealed press reports of the xenophobic attacks in 2015, in which the local Taxi Association allegedly initiated the attacks by displaying placards with messages like: "They Must Go," or "They Must Burn," referring to immigrants whom the taxi association wanted to leave the city. Like in any city in South Africa, it is easy for the taxi associations to target immigrants, as the taxis are the most common form of transport for immigrants and locals. The police and the municipality were heavily criticized by human rights and civil society organizations for failing to provide security to migrants.[3] Immigrants viewed these officials as complicit in the xenophobic attacks.

In Makhanda, there has been no integration scheme whatsoever to try and foster good relations between the immigrants and the host community. In fact, amidst the xenophobic attacks the Makana Municipality is alleged to have lied about providing food to the displaced foreigners.[4] Such divide-and-conquer messages by the municipality increased tension between the residents and the immigrants, both of whom pay taxes to the municipality. In reaction, residents were incensed by the belief that the municipality was looking after the people they were trying to get rid of. Overwhelmed by the situation, the Makana Municipality turned to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees whose officials provided successful mediation between the residents and the immigrants. One of the outcomes of that mediation was the setting up of the Makana Anti-Xenophobia Concerned Group,[5] but when I visited their office site, I found an empty building.
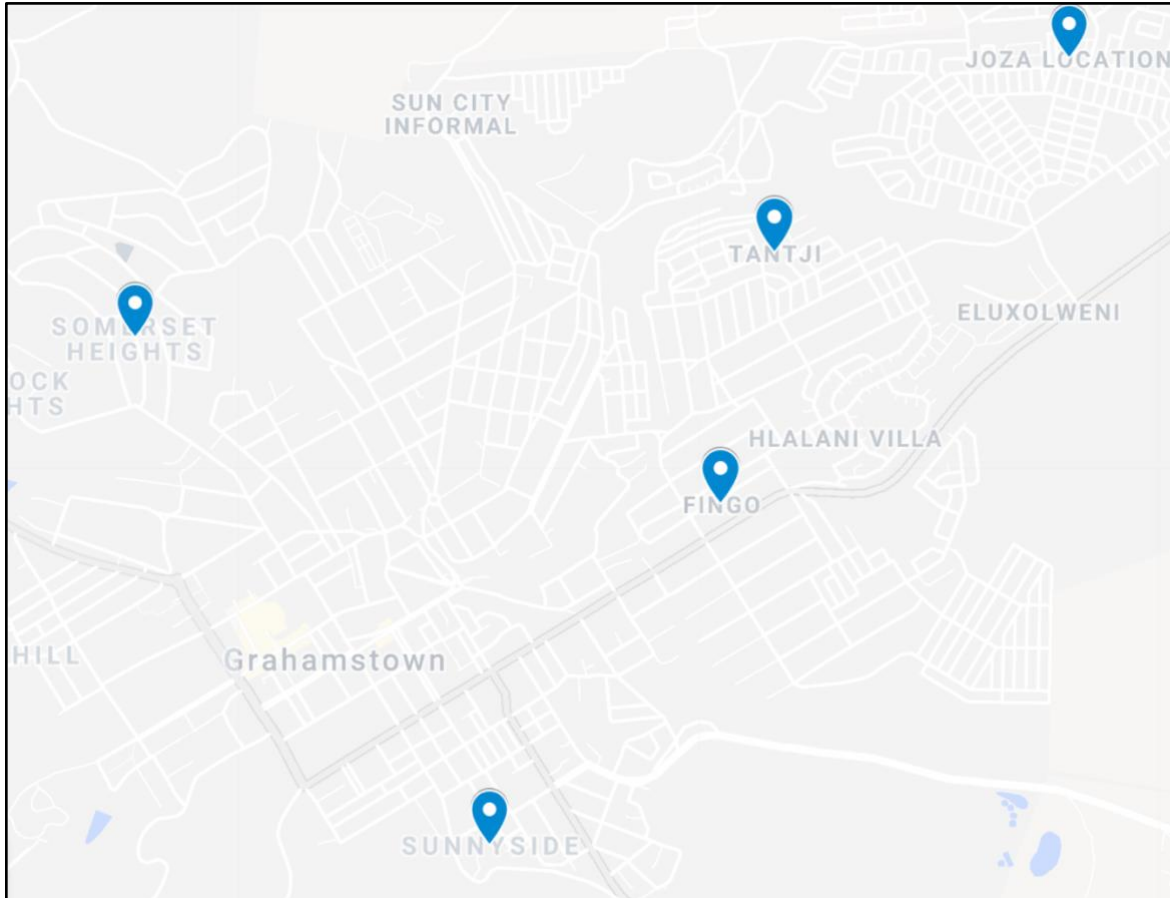

The Makana Anti-Xenophobia Concerned Group home is now an empty building.

