‘For Me It Is Double Quarantine Inside’. Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic – the Case of Lesbian Migrant Women in South Africa

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Abstract
In the end of March South African president Ramaphosa declared the national state of disaster including a nationwide lockdown with a restrictive curfew in consequence of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has a specific effect on (forced) migrants in South Africa. The consequences arising from the crisis unfold along the intersections of race, class, and citizenship as well as gender and sexuality. Informal migrants are confronted with the loss of livelihoods and often with a lack of provision of basic supplies, exacerbated through xeno- and – for lesbian migrant women – homophobia. Drawing on narratives conducted during the nationwide lockdown in Johannesburg in March and April 2020 with black lesbian migrant women the article examines the experiences of these women including the restriction of movement and how they reorganize their daily life and navigate the all-embracing condition of waiting. The article argues that the fracture of the Rainbow Nation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic is intensified. The lack of access to save housing and protection from discrimination, the omitted inclusion of the experiences of lesbian migrant women explicitly in policy responses to mobility and the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to enforced quarantining – both from society and from their self-identification.

Keywords
Quarantine, Waiting, Rainbow Nation, Lesbian Migrant Women, South Africa, COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

On Sunday 15 March 2020, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the National State of Disaster\(^2\) including drastic steps to curb the spread of COVID-19 by supporting its containment and to enable the health system to prepare for incoming cases. On Wednesday 18 March 2020, some of these actions came into effect, including a range of travel restrictions and the closure of several ports of entry among other non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as encouraging or enforcing physical distancing, quarantining and isolation. Introduced on 27 March 2020 the countrywide restrictive lockdown includes a five-level risk adjusted strategy.\(^3\) During level five the movement of people is strictly regulated and leaving the house is only allowed for essential travel for work or to purchase essential goods. Being outside for so-called non-essential purposes (including exercising), selling alcohol and all public gatherings are among prohibited activities. The first COVID-19 case was reported on 5 March 2020 and the first person died with COVID-19 on 27 March 2020. Especially internationally, the government’s quick initial actions were praised and applauded as decisive and efficient.\(^4\) The cases grew until the pandemic reached its first peak in July 2020 and its second peak in January 2021. During the time of writing, South Africa transitioned as of 1 March 2021 to level 1 with over 1.5-million registered COVID-19 cases and over 50-thousand registered people who died with COVID-19 in South Africa since the beginning of the pandemic.

Effecting not only migrants\(^5\), but also a large part of the population the implications of a lockdown for South African society and economy are worrying and non-pharmaceutical interventions such as physical distancing point to the inequality divide in the country. There has been a lot of writing about the ‘South African experience’\(^6\) of COVID-19 and ‘pandemic stories that are intended to reveal a shared humanity and promote common cause’\(^7\). Although both citizens and non-citizens are affected by the lockdown

\(^2\) The South African Disaster Management Act 2002 was a result of a long legislative process that started in 1994. It regulates, among others, the disaster management policy, responses to disasters, emergency preparedness and the establishment of decentralised disaster management centres and marks a shift from only responding to disasters to the reduction of disaster risk. The act and its lack of implementation is crucial to the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

\(^3\) www.sacoronavirus.co.za/covid-19-risk-adjusted-strategy/


\(^5\) Despite having exposed themselves recurrently to the South African asylum system, the participants referred to themselves as ‘migrant’ or ‘foreigner,’ rather than as ‘refugee’ or ‘asylum seeker’. Therefore, I use the term migrant as an umbrella term for (forced) migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The distinction between migrating people in different (state-defined) categories is often critiqued as an exercise of power and has material consequences for migrating people, see Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, “Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe’s ‘Migration Crisis’,” Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 44, no. 1 (2018).


and its consequences for the South African economy and society, Baldwin-Ragaven suggests being cautious to not only highlight the similarities, but also to not obscure the differences in the effects and experiences of the pandemic.8

This article intends to focus on the experiences of a group that is often overlooked in society and research9 (and not only during the COVID-19 pandemic): the experiences of lesbian migrant women living in South Africa. ‘For me it is double quarantine inside’10 Ruth11, a lesbian migrant woman describes her experience of the lockdown in March and April 2020 in South Africa. By shifting the focus to lesbian migrant women’s experiences in the Global South the paper adds to the expanding field of sexualities12 and migration studies as well as seeks to initiate a discussion around the intersection of sexualities, migrations and the COVID-19 pandemic. The article draws on narratives recorded during the lockdown in March and April 2020 with black lesbian migrant women who live in Johannesburg and who could potentially apply for asylum.13 The article argues that the experiences of the pandemic differ for lesbian migrant women from those who hold South African citizenship as well as from those who are not transgressing heteronormative boundaries. Studying the COVID-19 pandemic through an intersectional lens means taking into account that the effects of the pandemic and its policies and actions put in place by the South African government unfold for persons differently along categories such as gender, sexuality, class, and citizenship. This article discusses the narrative of the Rainbow Nation14 and outlines the asylum process and situation of asylum seekers in South Africa. Followed by a description of the exclusion of migrants from social and economic assistance and the lack of ‘migration-aware and mobility competent policies and

