

Begging belonging in Africa's no-man's lands: diversity, usufruct and the ethics of accommodation

Loren B. Landau and Iriann Freemantle

African Centre for Migration & Society, University of the Witwatersrand, Wits, South Africa

ABSTRACT

In Rongai, Kenya and Katlehong, South Africa, two peri-urban areas transformed by human mobility, social engagements are being shaped by a usufruct ethics: a means of establishing communal logics and rights to space aimed at achieving protection and benefit without communal membership or community cohesion. The resulting modes of mutual accommodation are consequently shaped by spatial circumstance and instrumental, pragmatic concerns rather than claims for ownership, representation or cultural hegemony. In Kenya, 'being cosmo' helps residents brace themselves against ethnicised violence and exclusion seen elsewhere in the country while opening space for multi-ethnic newcomers to pursue varied economic and social ambitions often tied to ethnicised membership elsewhere. In South Africa, outcomes include multiple ethics of difference simultaneously practiced: some violently exclusive, some remarkably inclusive, yet all unable to establish enduring hegemony. Here, residents manage their every-day interactions with Others through an ethics of disconnection—by 'minding their own business'—a principle manifested in both passive tolerance and active benefit-seeking. These findings from Africa's rapidly transforming urban peripheries speak to a growing, global trend in which varied forms of membership are being locally negotiated in the thrown together spaces that characterise many cities of the South. Beyond understanding such local dynamics, they give cause to question the spatial scale at which we locate integration and the very ethics and desired 'outcomes' scholars often presume ought to underlie diverse societies.

KEYWORDS

Migration; diversity; urbanisation; Africa; ethics of accommodation; conviviality and xenophobia

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Introduction

Based on research in two African peri-urban settlements, this article documents how diverse, peri-urban residents negotiate modalities of accommodating difference in which the emergent socialities challenge presumptions about the desirability of robust social connection, representation and spatially bound membership. For the residents of Rongai on Nairobi's urban edge and Katlehong on Johannesburg's periphery, conviviality is rooted in utilitarian extraction, not a desire for shared identity or enduring bonds. Co-existence within communities of disconnection and distance means that in place of

territorial ownership or strict social boundaries, people (co)operate through a largely instrumental ethics: oriented towards accessing and extracting the ‘fruits’ of urban space while simultaneously imagining or enacting life elsewhere. It is these emergent, spatially specific forms of coexistence that this article explores.

While an ethics of instrumentality and disconnection shape socialities in both Rongai and Katlehong, residents’ relationship to the sites’ specific geography and history gives rise to varied forms of urban ‘newness’ and site specific novelty (cf. Robinson 2013). In Rongai, ‘being cosmo’ allows residents to brace themselves against the virulent ethnicised violence and exclusion seen elsewhere in Kenya while opening space for multi-ethnic newcomers to pursue varied economic and social ambitions. In Katlehong, the language of accommodation is considerably less explicit and its formative ethos less evident. Instead, the area is characterised by multiple, parallel ethics of coexistence, some violently exclusive, others remarkably tolerant or inclusive. Importantly, none of these ethics has hegemonic status but provides a repertoire of site and situation specific scripts. Underlying each is a desire for distance: either to overtly exclude or to maintain almost slippery neighbourliness that resonates with a reluctance to root.

These findings’ significance extends beyond documenting varied forms of membership and coexistence in the thrown together, often informally governed spaces that comprise Africa’s rapidly expanding urban peripheries (see Kihato and Muyemba 2015). Rather, both South Africa’s ‘mind your own business’ and Nairobi’s ‘cosmo’ conviviality draw attention to the spatial scale at which we locate social integration, as well as the very ethics and desired outcomes scholars often presume ought to underlie ‘functional’ diverse societies (cf. Ye 2015). In both cases, we see space making shaped by multiple subjective histories and socialities: not only immediate survival imperatives, but also elements of residents’ past and social formation: fears and suspicions along with measures of social success often rooted in the social registers operating across ‘multiple elsewheres’ (cf. Mbembe and Nuttall’s 2004 discussion of ‘multiple elsewheres’). That many residents find social recognition in their more ethnicised ‘homelands’ or seek long-term success elsewhere creates an ethics of transience in which proximate social relationships are lent instrumental rather than intrinsic value (see parallels in Bryceson and Vuorela’s 2002 discussion of new transnational families).