[3] Allison, 2015.
[4] O'Halloran, 2015.
[5] Masifunde Education and Development Project Trust.

Mapping Makhanda's Immigrant Population

The townships Fingo, Joza, and Tantji, and the affluent residential areas off Somerset Heights and Sunnyside.

The main residential areas of the city are the affluent neighborhoods of Somerset Heights and Sunnyside. Some immigrants stay in these areas, mostly employees of the university and those who are uncomfortable with staying in the townships of Fingo, Joza, and Tantji. The townships,[6] where most black residents live, are low-income areas characterized by small houses, shacks, and government-provided buildings under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (known as RDP houses). Immigrants operate *spaza*[7] shops in these townships, and migrants from Southern African Development Community countries who have mastered local languages have integrated quite easily here. The university tries to foster integration by organizing programs where students offer extra

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[6] The underdeveloped segregated urban areas that, from the late 19th century until the end of apartheid, were reserved for non-whites.
[7] Informal convenience shop usually run from someone's home.

lessons to pupils from the township schools. However, local communities see these university initiatives as exclusive, even though they are aimed at both students and immigrants.

The main spaces that bring immigrants together are the places of worship scattered throughout the city and are the reason Makhanda is nicknamed the "City of Saints." Also bringing South African citizens and foreigners together is the public Settlers Hospital, which caters to both groups. However, those who can afford higher quality medical care use private medical clinics. Makhanda's schools range from government-run and -subsidized public schools with high teacher-student ratios—where most migrant children attend—to very expensive elite private schools which offer international curricula like the University of Cambridge exams, as well as sports like rugby and cricket where most South African citizen children attend.

Refugees' Experiences

People migrated to Makhanda for many reasons and have had a range of experiences with integration.

Social and Political Integration

Most of the people I spoke with confirmed that they had not heard of Makhanda prior to leaving their countries of origin. Upon arrival in South Africa, some headed straight for Johannesburg, Cape Town, Bloemfontein, or Durban. Others lived temporarily in Musina which is close to South Africa's border with Zimbabwe where many migrants enter the country. This border crossing is always busy, and immigrants cross it legally and illegally. Some migrants stop in Musina and other parts of Limpopo Province where they find work on farms to raise funds, and then travel south to other parts of the country. By then, they would have gathered knowledge of the country through social media or the news media, as did my interviewees who got to know Makhanda via Facebook and WhatsApp after they were already in South Africa. These networks put them in touch with friends and relatives already living in the city. This is not surprising as smart phones are now affordable even to low-income people, often imported to South Africa cheaply from China.

Immigrants seem not to come to Makhanda randomly. Except for a few that arrived more than five years ago when there was peace and stability in the city, recent arrivals came mainly because they had relatives or friends already based here. Social ties are a strong pull factor these days, especially as Makhanda is a small city with limited opportunities, so social, rather than economic reasons are the main incentive. Few individuals would risk a move to a new place of this size without knowledge of what life is like there and a pre-existing social group to connect with.

Most of my interviewees cited peace and stability as another reason they opted to come to the city, but Makhanda is really only peaceful compared to what was happening in other cities where migrants had initially settled. Ali from Somalia, for example, said he left Mayfair in Johannesburg after the two *spaza* shops he operated in Alexandra Township were ransacked in the 2008 xenophobic attacks and he was left with nothing. For him, lack of peace and stability were push factors: even though Makhanda has its fair share of troubles too, relative to Alexandra Township, it seemed tranquil. In Makhanda there were

xenophobic attacks as recently as 2015, when many immigrants were displaced from the townships to a local hotel where they were temporarily housed. The main city newspaper, *Grocott's Mail*, covered the attacks widely, although they were not widely reported in national news media. Therefore, the idea that Makhanda is peaceful and stable is only believed because the attacks here did not receive the same media coverage and publicity as those in Durban and Johannesburg where many lives were lost.

