



Researching about Zimbabwean
civil society in South Africa:
challenges, methods and preliminary
results from the fieldwork

Centre for Civil Society Seminar
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Source: blogs.msf.org



Source: alexengwete.blogspot.com



Source: [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)



Source: doctorswithoutborders.org



Structure of the Seminar

- Research centres
- Other studies about migrant civil society
- Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa: theoretical framework, research questions, methods, challenges
- Some preliminary indications from the fieldwork
- Zimbabwean CSOs and other activists in South Africa

Relevant Research Centres

- Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP), at Queens University, Canada.
- African Centre for Migration and Society, University of Witwatersrand (Above all papers by Loren Landau and Aurelia Segatti).
- Department of Anthropology, Carleton University, Canada (mainly works published by Blair Rutherford)
- Department of Geography, University College of London-UCL (Look at Joan Mc Gregor's research)
- Department of Development Studies, University of Oxford (Some work of Jocelyn Alexander)
- Publications of Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Zimbabwe Exile Forum, Zimbabwe Diaspora CSO Forum

Studies about migrant civil society (1)

- Theodore, N. and Martin, N. (2007) study focused on Chicago.
- Approach on the community of migrants, specifically Albany Park as “transnational community”, since in this neighbourhood the foreign born population is 52%.
- Migrant civil society: community organisations, social movements, hometown associations, church and faith based organisations, social clubs and other organised groups that represent the interest of migrants and operate between markets, households and the state.

Studies about migrant civil society (3)

- Odmalm, P. (2004) focused on Sweden.
- The researcher studies the relationship between migrant associations, Swedish civil society and political parties.
- Migrant associations: link between the sending country and the receiving one, supplement to the state, unified voice for their particular ethnic group in the host society, connection between the ethnic group and the country or region of origin.
- Swedish context acts in an assimilatory way, and migrant associations lose their ethnic identity and become “immigrant”; migrant associations tend to assume Swedish characteristics.

Studies about migrant civil society (4)

- Amisi, B. and Ballard, R. (2005), Congolese refugees in South Africa.
- Focus on expression of discontent, struggles and organisation.
- Analysis through the lenses of (absence) “citizenship”.
- Organisations and networks as answer to the circumstances refugees find themselves in, they are survival organisations.

Previous studies about Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (1)

- Makina, D. (2007) pilot study in Johannesburg to profile Zimbabweans in South Africa.
- Study in collaboration with Zimbabwe Diaspora CSO Forum.
- One of the questions of the survey was related to the support available to Zimbabweans, they mentioned:
 - Zimbabwe Political Victims Association (ZIPOVA) 22%
 - Zimbabwe Torture Victims Project (ZTVP) 4%
- Zimbabwean organisations as part of the support available for migrants.

Previous studies about Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (2a)

- Polzer, T. (2008) policy brief of Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP).
- Zimbabwean migrant: all people of zimbabwean origin who have entered or are staying in South Africa, including those who are eligible for, have applied for, or received refugee or asylum status.
- Migrant and refugee rights advocacy organisations remain ghettoised from other large South African CSOs which focus on civil and socio economic rights.
- Zimbabwean organisations mainly focused on advocacy regarding the situation within Zimbabwe, rather than concerning Zimbabweans in South Africa.

Previous studies about Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (2b)

- They are self funded.
- Important role of Churches
- Problem of divisions inside the Zimbabwean organisations, above all the Shona/Ndebele divide.



Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (1)

Theoretical framework

- De Haas, H. (2010), **migration** as a diffusion process, where endogenous and contextual feedback mechanisms can influence migration processes.
- Noyoo, N. (2006), **Civil Society** refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional form are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though the boundaries are often complex, blurred and negotiated.[...]Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non governmental organisations, faith based organisations, trade unions, self help groups[...]

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (2)

Theoretical framework

- Theodore, N. and Martin, N. (2007) **Migrant civil society**: community organisations, social movements, hometown associations, church and faith based organisations, social clubs and other organised groups that represent the interest of migrants and operate between markets, households and the state.
- **I enlarged this definition**, taking in consideration also involvement of Zimbabweans in civil society in general, even if their activities are not directed to help other migrants and/or specifically Zimbabweans.

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (3)

Research Questions

- What are the expressions of Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa?
- What are the characteristics of this civil society? Do the organisations create partnership with South African and/or other migrant organisations? How do they involve and recruit people? What are their activities?
- What is the profile of the people involved? (such as: what is their educational background? Were they active in Zimbabwe? What is their job?)