This article builds on and integrates a dual set of themes. The first surrounds the nature of urbanisation in Africa and the socio-political formations generated by such extraordinary dynamism. To be more precise, the instrumentalism informing Rongai’s and Katlehong’s usufruct ethics stems from three interrelated characteristics of South African and Kenyan urbanism (although such patterns are also evident elsewhere). The first includes longstanding prohibitions and restrictions on permanent urban settlement for countries’ Black majorities. Second, persistent translocal connections which create networks and registers of belonging beyond the city while encouraging continued transience: cities remain places for passage and profit; stations, not permanent destinations. Third, the absence of formal or informal mechanisms able to establish economic, coercive or identitive hegemony in the townships and peri-urban settlements in which in-migrants most often reside. Indeed, Africa’s rapid urbanisation has largely occurred in an environment of limited state capacity or structured economic opportunities. Whereas the historical growth of European and North American cities was largely driven by industrialisation and political consolidation, African cities are growing in the absence of expanding

formal employment or state services (Weber 1958, 1976; Simmel 2002; Götz and Simone 2003; Mbembe and Nuttall 2004; Simone 2004; Banks 2011; Robinso 2014). The absence of the disciplining force of formal markets and institutions means cities are unlikely to facilitate the kind of identitive, often national consolidation seen elsewhere (see Blau 1986). It also raises the spectre of chaos and conflict. Yet for all of their fluidity, inequality and informality, many African cities remain remarkably accommodating and physically (if not economically) secure. Our position is that these sites' very fluidity facilitates a kind of ground-up diversity management. The people occupying these cities—particularly their highly transient peripheral gateways—often see them as entry points to local economic opportunities or passage onward. While their activities and presence there may further their social standing, the registers that often matter to them remain elsewhere. These subjective understandings of the city have important implications for the enacted nature of urban life and governance while potentially reframing how we understand the objectives and ethics of social membership and integration.

The question of ethics draws us to our second theme and the article's theoretical locus: diversity and the modalities of 'managing' difference. Whether driven by intellect or instinct, such modalities typically establish both dialogical and practical engagements among ontological (i.e. who is the Other), ethical (how ought I address Others) and practical (how do we do this) premises. For the most part, scholars as much as policy-makers approach questions of successful coexistence among diverse population with a presumption that healthy and functional societies are consensus-based, united and synergetic (Jenson 1998; Heuser 2005; Cheong et al. 2007, 32). Deviation from this norm raises flags: too much difference potentially threatens social and cultural equilibria (Grillo 2007) while many consider poor social cohesion to be harmful to development, economic progress, regimes of redistribution, social stability (Esterhuyse 2004; Chipkin and Ngqulunga 2008). (Miller 1985, 2004, 36; Sampson et al. 1997, 923; Hirschfield and Bowers 1997, 1292; Heuser 2005, 8–9; Lægaard 2010, 454–455; Kelly 2003, 20; Jeanotte 2003, 6; Stanley 2003, 61; White 2003, 55; Esterhuyse 2004, 194; Kushner and Sterk 2005, 1139; Chipkin and Ngqulunga 2008, 68; Bradshaw 2008; Janmaat 2011, 61).

The integration imperative within urban planning and immigration policies has important practical consequences. With widespread declarations that multiculturalism has 'failed' since it has allegedly created alienated, parallel societies (Guardian 2010; Spiegel 2010, 2011; Vasta 2010; The National Archives 2011), many countries are adopting more rigid approaches intended to integrate migrants (Vasta 2010). To restore sameness within and limit 'surplus difference' from without, foreigners already in the country are required to 'adopt' the host country's 'core values' as their own (Grillo 2007; Syrett and Sepulveda 2012, 240) while more restrictive and selective immigration regimes are put in place to retard processes diversifying 'national' societies (Miller 2004; six cited in Holtug 2010; Vasta 2010, 505; Letki 2008). Such moves have critics arguing that a renewed emphasis on integration and cohesion clouds attempts to effectively assimilate migrants into hegemonic groups (i.e. the native, majority population) by excluding or alienating those who do not or cannot conform to majority culture (Young 2000; Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Kofman 2005; Vasta 2010, 505). Underlying both integration activists and critics are presumptions that (a) an identifiable majority culture exists, (b) that such culture is rooted in national formations; (c) that residents strive for full recognition and belonging as cohesion and full membership aligns with peoples' immediate and long-

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term objectives. Rarely do they consider the sub-national sites in which *de facto* integration occurs or the kind of fluidity and social simultaneity (see Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) that inform the emerging socialities on Africa's urban peripheries.

Bringing together these two themes—the nature of African urbanisation and dominant discourses on diversity and cohesion—this article interrogates the modalities of coexistence in two ethnically heterogeneous informal settlements in peri-urban South Africa and Kenya. However, unlike many of the works referenced above, we document negotiations over accommodation and tolerance that do not stem from a clearly articulated vision, let alone one aimed at cohesion and synergy. Rather, due to the precarity of employment and the need to maintain multiple local and translocal networks (Simone 2009; Kankonde 2010; Madhavan and Landau 2011), successful accommodation in many African cities—as understood from the perspective of those involved—is best measured by people's ability to 'get along': to co-exist and work towards their ends without being bound by the demands of full membership. In short, conviviality is achieved without an emphasis on 'consensus over values and a sense of common belonging' (Syrett and Sepulveda 2012, 240), but rather through emergent sets of commonly recognised rules or modalities of engagement that afford opportunities to pursue individual trajectories and goals without forging collective or exclusive, place-bound identities. Building on the premise that physical proximity of diverse populations—in neighbourhoods, transport, public squares—itself has the potential to result in hostility as much as in conviviality (Amin 2002, 969;967: Valentine 2008, 327; Karner and Parker 2011; Wilson 2011, 646), this paper thus also speaks to a growing literature on how specific conditions influence the encounter with Others.