Logistical Barriers to Integration in a Small Town

The main deterrent for those on temporary asylum seeker permits who want to come to Makhanda is that the local Home Affairs office does not renew permits. Temporary asylum permits[8] must be renewed after every three to six months which can only be done in Port Elizabeth or other major cities. Makhanda therefore attracts immigrants who already have refugee status or quarterly work permits. Living without refugee status is not viable for immigrants who are struggling to make ends meet, as traveling back and forth to Port Elizabeth to renew permits is an unmanageable burden when working long hours, taking care of children, and bearing the relatively high costs of travel.

The situation got worse for immigrants in the Eastern Cape when the Port Elizabeth Home Affairs offices closed in 2011, around the same time as the closures of the offices in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The Department of Home Affairs argued that the offices were not anywhere near a port of entry and immigrants must apply for permits at or near ports of entry. Additionally, the business community around the Home Affairs offices were complaining because of the noise made by queuing immigrants. However, it's alleged that the offices actually closed because of an expired lease agreement.[9] Eventually the decision to close the offices was declared unlawful by the High Court[10] and the offices reopened in October 2018. However, applications are still taking a long time to process as the office is understaffed.[11]

I did not ask my interviewees if they are here legally, but it is possible that some immigrants in smaller cities like Makhanda could be undocumented. Isolated places like this city are safer for them as immigration officials rarely patrol, round up, or target illegal immigrants for deportation as they do in the big cities. I did not ask immigration officials about this because of the sensitivity of the topic, so my claim here is solely based on speculation.

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[8] Immigration Act, No. 13 of 2002.
[9] Levy, 2018.
[10] South Africa still has an independent judiciary which respects the constitution. Most of the time its judgements are quite fair and are passed with no political influence whatsoever.

[11] Chirume, 2018.

One of the many shops selling phone accessories in the city.

A typical grocery store operated by Somali or Ethiopian nationals in town who order produce in bulk as a community at a heavily discounted price.

Economic Integration

While less known than South Africa's major cities, Makhanda's other attraction to immigrants is its entrepreneurial opportunities, and there are many businesses here owned and operated by migrants. For example, there are several small sole proprietor electronic goods stores operated by Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals. They sell smart phones, phone covers, chargers, and earphones as well as repair broken phones, computers, and laptops. I counted more than ten such stores in the small area the locals call the "town," seemingly too many for such a small area, although demand for their products and services is high. The goods are sourced and imported in bulk at affordable prices from China and East Asia.

There are also numerous grocery stores operated by Somali and Ethiopian nationals. Compared to local operators who make a single order for each store, Somali and Ethiopian prices are lower because they put their money together and order products together at discounted wholesale prices. These stores are in downtown Makanda as well as the townships, making them convenient for the local population as their hours go beyond the chain supermarkets like Pick'n Pay, Checkers, and Shoprite. These

Hair salons and barber shops operated by foreign nationals are found throughout the city.

chain supermarkets are owned by South African business tycoons and employ mostly South Africans and only a few immigrants who work as cashiers or preparing food for their bakeries and deli sections.[12]

There are several small clothing stores mostly operated by Somalians and Ethiopians, which offer laybuy[13] deals convenient to low-income groups. These clothing stores provide employment to both South African nationals and immigrants. The city also has several barber shops and salons operated by Ghanaian, Zimbabwean, and Congolese nationals that also employ South Africans.

However, even though entrepreneurial opportunities brought many immigrants to Makhanda, they face enormous challenges from local business operators and organizations who don't like the competition. In 2015 when the xenophobic attacks occurred in Makhanda, shops owned by foreigners were looted and ransacked. The Grahamstown Business Forum, a local business organization, blamed foreigners for selling expired goods, not adhering to municipal laws, not respecting labor practices,[14] and not contributing back to the community in the form of charity[15] on top of the taxes they already pay the government.

O'Halloran concluded that foreigners are faced with "disreputable and manipulative local political and business interests that are deeply hostile."

