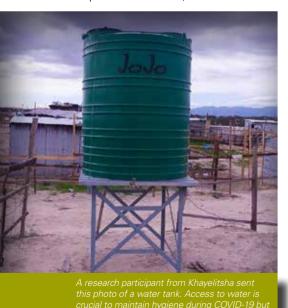people spent a lot of time waiting, increasing their risk of infection. To mitigate the burden, the Department of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation introduced water trucks and tanks, which provided relief. However, as one respondent from Khayelitsha explained:

*"Social distance is really difficult. If the water has run out from the communal taps, you have to run for the tanks/trucks that are coming to assist but, because there are no roads, they can't stop where you are staying. They stand +-500 m from the house, which makes carrying 20-25 litres difficult."*

For those households with free-flowing water, individual access affordability was a major concern. Increased consumption created anxiety and fear about future water bills and indebtedness.

Beyond water, lockdown also increased the need for, and cost of, electricity. Some were able to benefit from free extra units, but the amount was minimal. Others had to stop using electricity altogether, resorting to paraffin and wood, with adverse



*A research participant from Khayelitsha sent this photo of a water tank. Access to water is crucial to maintain hygiene during COVID-19 but informal settlements often don't have sufficient water and sanitation infrastructure.*

health and safety concerns and increased time spent cooking. Lack of electricity also hampered usage of communication technology such as smart phones.

**COVID-19 and lockdown aggravated pre-existing social and psychological distress.** Many of the participants lamented the lack of space at home, lack of privacy and stress of being in a confined space for so long. As a backyard dweller from Beacon Valley explained:

*"… the space is overcrowded and the house is too small. We are in each other's way. It is very awkward. Just to do the cleaning and washing, we have to not all be in the same room. Everything is too much, we are not used to sit inside cooped up, we are used to go outside to visit family and friends. We are working on each other's nerves."*

**Life outside the house: Overloaded infrastructure**
Public and private infrastructure in high-density areas are often overloaded and inadequate to accommodate growing demand. In each neighbourhood the already limited health, social and economic facilities were overwhelmed by the number of people who had to be served under social-distancing measures. The resulting long queues in front of clinics and shops contributed to residents' risk of contracting the virus. Many participants expressed anxieties and fears around this. A participant from Beacon Valley wrote, "I am afraid that I will be infected while waiting", which was echoed by a participant from Khayelitsha who said, "Even shopping is risky, there are too long lines and you can get infected. It's not secure, it's not safe."

Limited public transport further exacerbated the situation, as reflected in an account from a participant in Hillview about her trip to the local Shoprite:

*"There were no taxis to Shoprite so I used an Uber in Military Road. When returning home, I had to order another Uber because there were no taxis. But robbers robbed the Uber driver while I was standing there."*

As an alternative to supermarkets residents made use of local spaza shops, but complained that "at the spaza shop, there is no adequate food and they are so expensive".

**Conclusions**
Investing in physical, social and economic infrastructure in urban peripheries can drive transformative change. This should be supported through mechanisms to redistribute wealth, including a progressive wealth tax and a basic income grant. The case for these measures is increasingly hard to ignore, and they are especially warranted in South Africa, in the context of extreme, racialised wealth inequality.

During the pandemic, we have witnessed shifts in state and community practices that are encouraging. These include the extraordinarily rapid progress in water provision across the country, the increase in state assistance through grants, and the emergence of mutual aid groups that connect people within and across urban neighbourhoods.

These are all prefigurative of what could be but would need to be far more substantive and long term. Currently, we are faced with a choice between intensified immiseration or emancipatory change. We need to choose the latter and construct a society built on a politics of equality as opposed to a politics of austerity and exclusion.

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# CIRCULAR MIGRATION DURING COVID-19:
## Reflecting on the social and cultural significance of 'home'

The arrival of COVID-19 in South Africa has been like putting dye in water; moving across the surface as flow determines spread, it leaves clear and detectable patterns. Lockdown was meant to keep all of the dye in one place – but it spread across the country, including into the Eastern Cape where hotspots have emerged in Chris Hani and OR Tambo district municipalities. The movement patterns indicate that circular migration, migrant labour and double-rootedness remain significant features of the South African political economy. A new book, *Migrant Labour after Apartheid: The Inside Story*, argues that this movement is driven from below rather than scripted by capital and the state from above. *Leslie Bank*, who co-authored the book with *Dorrit Posel* and *Francis Wilson*, explains.

The 20th century Hungarian economic historian and anthropologist Karl Polanyi argued that impersonal or 'dis-embedded' economic transactional orders were unique historical features of a market society or capitalism. He suggested that, in contrast, the realm of economic transactions in non-market societies was characterised by social and moral considerations such as reciprocity or redistribution, and not by mere self-interest and maximisation.

Polanyi was mistaken in one important regard: the idea that capitalism or the market society is asocial and driven by a universal logic of maximising behaviour is problematic. In a consumer society, social values, morals and aspirations mould needs and wants, which in turn shape the transactional orders and production regimes of capitalism.

The most important take-away from Polanyi is, perhaps, that economic behaviour everywhere is determined by both utilitarian and sociocultural forces. The British social anthropologist Henrietta Moore recognised this when she warned (Marxist) economists not to think simply of the 'reproduction of labour power' as a matter of biological reproduction, but to see it as a matter of reproducing socialised people and identities.