This article describes are the dynamics of poly-centric, 'horizontal' or social relationships that incorporate or exclude. In this way the socialities explored here differ from those described in the 'north' which often analytically privilege the roles of centralised states and business-centred mechanism to uniformly discipline and shape the relationships between hosts and new arrivals. The kind of management 'from below' (or really, from beside) described here relies less on the coercive and normative power of state institutions, churches or regulated markets than on varying vernacular discourses and practices of inclusion and exclusion, tolerance and hospitality. These quotidian processes of boundary making and breaking *vis-à-vis* ethnic, national, religious or sexual. Others are what determine the evolving and dynamic nature of Africa's urban society.

The remainder of the article proceeds through four sections. The first briefly reviews the data informing our analysis and the means by which they were collected and analysed. We also include general information on the two research sites highlighting the social dynamics and institutional configurations which shape the observed outcomes. The second situates African urbanism historically, explaining the roots of the observed fragmentation, fluidity and instrumentality. The third is the article's empirical centre, offering commonalities and contradictions in our case material from Kenya's and South Africa's urban peripheries. Given the medium's confines, this presentation is illustrative, not exhaustive. While attempting to capture complex and often confusing realities and historical precedents, it intends largely to destabilise presumptions within the literature about the ethics and mechanisms of integration, conflict and conviviality. Those histories were, after all, fashioned by forms of consolidating political authority and industrialisations that remain relatively alien to the African experience. The article concludes by revisiting the

premises informing much of the literature on conviviality and diversity reiterating our position that Africa's divergent patterns of urbanisation and social difference are shaping a decidedly different mode of coexistence based less on shared membership or belonging than on a utilitarian and pragmatic ethics.

Sites and data

Kenya and South Africa represent two of the continent's most urbanised or urbanising countries. Although their cities are smaller than West-Africa's sprawling monsters—Nigeria's greater Lagos has more than 20 million people compared to Johannesburg's 7.5 and Nairobi's 3.5¹—they nonetheless attract significant and diverse migrant streams from within and beyond their national borders (see Kihato and Muyemba 2015). Through this mobility, the population has become increasingly diverse, representing not only the countries' varied ethnic/tribal groups (South Africa has 11 national languages; Kenya recognises 42 tribes), but refugees and economic migrants from throughout the region and beyond (SADC 2010).² Although migration is but one component of these cities' rapid growth, their expanding social and physical footprint has rapidly outstripped the institutional capacities of government to provide or regulate service delivery (water, housing, schools and clinics) or infrastructure development (UN 2011). Equally important, the most rapid growth—especially the most rapid growth due to human mobility—is not in the relatively established city centres, but rather on the less expensive and infrastructurally underendowed urban peripheries. The convergence and almost tidal movements of people through these ever evolving, informal urban spaces—what Landau (2014) terms 'urban estuaries'—give cause to question the distinctions between hosts and outsider or the possibility of enduring, site specific forms of membership. It is two such sites, Ongata Rongai outside of Nairobi and Katlehong on Johannesburg's urban edge, in which we conducted our work.

The data employed here stem from a series of projects considering the changing nature of African urbanism, governance and political identities. The Rongai work began in 2006 when the African Centre for Migration & Society co-organised a survey on migrant livelihoods and politics in Nairobi (results appear in Landau and Duponchel 2011; Madhavan and Landau 2011; and elsewhere). While Rongai was excluded for falling just beyond the municipal boundaries, it attracted attention as one of greater Nairobi's most rapidly transforming spaces due to domestic migrants from across the country. Returning later to Rongai, we conducted two studies explicitly exploring the people and institutions taking shape in the peri-urban space. These included close to 40 extended interviews with a broad swathe of residents and weeks in the area observing interactions and the sites social and physical geography, and participating in discussions—some orchestrated, some spontaneous—with residents in a variety of settings.

Our South African material is drawn from 80 qualitative interviews with residents of the township of Katlehong. Research was conducted between 2013 and 2014 in four (mostly) informal sub-sections of the settlement. Katlehong was established in 1945 to host black populations removed from another ethnically more mixed settlement in a bid to control urbanisation and contact amongst racial groups (Dlamini 2010, 189). Originally designed as a 'model township' with formal housing and infrastructure, by the 1980s this planned area was engulfed by sprawling informal extensions and makeshift