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10 Ruth, 24 April 2020
11 All names are pseudonyms.
12 Reference to sexuality in the plural does not simply point to the diverse forms of orientation, identity or status. It is a political call to conceptualise sexuality outside the normative social orders and frameworks that view it through binary oppositions and simplistic labels. In other words, thinking in terms of multiple sexualities is crucial to disperse the essentialism embedded in so much sexuality research’ see Sylvia Tamale, “Researching and Theorising Sexualities in Africa,” in African Sexualities: A Reader, ed. Sylvia Tamale (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 11.
13 Several of the interviewees did not move to South Africa solely because of their sexuality, but because of political persecution, family ties, educational and employment opportunities. Therefore, I borrow the notion of ‘potentiality of asylum’ from Camminga whose ‘use of asylum spread to those that could potentially apply for asylum but for various reasons had chosen not to’, see B Camminga, Transgender Refugees and the Imagined South Africa: Bodies over Borders and Borders over Bodies (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 274.
14 The term Rainbow Nation was coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1994 to describe post-apartheid South Africa’s ethnic diversity: In his inaugural speech in 1994 in Pretoria, President Nelson Mandela proclaimed ‘We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity - a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.’
programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic. After which I examine the experiences of lesbian migrant women during the lockdown in March and April 2020 focussing how these women reorganize their daily life, experience the restriction of movement and navigate waiting.

**The Structure of Asylum and the Narrative of the Rainbow Nation**

Despite South Africa’s long-standing efforts to limit human mobility, the country continues to be a major destination for those fleeing homophobia and transphobia as it is the only country on the continent that offers constitutional protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) persons who flee their country of origin because of homophobia or transphobia may qualify for refugee status according to the South African Refugees Act 1998, read in conjunction with the South African Constitution. The country is not only regarded as a safe haven for LGBT persons but also actively markets itself as a Rainbow Nation and the ‘gay capital of Africa’. This results in that the country is perceived as...

‘...the most multicultural and egalitarian state on the continent, especially given the growing antagonisms across the continent regarding human rights, issues of sexuality, gender identity / expression and sexual orientation, the legacy of colonial era penal codes, and a rise in a particular kind of unrelenting heteronormativity.'

In contrast to the narrative of the Rainbow Nation, the country shows high rates of xenophobic violence. Deep social tensions around a perceived influx of migrants into the country erupt periodically into widespread violence. However, xenophobic violence is not a problem related to mobility, but as a societal and governmental problem, arising from massive social inequality and the inability of the government 'to truly take on the

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17 Elsa Oliveira, Susan V. Meyers and Jo Vearey, eds., Queer Crossings: A Participatory Artsbased Project (Johannesburg: MoVE, 2016); Ingrid Palmary, Gender, Sexuality and Migration in South Africa: Governing Morality (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
19 Camminga, Transgender Refugees and the Imagined South Africa, 10.
responsibility of governing a deeply divided, angry country. Politicians as well as parts of society use the current pandemic once again to scapegoat migrants.

Despite the narrative of the Rainbow Nation, South Africa remains a largely hostile environment for LGBT persons. Homosexuality is widely regarded as ‘un-African’ and sinful, resulting in violent against those seen to transgress sexual and gender norms. Therefore, the combination of homophobia with xenophobia creates ‘a complex set of legal and political structures that render them [LGBT migrants] hyper-visible and invisible at different moments and with different consequences.’ Thus, lesbian migrant women need to navigate these structures by actively reconfiguring multiple borders at multiple scales, such as processes of exclusion from church for being lesbian and from the labour market for being foreign.

Rather than to address the challenges that have been documented within the country’s asylum system since the introduction of the original Refugees Act in 1998, the recent implementation of the South African Refugees Amendment Act on 1 January 2020 further limits the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. The Amendment is criticised extensively by civil society and is suggestive of growing efforts by the state to reduce specific forms of (international) mobility and to securitize the country’s external borders.

Certainly, the South African state’s attempt to control international mobility, coupled with negative perceptions of international migrants, is reflected in the operations...