There are a few restaurants in the affluent parts of Makhanda. Among their employees are a few immigrants from neighboring African countries working as waiters, many of whom are part-timers while they study at the university. In my conversations with them they revealed that they only sought employment after they had enrolled at the university, and mostly work when they are not attending lectures or studying. Most of the popular burger and pizza stores in the city also employ foreign nationals as deliverymen for takeaway orders, as drivers' licenses are easy to obtain, even for foreign nationals who do not have work permits.

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[12] These chain stores operate for a limited number of hours within the laws of the country. Unlike them, the Somalis and Ethiopians open as early as 05h00 in the morning and close near to midnight.
[13] The buyer can make several weekly or monthly deposits before collecting the item.
[14] Minimum wages and basic legally required conditions in the workplace.
[15] O'Halloran, 2015.

Agriculture provides limited economic opportunities in Makhanda, as rainfall and agricultural activity here is low compared to other parts of the country. The previously demarcated homelands[16] of the Eastern Cape where most of the residents live are rocky and sandy and unfit for agricultural purposes. The province loses many able-bodied rural inhabitants who migrate to the more developed regions of the country for work. In fact, the number and proportion of international migrant workers in South Africa is small, and domestic urbanization is the most common form of mobility with more than a third of internal migrants in South Africa coming from two major poorer provinces: Limpopo (21%) and the Eastern Cape (17%).[17] Thus, rural to urban migration serves as a source of labor for the developed metropoles of the country.

The case of Makhanda shows that even though immigrants take jobs, they also create employment opportunities in grocery, electronic, and clothing stores across the city. Businesses owned by immigrants employ other migrants and South Africans. My evidence—which is supported by other local research—suggests immigrants go one better: rather than "stealing locals' jobs," immigrants are in fact creating more jobs.[18] In Makhanda, immigrants are reviving and developing the town through their entrepreneurship, while locals move to other major cities in South Africa seeking economic prosperity from high-income service jobs that they could not find in Makhanda.

Reflections on Integration

A month after I arrived in this city, a Ugandan friend living near the town expressed shock when I revealed that I had been to the township. He warned me to be cautious next time as the downtown area and the townships can be dangerous to foreigners. His concerns reveal how people treat each other with suspicion based on false prejudices without bothering to question such notions or to see for themselves.

Integration is not a one-way process where host populations are expected to make the lives of immigrants comfortable without immigrants playing their part as well.[19] In my experience in Cape Town and Makhanda, the process works best when there is effort from both sides. In the aftermath of the 2015 xenophobic attacks, for example, the Makana Municipality is reported to have embarked on Emergency Responses and Social Cohesion Workshops,[20] and to have initiated programs of educating Councilors and Ward Committee Members about the rights of refugees in South Africa.

However, rather than supporting integration, obstructing integration is more often reflected in the rhetoric of local leadership in Makhanda. The then-mayor of the municipality said, "most communities wanted foreigners [to come] back and blamed xenophobic threats on criminal elements."[21] This blaming of criminal elements for the xenophobic attacks is the kind of rhetoric that leaders use to escape responsibility, and I find it disingenuous. As Ayanda Kota argues: "the way integration happened was a

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[16] In Apartheid South Africa, the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 restricted the Xhosa people to the homelands of Ciskei and Transkei.
[17] Jinnah, 2016.
[18] Korhonen, Freeman and Johnson, 2018.
[19] Ager & Strang, 2008.
[20] Makana Municipality Integrated Development Plan Final, 2013-2014.
[21] Macgregor, 2015.

mistake, it was not done properly, and officials have been complacent in assessing the scale of the problem."[22] Because of this mismanagement, I believe sustainable integration will require the commitment of local leaders, not simply the policies of municipal government officials.

Finally, immigrants in Makhanda do not rely on support from host populations, but help themselves, as with the Muslim community of Makhanda who founded the Grahamstown[23] Muslim Association. The Association conducts regular meetings and mediates misunderstandings between its members and the host population. The Association also helps build interpersonal relationships and encourages business people to promote social uplifting by giving back to the community through sponsoring social events. The Bangladeshi Community Forum plays a similar role. However, as in most cities of South Africa, immigrants tend to operate individually and do not form collective action organizations like the Muslim Association. They lack organizations that unite them outside of the churches they attend. The late Professor Masipula Sithole once joked that, "If you take two Zimbabweans to the moon, leave them there and visit them the next morning, they would have formed three political parties." While this is a joke about Zimbabwean politics, it speaks to how divided the Zimbabweans are, even in the diaspora, which limits their ability to efficiently integrate.