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settlements (Malinga 2000, 67). Katlehong is linguistically and culturally diverse (Census 2011) with significant levels of inter-group violence: ‘wars’ between taxi operators, gang violence, attacks on foreigners and other outsiders as well as long standing conflict between township/settlement residents and hostel dwellers (Segal 1992; Independent Board of Inquiry and Peace Action 1994; Sitas 1996; The Citizen 2008; News 24 2011, 2013; SABC 2014). Ethnicity and nationality frequently intersect these fault lines, but at times also traverse them. AQ11
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Given such eclectic data sources, this account should be seen as a kind of proto-ethnography extrapolating from what is a broad if relatively shallow archive. Even the most casual observer will note that the axes of difference discussed here differ remarkably between the two cases. In Kenya we largely consider the convergence of people from within the country’s territorial boundaries; in South Africa the primary points of contention relate mostly to nationality although diversity tied to internal mobility and ethnicity also features prominently. While there are obvious concerns with lumping these cases together, our position is effectively studying African urban realities means, as Meyers (2011) suggests, moving beyond documenting the specificities of place. So while the significant dimensions of difference between the two sites are highly contextual, they are not essential. Nationality need not be more or less significant than ethnicity, language or other potential markers of difference. Moreover, the resonance of our findings across the two cases suggests the value of such comparisons in ways that lets us raises broader more substantive—if still conceptual and methodological—points around meaning of hosts and guests, debates around immigration and integration and discussions of nationalism and the accommodation of domestic diversity.

Sites of extraction: alternative urbanisations, alternative modes of coexistence

To speak accurately about present and future forms of urban conviviality means first problematising presumptions behind contemporary debates surrounding migrants in ‘western’ society. More specifically, we must reconsider the meanings we attach to accommodation and the modes of organising difference, the actors involved, and their intentions. The first challenge links to the nature of difference: namely that new arrivals destabilise the host population’s *status quo*. Although the language of hosts and guest has informed almost every piece of work since Kant and Derrida, we must rethink in an era of multiple diversities and fluidity (see Snel, Engbersen, and Lekres 2006, 285; Westmoreland 2008, 8; Dikec, Clark, and Barnett 2009; George 2009). While challenges to the assumption of an internal homogeneity of ‘groups’ are increasingly common (Brubaker 2002, 2003; Vertovec 2007; Berg and Sigona 2013, 348), scholars as much as ordinary people continue to reify dual categories of ‘established’ residents and new arrivals, or guests and hosts (Wise 2005, 183; Meier 2013). For Kant and Derrida (see Miller 1985), it is difficult to image a situation where in there is anything but chaos in the absence of a dominant host population. For Westmoreland (2008, 8), such conditions ‘open up the possibility for contamination in that it calls for no governing body such as a sovereign state or master of a home to establish laws and authority over another subject’. Yet across Africa and elsewhere in the world—and particularly in the fluid peri-urban spaces discussed here—the pace of change is such and levels of heterogeneity so great

that speaking of existing social systems makes little sense (cf. Amin 2002). In essence, new migrants are not moving to coherent neighbourhoods with high levels of overlapping engagements and shared values. Moreover, the diversity of the migrants themselves—religious, linguistic, ethnic and national—means there are typically few bases for immediate forms of Hegelian recognition (cf. Makowski 2008).

The second reconsideration surrounds the actors and incentives for building cohesion. While in Europe, the state plays—and is expected to—a ‘leading role in defining and cementing relations between citizens or groups of citizens’ (Sandercock 2003; White 2003, 52; Heuser 2005, 14; Syrett and Sepulveda 2012, 239–240), the pace of African urbanisation and the general inability of public institutions in establishing identitive hegemony over their populations means that interactions and negotiations among residents tend to be horizontal and informal. While states have an inherent interest in creating more cohesive and thus presumably more readily ‘managable’ populations (Scott 1999; White 2003, 55), even in South Africa, arguably the continent’s strongest state, such desire remains largely in the realm of rhetoric. The absence of regular employment—and almost never the kind of factory based jobs so critical to Weber and Simmel’s analyses—further removes another potentially integrative, disciplinary mechanism. And while religious institutions are almost omnipresent, particularly in the form of entrepreneurial Pentecostal outposts, these bodies more often compete rather than collaborate, becoming sources of fragmentation and distrust rather than incubators of community (Helgesson 2006; Nzayabino 2009; Landau 2014). Beyond the limited resources available for binding diverse communities or determining the rules of engagement, even long-time urban residents may see cities in largely instrumental rather than identitive terms (see Potts 2011; Kihato 2013). This orientation has origins in the logics and practices of colonial (and, in South Africa, Apartheid) urban planning. With significant restrictions on who could live in cities, the countries majority were largely excluded from permanent urbanisation (see Swanson 1977; Maylam 1995; Posel 1997; Robinson 1997; Myers 2003). Residence in a city, while it opened important opportunities for economic advancement, was remarkably precarious with the possibility of being forcibly expelled when one’s immediate utility to the dominant minority came under question. Those wishing to stay past their ‘expiry’ date often had to remain invisible or underground. Although the post-colonial and post-Apartheid orders relaxed many of the formal restrictions on urban residence, in planning and popular mentality, cities often preserved their contradictory place as sites of utility and opportunity coupled with physical risk and moral hazard.