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (4)

Methods

- Semi structured interviews (snowball sample, key informants)
- Group interviews
- Participant observation
- News analysis
- Bibliographical research (comparative analysis)

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (5)

Challenges and Limitations

- Time available
- Researcher and interviewee availability
- Change of the topic
- Researcher external to the South African and Zimbabwe context, this requested bit of time in the beginning to understand how to deal with this kind of research
- No budget available for the research

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (6)

Some preliminary indications from the fieldwork/ pilot study

- It has been discovered that in Durban the main Zimbabwean Network is the one composed of MDC supporters.
- Activists can have activities outside the Zimbabwean interests, but related to the South African Context.
- One member was a “facilitator”(De Haas, 2010)
- Most of them are in South Africa because escaped to the 2005-06 political violence (except one)
- They were active members of MDC since 1999 in Zimbabwe (except one)
- Their age is 30 onwards, they have at least high school degrees, but have also university degrees and professional diplomas, 6 males, 1 female, they all have relatives both in Zimbabwe and in South Africa, they all speak Shona. They arrived first in Johannesburg or Musina.

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (7)

- Sunday meetings of MDC activists: discussion about Zimbabwe, useful strategies to bring “peace to Zimbabwe”, support network for Zimbabwean migrants that need information and advise for documents, and organising protest. In their opinion an important role of Zimbabwean civil society abroad is also to make communication and information about Zimbabwe situation.
- There is no collaboration with other migrant communities
- There are networks with South African civil society
- Low involvement of women “ because they have family, they may be busy with other activities”
- Door to door system to involve/recruit people
- Family members and friends are indifferent or supportive of their activity

Zimbabwean civil society in South Africa (8)

- They achieved: experience that can be used one day in Zimbabwe, learning experiences.
- They are very critical towards MDC, even if they declare themselves as members of MDC, there is actually no funding or direction from Zimbabwe about their activities and scope.
- MDC activists abroad defined by MDC T as associates members, they found this “degrading”.

Zimbabwean CSOs in South Africa

- Zimbabwe Political Victims Association
- Zimbabwe Torture Victims Project
- PASSOP- People Against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty
- Zimbabwe Economic Development Centre
- Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition
- Zimbabwe Exile Forum
- The Migrant Workers' Association - South Africa
- MDC networks
- Penthecostal Church

Other relevant activists

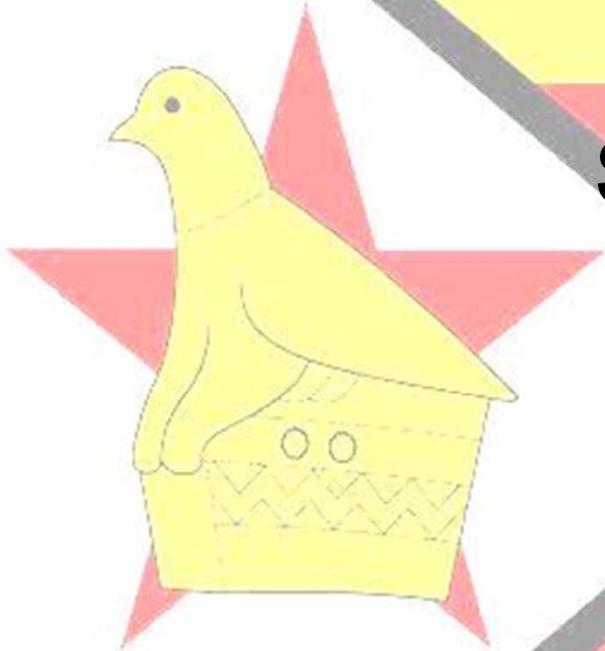
- **Braam Hanekom** is a Zimbabwean-born South African refugee rights activist. He left Zimbabwe after leaving school to assist the Movement for Democratic Change as an activist in their 2002 presidential campaign. He then moved to Cape Town where he founded PASSOP in 2007. He is fluent in Shona and for 2 years he wrote a weekly column for a newspaper 'The Zimbabwean'. During the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 he endured police harassment and arbitrary detentions, several while participating in different legal protest actions. During the same period PASSOP was instrumental in exposing the crisis at refugee centres in South Africa.
- **Dr. Dale T. McKinley** is an independent writer, researcher and lecturer as well as political activist. Originally from Zimbabwe, Dale has lived and worked in Johannesburg since 1990. He ran/managed a socialist bookshop from 1991-1994 and was a full time activist/educationist with the South African Communist Party from 1995-2000. Dale was a co-founder and executive member of the Anti-Privatisation Forum and remains active in social movement/community struggles.

To be done

- To explore the role of churches
- To interview more Zimbabweans active in civil society, at least 8-10
- Other kind of associationism (students)
- Participant observation



The end



Mazvita!
Siyabonga kakulu!
Thank you!
Ngiyabonga!
Grazie!

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