Conclusion

Most immigrants cited social connections and peace and stability as the main reasons they opted to move to Makhanda, but the peace here is temporary and only stable relative to what is happening in the larger cities. Without efforts to integrate and foster good relations between locals and foreigners, more instability will emerge in Makhanda like in the big cities. Hosts and migrants only seem to mingle at churches and workplaces, and both sides treat each other with suspicion, and lack understanding for each other. In this climate, the jump from suspicion to violence only takes a minor incident like what happened in Soweto at the beginning of September 2018 when foreigners were accused of selling expired goods and their shops were looted. These inflammatory statements about foreigners that can trigger such attacks also come from right-wing populist politicians and are especially common in the lead up to elections.

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[22] Mtyala, 2015.
[23] This name might change following Grahamstown being renamed Makhanda.

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Appendix A: Refugees in South Africa

With an estimated population of 57.73 million, South Africa is one of Africa's most populous nations.[24] A significant part of this total population are immigrants from various African countries and other parts of the world. In 2014, the International Organization for Migration reported that at least 20,000 migrants travel through the Great Lakes and SADC regions to try to reach South Africa each year. These flows originate mostly from the Horn of Africa, particularly Ethiopia and Somalia, and consist of refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, and victims of trafficking, including women and children.[25] Most of these migrants attempt to reach their destinations through established smuggling and trafficking networks. Other immigrants also come into South Africa from nations of the Middle East and Asia like Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and China. People around the world are becoming increasingly aware of better opportunities in South Africa due to globalization including improvement in communication, and modern transportation systems and infrastructures.[26]

Of the six world regions contributing immigrants to South Africa, Africa accounts for most at 75.3%, followed by Europe at 8.2%, and Asia at 4.7%. Of the African immigrants most are from the Southern African region which accounts for 68% of the 75.3%.[27] Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Swaziland are the key contributors of the refugees from Southern African region, with the former supplying the most as its citizens flee economic hardships spanning over two decades.

South Africa is a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention.[28] As such it honors the Convention's core principle of *non-refoulment* which states that refugees should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. Moreover, South Africa boasts some of the most progressive[29] asylum laws in the world. Instead of being forced into sprawling camps, once migrants apply for asylum, they can live and work anywhere in the country until the state determines whether or not they qualify as a refugee.[30] Most of the refugees are concentrated in the country's major economic hubs of Johannesburg and Cape Town, as well as in and around Musina, meaning most of them are staying in urban areas. However, many more are working on the farms in the Limpopo and Western Cape provinces.[31] In 2014, the UNHCR's own "Policy on Alternatives to Camps" describes residence in urban areas as "…more sustainable and cost-effective, because they harness the potential of refugees, rationalize service delivery and allow for more targeted assistance to those most in need," (2014: 9). The same report concludes that camps should be the exception, and ought to be phased out at the earliest possible stage. Even in smaller cities like Makhanda, refugees stay alongside South Africans under the host country's non-encampment policy.

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[24] Stats SA, 2018.
[25] International Organization for Migration, 2014.
[26] Stats SA, 2017.
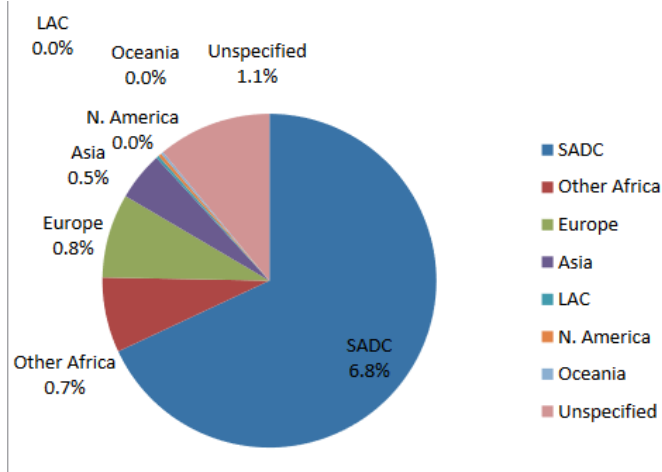[27] Meny-Gibert and Chiumia, 2016.
[28] UNHCR States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol.
[29] Refugee Act 130 of 1988.
[30] Wellman and Landau, 2015.
[31] Stats SA, 2018.