Due to ongoing mobility and the need and desire to maintain strong connections to communities elsewhere—whether sites of origin, intended destinations, or an amorphous diaspora—the city is a place in which to gather the resources needed to further onward movement or build status and security the city’s boundaries (Geschiere 2009). Connections and regular shifts between rural (or peri-urban) and urban areas are a critical factor in slowing the emergence of urban regimes which, rather than destinations, are often stations on an ongoing journey. For many moving for work, the primary motivation is profit and the need to extract urban resources to subsidise the ‘real’ life they live elsewhere. Indeed, spouses and children often remain elsewhere while men and women earn money in the cities to sustain them. Although urban residents may establish second families, the social, ethnic and political ties elsewhere often mitigate against full urban integration. While a sizable European literature attests to the salience of popular

and official negotiations over the meaning of community, belonging and criteria for membership in the context of immigration and diversity (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Kofman 2005; Kalra and Kapoor 2009; Fangen 2010; Vasta 2010; Koefoed and Simonsen 2011), many African migrants actively resist the bonds of belonging as their intentions are for rural retirements or to move elsewhere. In some instances, significant numbers of the foreign-born population—or non-local citizens—arrive in the city seeking protection from conflict and persecution with the intentions to return home or move on when conditions allow. This helps generate a kind of permanent temporariness in which they too actively resist incorporation (Malauene 2004; Landau 2006; Kihato 2009). For many, cities have become ‘places of flows’ where rooting and local representation is not the goal (Castells 1996) and the burdens and binding that connections and political participation offer are often something to be avoided (Madsen 2004; Kankonde 2010). Given the insecurity of land tenure, the possibility of violence, and ongoing economic deprivation, people often maintain feet in multiple sites without firmly rooting themselves in any (Haupt 2010).

The processes described above have produced cities where there are weak central authorities and limited incentives or mechanisms for producing a strong territorially bound set of allegiances that could demarcate insiders and outsiders, hosts and guests or foster their integration. Given that most migrants are citizens, citizenship and documentation is not a major variable in structuring these relations. Although Africa’s colonial and post-colonial cities have been the one geographic site where the state’s powers are most evident (Herbst 2000; Bratton 2006) they are rarely able to enforce strong prohibitions on non-nationals who make their way into cities (Swilling, Simone, and Khan 2003).

In such environments, formal citizenship may have symbolic value for some, but with only limited enforcement capacity and a minimal reliance on state provided services—schools, clinics and jobs—documentation and legal status do little. At the most practical level they are poor predictors of people’s welfare (Landau and Duponchel 2011). Even in South Africa, arguably the continent’s ‘strongest’ state, these processes are negotiated on the ground through a panoply of rationalities and calculations, sometimes involving laws and state actors but not always in predictable ways (Hansen and Stepputat 2010). Monson demonstrates how xenophobic violence, common in South Africa’s urban areas, ‘can involve various levels of departure from the state-sanctioned social order as well as various degrees of trespass into state jurisdiction’ (2011, 173, 176, 196). (2011, 176). The state and its mechanisms of control thus do not become irrelevant or void, but relativised and often effectively marginalised as only one of many possible institutions of authority and sovereignty. In Katlehong, almost all residents (save those in the government’s employ) expressed a seep sense of frustration with the ‘empty promises’ of citizenship and were profoundly alienated from the state and its representatives, something close to the abjection and disillusionment that Ferguson (1999) finds elsewhere. Many consider their own government as careless, self-serving and corrupt. From concerns about service delivery to immigration, residents were frustrated that the government is not listening to its own citizens, as Lungile (Tsietse, 15 March 2014) exclaimed: ‘they can say my vote is my voice you see, but if you can look around this area, this environment, my voice won’t say anything’. Deeply distrustful of both capability and agenda of the local police, Pieter stated that he prefers to report crime to a local newspaper since ‘it moves quicker.’ (15 March 2014, Tsietse). As Misago writes about contexts similar to Katlehong, police are effectively

often complicit in this redefinition of responsibilities as they ‘allow communities to self-govern’ (2011, 98). Most residents were unaware who their current ward councillor was, those who did were typically suspicious: ‘He always comes and lies and goes and then after that people would protest and then he comes back and lies and goes again’ (Graca, Tsietsi, 27 June 2013). Exploiting the state’s absence (or countering it wherever it does have a presence), a wide range of alternative structures and agents have stepped in to impose law and order in Katlehong, ranging from kangaroo courts, mob justice and occult movements to vigilante organisations and business associations of various levels of formality and legality (cf Misago 2011, 99). In such environments, finding space and resources within a city involves an ongoing process of forming and abandoning horizontal and vertical connections and constant, often constrained, calculations. What it produces is something we have yet to fully understand but which the following pages begin to reveal.

Utility, group boundaries and ethics of accommodation

In South Africa and Kenya’s peri-urban spaces, practices of membership and accommodation are being shaped by a usufruct ethics: rather than claiming ownership or drawing strict boundaries of membership, this is a largely instrumental ethics oriented towards accessing the ‘fruits’ of urban space while simultaneously maintaining imagining or enacting life elsewhere. As such, for urban residents, however temporary, the imperatives of conviviality and accommodation are rooted in utility, not identity or culture: these are places of extraction, not belonging. Where residents or leaders evoke idioms of indigeneity, the objective is often more to exclude competition than to strengthen bonds of localised belonging. Unlike the emotive sense of community and place-bound belonging (which is then ‘disrupted’ by the arrival of Others) that is evoked elsewhere (Gidley 2013; Meier 2013), space here is conceptualised in terms of its materiality and utility. Place is, fundamentally, not about being ‘part of’ it, neither is it about establishing true ownership or responsibility for it.