*Matatiele, Eastern Cape*
**Photo:** Graham Maclachlan

It is in times of societal threat, such as during the present crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19, that social reproduction acquires a special salience as people reconnect with their roots and reflect on their core social identities. This is why governments all over the world have supported people seeking to return to their home countries or homelands to be with their families. In South Africa, increased movement between urban and rural areas has caused tension during the stringent lockdown imposed by the government.

Many South Africans do not have only one home, but relate closely to two or more places — what has been called 'double-rootedness'. These often include a place in the city and at least one home in the countryside. People without a rural home, especially for their children, are often said to lack the means of acquiring an authentic black South African identity.

Many black South Africans still feel alienated and vulnerable in South African cities, which made the hard lockdown in the early months of the pandemic problematic. Who has the right, people ask, to stop them from going home – especially in these trying times?

Law enforcement against the flow of translocality and circular migration has resulted in a war of words between regional governments, which are struggling to keep people confined to local cities and regions. The tensions between these authorities reveal that there are no institutional structures for the management of translocality and double-rootedness in South Africa.

### Migrant labour, translocality and people's science

Lockdown, like development, has created territorial traps. It appears to be an obvious response to COVID-19 from the biomedical and classic market-economics perspectives. From the biomedical point of view, stopping people from moving represents a basic method for preventing the virus from spreading. Meanwhile, rational-choice economists assume that population movement is unidirectional as people logically leave areas of low economic opportunity, such as the former rural homelands, for the cities.

In contrast, those who pay close attention to the sociocultural aspects of economic theory and focus more on what people are doing, the so-called 'substantivists' in Polanyi's framework, would have noticed that many people in the cities are gravitating to the rural areas. Rationalists would say that these people are moving because they realise that jobs will be scarce during the COVID-19 crisis, and there is more space for social distancing in rural areas.

However, we might interpret this movement differently. People are more likely to reflect on the social and cultural significance of home at this critical time, especially

those who have essentially never been welcomed and given full citizenship in the city. They may reflect on questions of moral integrity and security, kinship and close-knit social relations, and cultural identity, as well as historical experiences of migration and threats to life and dignity posed by the spread of COVID-19 and lockdown restrictions.

The evidence from rural communities in the Eastern Cape suggests that many people from the cities have returned to their rural homes to be with their families at this dangerous time. They are apparently also catching up on customary ceremonies and rites that they might not have been able to perform earlier by virtue of long absences in the city.

Visits to the rural home are enabling people to re-centre their lives spiritually and culturally, and to reconnect their families and children to their home places. In reflecting on this movement, it is important to note that those who have land and homes in rural areas have retained these, often at great cost to themselves and their families, as a form of resistance to colonialism and dispossession.

Holding on to these places, however remote they may be, has its own rationality. There is a logic to why people continue to 'suffer for territory' in the ways they do, and retain their connections with an ancestral home and culture. This includes holding on to ideas of an 'old nation', which have been rapidly pushed aside by new ways and social change in recent years.

In this context, home is a kind of heartland, a reference to a moral community. It is not an abstract place defined by Western science, a site for the spread of germs and disease, nor merely a spatial container of economic opportunities. In terms of the 'people's science' of everyday life, home in South Africa is translocal and often stretched across space, to ensure that both survival and social reproduction remain possible in difficult times.

Consequently, economic and medical science alone will not be effective in managing the spread of COVID-19 in South Africa. Interventions must be able to connect with people's own practices of householding and their adaptations to challenges of everyday life.

Against this background, the apparent failure of the South African government to develop policies and programmes that are responsive and attuned to the promotion of a 'people's science' and the persistent practice of translocality in the country lies at the heart of the current contestation among provinces over the movement of people.

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**Photo:** *ZenzileMolo*

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*During the day, Jody works in the Khulisa Streetscapes vegetable garden in Cape Town then skarrels after work to supplement her income before returning to her sleeping spot outside. "It's cold, but I'm used to it. I am now 11 years outside. We have blankets and throw cardboard [with a big piece of] plastic on top when it is raining."*

**Photos:** *Andrea Teagle*

# HOME FIRST:
## A starting point for the chronically homeless?

On a crisp June morning over two months after COVID-19 lockdown was announced, Cape Town was eerily quiet. Stripped of its bustling crowds of city workers and tourists, much of the movement on the streets was that of homeless people wrapped in their blankets and setting off for another day of *skarreling* — slang for their daily hustle for money. For some, the lockdown has kick-started new choices, partly because they found a place to call 'home'. *Antoinette Oosthuizen* reports on a housing project in the city that is being evaluated by the HSRC.

The worst part of being addicted is waking up in the morning needing a fix, says Sam*(30), who managed to stop smoking heroin during lockdown: "You crave, your stomach is cramping, you must smoke, you cannot do anything, you are just lam [paralysed]. You must smoke to feel normal again."

His challenge was particularly gruelling because until recently he was also homeless.

In May, he moved into a house in a Cape Town suburb to participate in a supportive housing programme, which the HSRC is helping Khulisa Social Solutions to evaluate.

Sam used to share the streets with about 8000 homeless Capetonians, but the true number is likely closer to 10 000–15 000 in the metropole alone, says Jesse Laitinen, Khulisa's strategic partnerships manager.

Khulisa's Streetscapes project runs a community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programme for chronically homeless people in Cape Town. Most have lived on the streets for years or decades and also have substance use or mental-health issues. Most shelters require abstinence, so they refuse to sleep there, says Laitinen. Being viewed as antisocial or criminal has contributed to their marginalisation.