Economic Factors of Migration in South Africa

Migrants' distribution by region of birth in 2011 (Stats SA 2017).

According to a Stats SA report (2015: 120), the consistently high rate of migration from the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries to South Africa is due to a colonial and apartheid-era regional "history of labour migration, especially from Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Swaziland." Prior to the transition to democracy, international migrants from Southern Africa came to South Africa from the traditional labor-supplying countries such as Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and Malawi, working in the mines of Gauteng and in the agricultural sector. This pattern of international migration has changed since the attainment of democratic rule: international migrants in South Africa have diversified and now include highly-skilled and low-skilled immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, as well as other documented and undocumented migrants.

This immigration is catalyzed by the South African state's policies that undermine other African economies, especially in the Southern African region, including its multinational corporations' policies that extract wealth from neighboring states.[32] South African chain stores are present in Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. Its mining companies are extracting minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mozambique. Even as far to the west as Nigeria, South African mobile operators dominate the communications sector. De Beers is even accused of violating the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) ethical guidelines on conflict zones.[33] It is such policies which ensure the capital of the continent will always be concentrated in South Africa. Labor will always follow capital, and immigrants from the countries that South Africa is helping "impoverish" tend to follow the capital down south.

[32] Bond, 2005.
[33] Adusei, 2009.

Appendix B: Migration in Makhanda

With an approximate total population of 92,000, Makhanda is a small city in South Africa in comparison to the large metropoles of Johannesburg and Cape Town that have total populations of 4.4 million and 3.75 million respectively. That means the population of the city cannot even fill the 94,736 capacity of First National Bank Stadium, which is the country's biggest soccer venue. Even in the Eastern Cape province where it is situated, the city is a distant third after East London with about 755,000 people and Port Elizabeth with an estimated total population of 1.3 million.[34] Makhanda is sandwiched between these two big metropoles of the Eastern Cape.

The National English Literary Museum is one of the key national institutions in Makhanda.

The town is famous for its numerous Georgian, Victorian, and early Edwardian architectural-style churches, and the massive Anglican cathedral situated right at the heart of the town. It also has numerous new Pentecostal and the new "Prosperity" churches,[35] as well as a mosque for Muslims and a meeting place for Hindus. This heavy presence of religious shrines earned the city its nickname, the "City of Saints." The old historic section of the city has more than 70 heritage sites which include the towering 1820 Settlers Monument, but Rhodes University serves as the nerve center of Makhanda. The city comes to life whenever the students are around, and in the winter of every year during South Africa's National Arts Festival. Makhanda is also the home of the National English Literary Museum and the South Africa Library of the Blind. It hosts the Eastern Cape Division of the High Court and the 6th South African Infantry Battalion.

One of the many churches in the "City of Saints."

Grahamstown's name was officially changed to Makhanda—after a Xhosa prophet, philosopher, and military man—to get rid of the colonial name based on the British officer, Graham.[36] The name change

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[34] World Population Review, 2018.
[35] Religious groups that promise financial blessings and better livelihoods.
[36] South African Government 2018.

was officially proposed on 29 June 2018 and declared by Arts and Culture Minister Nathi Mthethwa on 2 October 2018.

The immigrants living and working in Makhanda may not exceed 5,000 in total. For the purpose of this study, this count of migrants excludes the international students enrolled at Rhodes University as these come and go: most of the students hardly spend four continuous years in the city, but most non-student immigrants have been staying in the town for more than half a decade now.

The map below shows the Eastern Cape Province where Makhanda is located, which hosts the least number of immigrants of any province in South

Meny-Gibert and Chiumia, 2016.