Perhaps the emergence of a usufruct ethics comes as little surprise given that in Rongai and Katlehong everyone is a migrant of some kind, most are transient and translocal in trajectory and rarely does anyone have aspirations to stay put. Where people with somewhat ‘legitimate’ claims to indigeneity exist—as with Rongai’s Maasai or those living in Katlehong since its inception—these are often wildly outnumbered by more recent arrivals. Instead, what shapes the encounter with Other and the nature of social boundaries are claims for opportunities in their varied forms: women, infrastructure, residential space, political leverage; economic advancement. As Waweru (author interview, 9 January 2014), a restaurateur summarises, ‘For many, Rongai is just a place to make money. It’s just a place to get somewhere.’ However, while in both Kenya and South Africa the language of utility and instrumentalism shapes the conditions of tolerance, this manifests in decidedly different ways in the two places.

In Rongai, this utilitarian concept of space has helped to shape a cosmopolitan ethics that serves to legitimate the arrivals of outsiders and newcomers and explicitly produces a valuable urban space that, rhetorically anyway, belongs to no one and hence allows everyone to be there. A more thorough understanding of the site reveals three factors beyond market imperatives that facilitate and fortify Rongai’s cosmo subjectivity. The first surrounds a

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foundational myth of ‘terra incognita’ and Maasai hospitality: that Rongai’s modern occupation is seen as both morally just and achieved in such a way that no group can now make exclusive claim to the territory on which it sits. The remaining two points are products and reactions to the country’s history of ethno-political exclusion and violence. More specifically, Rongai’s rapid population growth is a direct consequence of displacements elsewhere in the country. As people fled violence and exclusion in the Rift Valley and even central Nairobi (Kibera in particular), they brought with them a determination to prevent further violence. Third, the area has long been characterised by what Landau terms—borrowing from common Kenyan nomenclature that may offend elsewhere—a kind of ‘half-caste politics’: Because the leadership of the area was of mixed ethnicity, they have actively worked to de-ethnicise politics to preserve their own legitimacy and power. Such instrumentalism draws attention to a final sub-point regarding the compelling economic interests of local elites to preserve the peaceful status quo.

Rongai’s particular form of ‘cosmo’ accommodation is a reaction to the violent ethnicisation of land and politics elsewhere in the country, but it nonetheless generally accepts the fundamental intertwining of land and identity. However, even as people decry ethnicised violence and exclusive practices seen elsewhere, they rarely challenge the basis for such conflicts. Many accept a generalised cosmology categorising people in ethnicities and tribes rooted to homelands over which they have primary or even absolute authority. Indeed, many of Rongai’s land owners and residents continue to remain rooted in such spaces and ethnicities beyond Rongai’s boundaries. It is precisely because of such connections elsewhere that people are prepared to operate within a kind of ownerless interzone. Rather, they often demonise those who do as somehow polluted or corrupted for having lost rural connections. Yet inasmuch as residents remain rural ethno-spatial subjects, they maintain that ethnic hostilities and exclusive discourses must be checked at the city gates.

In South Africa too, concepts of pragmatism and utility dictate the conditions of tolerance, albeit in different ways. In Katlehong, definitions of inclusion and exclusion often depend on whether the advantages outweigh the detriment associated with a reconfiguration (or suspension) of current group boundaries. In places not considered or desired to be *home*, tolerance towards the Other is rarely motivated by a principled stance towards affecting a permanent, binding and universal order, but determined by a situated assessment of how best to serve one’s own trajectories and goals under precarious living conditions. While residents privately pursue their own trajectories, a widely shared meta-narrative of ‘mind your own business’ serves as a more universally accepted principle of governing difference, and allows for the co-existence of multiple parallel and often contradictory ethics: Christian neighbourliness, Pan-African brotherhood, interethnic solidarity and human rights discourse exist alongside nationalistic and ethnic chauvinism, re-interpreted racial hierarchies and a ‘quasi’ autochthonous micro-territoriality of having been the first of all the migrants in the area. No particular framework is solely dominant, or even necessarily aspires to be. The principle of ‘mind your own business’ has no actual substantive content, it does not produce a ‘we’ or establish sense of cohesion in the normative sense. Instead, it serves the dual function of ‘being’ yourself as you wish and allowing Others to ‘be’ while remaining able to exclude them, albeit typically only temporarily, when it is considered necessary. In most cases, ‘mind your own business’ reflects in a pragmatic, disengaged co-existence which tolerates all sorts of otherwise and elsewhere frowned upon ethnic, religious or other differences.

Beyond the passive aspects of ‘mind your own business’, residents often shift or suspend the parameters of tolerance in order to actively secure a benefit or allow for particular constellations that suit their own ‘business’, trajectory and aspirations. As a result, group boundaries and categories of Others are in a constant state of flux. Ethnic, religious or foreign-local antagonisms, while passionately legitimised or violently enforced at one point can become permeable a moment later.

The category of the foreigner documents this volatility in a particularly insightful way: it neither encompasses only those holding foreign citizenship nor all foreign nationals alike at all times and in all places (Freemantle 2015). In particular, which of the foreigners is effectively considered an outsider often depends neither on actual nationality or other criteria like ethnicity, language or appearance nor a principled ‘xenophobic’ stance, but whether or not he or she is willing to ‘contribute’ to the ‘community’.

Apart from the specificities of African urbanisation discussed earlier, this particular framework within which tolerance to the Other is granted is critically shaped by two sets of principles cultivated during the colonial and Apartheid era: a persisting ethnicised and territorial concept of rights as well as the notion that the privilege to reside in urban areas is given only in exchange for a service (Davenport 1970; Beavon 1982). Accordingly, ordinary residents as much as officials such the police selectively allow some individuals or groups of foreigners to stay as long as a variably defined benefit—money, goods, knowledge, other support—is provided in return (see Sunday Times 2011, Daily Maverick 2013; IOL 2013; City Press 2013; Makore 2014, 72, Freemantle 2015). Acceptance into a ‘community’ is thus dependent on foreigners to pay protection money, help out with funeral costs or provide transport costs for school going children. Rabie in Katlehong aptly sums up this approach: ‘If you come and you add value, we’ll just appreciate you. But if you come and you don’t add value you might not be welcome in this place.’ (Holomisa, 1 April 2014). To an extent, utility even shapes other apparently more inclusive pan-African or cosmopolitan attitudes that legitimise the foreign presence on the basis of the possibility of future benefit (for example, the exchange of knowledge or learning of a new language) or reciprocity (for example, the ability to visit other countries oneself).

Centred on constructions of black South Africans as a people whose suffering continues beyond the end of Apartheid, foreign Others are thus categorised into those who either facilitate or thwart the achievement of economic freedom and ‘transformation’ for South Africans. Along with domestic *impimpi* (‘sell outs’), they can be quickly re-categorised as traitors—once that benefit appears to have ceased for those who previously enjoyed it—or the foreign Other appears to usurp the position of citizens and their entitlements all together: when prices are raised or when the strike breaking, lower wage accepting *Shangaan* undermines South African worker’s bargaining power, this precarious hospitality is withdrawn and easily turns into overt hostility, Langa explained that ‘if those people are raising their price there, they are going home, fast.’ (Holomisa, 5 April 2014).

However, while regular attacks on foreigners are often misread as evidence of the hegemonic status of xenophobic sentiment, such ‘expulsions’ rarely constitute permanent ethnic cleansing. At some point, displacees typically return to the same areas they fled from. While of course some of this is due to the economic incentives—or pressures—to resume livelihoods, it is important to highlight that there are also always those in the ‘local community’ who subscribe to a different set of ethics—whatever that may be

motivated by—and support that displaced foreigners should return. The overall transience of the population and its trajectories means that efforts to dominate space whenever they do happen—be they political, linguistic or economic in nature—will ultimately be frustrated due to an inherent inability to mobilise sustained and fully collective support for any *specific* order. As in the Kenyan example, Katlehong’s fluidity results in a heterogeneous and ever changing social landscape which offers many categories of Others both opportunity and room to manoeuvre. Without a singular order explicitly fostering peaceful coexistence—as we see in Rongai—South Africa’s more volatile mode of membership and instrumental approach to organising diversity however also enables at times extraordinary exclusion and violence.

Conclusions

If Bulley (2006) is right that, ‘hospitality requires some notion of an “at home” for its possible performance,’ then what is integration when we see multiple homes or where everyone is both host and visitor? Without dominant states, hegemonic markets or powerful, centralised social institutions, diverse, newly urbanised populations have nonetheless found means of accommodating each other. Drawing on elements from liberal cosmopolitanism to violent and exclusive ethno-national chauvinism, the underlying ethics and mechanisms of inclusion nonetheless challenge fundamental elements of our thinking on both of these. Perhaps most importantly, the urban spaces in which people contest or co-occupy are fundamentally no-one’s home in an ontological sense. Even the most vehement and exclusive claims to space are driven by an instrumental desire to *use* rather than *own* and be bound by it while maintaining important social engagements and status elsewhere. Moreover, in the absence of centralised, disciplining institutions, even the most inclusive practices of tolerance and hospitality can be rapidly undone by shifting alliances or incentives (Wroblewski 2012, 29). Derrida thus writes that there is ‘residual violence of the hospitable gesture, which always take place in a scene of power’ (Leung and Stone 2009, 193).