Africa. Most of the 0.8% immigrants in the province are found in either East London or Port Elizabeth, which offer better opportunities for business and employment as they are bigger and busier than Makhanda. Otherwise, most of the immigrants coming into South Africa opt for Western Cape and Gauteng provinces at 3.1% and 6% respectively. Not surprisingly, these provinces are home to the country's key economic hubs of Cape Town and Johannesburg.
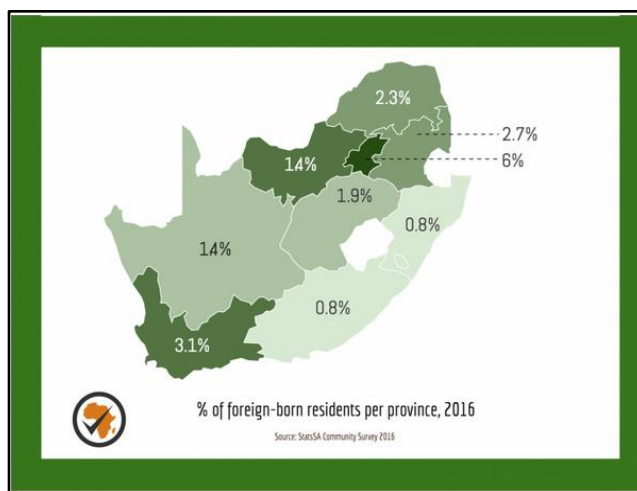
When the xenophobic attacks occurred in Makhanda "in October 2015 – more than 500 were displaced and more than 300 businesses were shut down – [these included] shops in town and the townships."[37] That so few were affected suggests that there are not that many migrants living in the city. However, exact numbers are difficult to establish, as this is a part of the country where immigrant statistics seem to surface only when there is a problem affecting them, as in 2015.

Despite the relatively small numbers of immigrants in Makhanda, there is a relatively high number of small businesses in Makhanda that are owned and operated by immigrants, particularly downtown, which is testimony to the fact that they bring their entrepreneurial skills to the benefit of the inhabitants of the city. These range from clothing shops owned by the Somalis, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Chinese, to electronic merchandise shops owned by Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Chinese, to African food-stores belonging to Senegalese and Malawians, as well as barbershops operated by Zimbabweans and Ghanaians. There are many other foreign nationals too, from Lesotho, Nigeria, and other parts of Africa living in Makhanda. Some of them are working in the town's numerous restaurants situated closer to the upper-class residential suburbs.

[37] Mtyala, 2015.

About the RIT Project

The **Refugees in Towns (RIT)** project promotes understanding of the migrant/refugee experience in urban settings. Our goal is to understand and promote refugee integration by drawing on the knowledge and perspective of refugees and locals to develop deeper understanding of the towns in which they live. The project was conceived and is led by Karen Jacobsen. It is based at the Feinstein International Center at Tufts University and funded by the Henry J. Leir Foundation.

Our goals are twofold

Our first long-term goal is to build a theory of integration from the ground up by compiling a global database of case studies and reports to help us analyze and understand the process of immigrant/refugee integration. These cases provide a range of local insights about the many different factors that enable or obstruct integration, and the ways in which migrants and hosts co-exist, adapt, and struggle in urban spaces. We draw our cases from towns in resettlement countries, transit countries, and countries of first asylum around the world.

Our second more immediate goal is to support community leaders, aid organizations, and local governments in shaping policy, practice, and interventions. We engage policymakers and community leaders through town visits, workshops, conferences, and participatory research that identifies needs in their communities, encourages dialogue on integration, and shares good practices and lessons learned.

Why now?

The United States—among many other refugee-hosting countries—is undergoing a shift in its refugee policy through travel bans and the suspension of parts of its refugee program. Towns across the U.S. are responding in different ways: some resist national policy changes by declaring themselves "sanctuary cities," while others support travel bans and exclusionary policies. In this period of social and political change, we seek to deepen our understanding of integration and the ways in which refugees, migrants, and their hosts interact. Our RIT project draws on and gives voice to both refugees and hosts in their experiences with integration around the world.

For more on RIT

On our website, there are many more case studies and reports from other towns and urban neighborhoods around the world, and we regularly release more reports as our project develops.

www.refugeesintowns.org

About the Author

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Barnabas is a Ph.D. student at Rhodes University, and was previously a Curator and Assistant Researcher at the University of Cape Town's Centre for Curating the Archive. He is a Zimbabwean who moved to Cape Town in November 2008, and has since studied, worked, and lived with fellow migrants from Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Somalia, and Rwanda, among other countries of origin. He is interested in the experiences and treatment of migrants by host populations and immigration authorities. Barnabas studied at Midlands State University in Zimbabwe, the University of Cape Town, and the University of Stellenbosch.

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