Our findings challenge the literature’s emphasis on cohesion as the basis of conviviality; that the ultimate goal of policy-makers and residents is to turn every-day interactions into ‘positive’ and transformative encounters that produce a society based on respect, common goals and mutual recognition (Amin 2002, 969; Holtug 2010, 441; Wiesemann 2012, 23; Rogaly and Qureshi 2013, 434–435; Wilson 2013, 642,642). Our discussion challenges a number of key assumptions informing the existing literature on diversity and accommodation: assumptions about the integration, homogeneity and sedentary nature of both hosts and new arrivals (although others have begun addressing this in advocating a paradigmatic shift towards ‘super diversity’, see Vertovec 2007; Fanshawe and Sriskandarajah 2010, 5; Fog Olwig 2013); assumptions about the distinctions between, and existence of, hosts and guests; assumptions about the centrality of the state and its agents in ‘controlling’ difference; and assumptions about the nature of place, mobility, identity and membership.

By allowing people to retain ethnic, religious, or forms of extra-local loyalties—both religion and ethnicity remain highly visible in Kenya and South Africa—residents may inadvertently generate a kind of radical multiculturalism, a ‘pluralisation of possibilities of being on the same territory’ (Campbell 1998, 162). We are not suggesting that what we document should, or could, serve as a normative model of integration. In many ways it remains brutally violent, unstable or so historically contingent as to deny the

possibility of conscious reproduction. However, they provide valuable insights into the actual, lived experiences of diverse populations and the ways they find to 'get along', however precarious it may be. In doing so, they raise fundamental questions about the naturalness with which we commonly, intuitively, imbue the link between integration and shared values, place-based belonging and consensus. If anything, the important role of utilitarian and pragmatic elements in the engagement with Others resonates beyond well the continent's cities, as for example Skrbis and Woodward's work on 'limits of cosmopolitan openness' (2007, 744–745) suggests. While such concepts of instrumentality and the right to use—the *usufruct* of our title—rather than to own and belong, sit uneasily with dominant normative and moral concepts of society, they are a reality in African cities as much as elsewhere that anyone—scholar, policy maker, ordinary citizen—will have to negotiate and acknowledge in their attempts to 'manage' diversity.

Beyond these normative and theoretical conclusions, this article also draws our attention to the specificity of space and place. While Simmel, Weber (Eugene and Max) and hosts of others note cities' role in spawning national political subjectivities, the literature on immigrant integration too often overlooks the particularly generative potential of urban space. It instead speaks of national cultures being transformed or threatened. Even those challenging such 'methodological nationalism' (cf. Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003), often fail to adequately consider two factors surfaced here. Instead we bring the insights of urban studies (see, for example, Mabin, Butcher, and Bloch 2013; Robinson 2014). The first is the need to disaggregate city space. As works on ghettoisation and gateway neighbourhoods suggest (Keith 2005, 61–85; Saunders 2011), not all streets or neighbourhoods are created equal. Peri-urban Africa may not be globally unique, but the rapid sprawl of urban spaces with little state regulation or public infrastructure creates distinct and potentially novel ways of living together. There is a thrown-togetherness here, but one unlikely to result in forms of membership others describe. Secondly, we must be more conscious in our treatment of the putative host population's composition and intentions. In the cases discussed here, it makes little sense to speak of a settled host with a conscious conception of community or even a desire to build stable, place-bound membership. Even where such populations are citizens, they remain so internally fragmented and fluid as to belie sensible analytical aggregation and may also wish to remain fluid and fundamentally fragmented as they navigate the precarity of tenure, employment, and family demands. Given the history of recent urbanisation and ongoing mobility, people's most significant moral and political communities may be elsewhere.

Although there will be those who read in this article an appeal for African exceptionalism, the challenges we raise are anything but. Our attention to the historical specificity of place is not intended to suggest that Africa is inherently distinct. It rather surfaces the specificity of the Euro-American experience by illustrating how its history of nationalism and urbanisation during an era of industrialisation has shaped both practices and analytical presumptions about membership, belonging and the trajectories of diverse societies. Such institutional and structural foundations are present only rarely in the cities and countries of the 'global south,' the sites of the most rapid forms of immigration and urbanisation. We can no longer see these sites as deviations from a Euro-American norm, either analytical or philosophical. Rather, the kinds of pragmatic, instrumental and horizontal patterns described here, however briefly, are likely to become the new normal, and require us, as van Leeuwen (2010) and Tonkiss (2003) suggest, to conceptualise more manageable, pragmatic 'side by side' modes of urban co-existence that align with the

diverse nature, needs and aspirations of city populations. Although Europe and North America may never face the kind of institutional frailty described here, there are clear parallels in the ghettos or the United States and the denigrated post-industrial spaces of Europe where host populations are themselves fluid and fragmented and state and cultural institutions remain only shallowly embedded. Although future urban sociality and modes of accommodating difference in the global North may look little like Katlehong or Rongai, unless we expand our range of analytical tools and normative standards along the lines described here, we may overlook the novel and important socio-political formations that ultimately emerge.

Notes

1. Data compiled by Thomas Brinkerhoff from official records. Downloaded from www.citypopulation.de.
2. International Migration and Development in Africa: The Migration and Climate Nexus.

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