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23 Palmary, Gender, Sexuality and Migration in South Africa, 21.
25 Although it was stated at the public hearings on the Amendment Act that the Act is a response to the allegedly fraud and abuse of the asylum system, it is more likely that the restrictions are suggestive of a shift toward a security-oriented response to migration.
of the country’s asylum system that is shaped by a dysfunctional bureaucratic system and delays.\textsuperscript{29} Upon entering South Africa and indicating an intention to claim asylum, a person is granted a non-renewable Section 23 Permit, which gives the holder five days to lodge an asylum claim at the nearest Refugee Reception Office.\textsuperscript{30} To complete this process, the person is required to present their Section 23 Permit, proof of identification from their country of origin and any travel documents. In the initial eligibility interview, a Refugee Reception Officer records a person’s personal data and their reason for applying for asylum. After the interview, a temporary Section 22 Permit is issued that is usually valid for a period of up to six months and allows the applicant to stay in South Africa until the final adjudication is made. According to Department of Home Affairs (DHA) regulations, the merits of the asylum claim should be assessed through a second interview with a Refugee Status Determination Officer, who has the power to grant refuge, reject the application or refer it to the Standing Committee for Refugee Affairs. In practice, applicants wait many years, sometimes decades, for the second interview, forced to survive on temporary permits that must be renewed every three or so months.\textsuperscript{31} This leaves applicants in a state of limbo, forced to expose themselves repeatedly to interrogation by DHA officials or to live without papers. Research suggests that the eventuality of being granted asylum is highly improbable for most applicants.\textsuperscript{32} Reasons for this range from ‘corruption to inaccessibility of the system to appallingly poor decision-making by the Refugee Status Determination Officers.’\textsuperscript{33}

**Limited Access to Social and Economic Assistance during the Pandemic**

The COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines state that “South Africa has a unique challenge of a large vulnerable immunocompromised population living in overcrowded conditions.”\textsuperscript{34} Physical distancing is in many townships almost impossible,
food security is threatened, and the South African Police Service violently enforces the lockdown.\(^{35}\) However, the pandemic has a specific effect on migrants in South Africa who are confronted with the loss of livelihoods and often lack basic supplies, such as shelter, food and access to health care.\(^{36}\) The lack of ‘migration-aware and mobility competent policies and programmes’\(^{37}\) in general and specifically in the health care sector, housing and food security that existed prior to the pandemic, is now showing its consequences.\(^{38}\) Individuals intersectional social position determines how they in fact can practice rights enshrined in the South African constitution and access the asylum system.

The lockdown closes large part of the informal economy that makes up a significant number of the South African economy in which a considerable amount of migrants’ work. During the first weeks of the lockdown in 2020, the South African government did not provide any social and/or financial assistance for non-citizens, albeit the government spent around R37-million to build a 40km-fence at the border with Zimbabwe.\(^{39}\) The lack of financial or social support became apparent as non-citizens were not included in the state’s response to the pandemic and lockdown, e.g. access to social grants and food parcels, were not enabled. The government created the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) as a monthly payment for a 6-month period that was limited to citizens, permanent residents and acknowledged refugees.\(^{40}\) Asylum seekers, holders of special permits and undocumented migrants were not included. On 19 June 2020, the Scalabrini Centre won a court order over the exclusion of non-citizens in the SRD.\(^{41}\) Thereafter, asylum seekers and holders of special permits were eligible for the SRD. If non-citizens were registered through their employer, they had also access to the Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS). However, undocumented migrants and those who work in the informal economy remained largely excluded.\(^{42}\)

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With the implementation of the lockdown in March 2020 all Refugee Reception Offices (RRO) were closed and the DHA announced that everyone whose permit became invalid during the lockdown would have the opportunity to renew it within 30 days after the lockdown had been lifted, but a ‘temporary stay on having to renew permits during the pandemic is, however, at best merely perfunctory.’

Hence, the backlog of new asylum applications and applications for permit renewal of the already overburdened and dysfunctional asylum system was increasing. The closure of RRO during the lockdown resulted in multiple challenges for those who need to access or renew documentation and are not able to do so. They faced challenges in accessing social grants, health care, banking services as well as food parcels and were in danger of arrest, detention and deportation. This is especially challenging for LGBT migrants who often cannot rely on social networks such as family and/or community of origin as those were often the reason for their migration. This highlights the need for the LGBT (migrant) community to organize themselves with the support of others with projects for the community by the community to avert the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Albeit the lack of ‘migration-aware and mobility competent policies and programmes’ there is a need to be cautious that the policy development during the pandemic might be used to advance the restriction and securitisation of migration and mobility further and to create an even more hostile environment especially for LGBT migrants.

Case Descriptions
The narratives of the two cases presented in this article were conducted during the first lockdown in South Africa in April 2020 with two lesbian migrant women who migrated from other African countries to South Africa. Ruth, a lesbian migrant woman in her mid-thirties, migrated from an Eastern African country to South Africa only recently and applied for

46 The African LGBTQI+ Migration Research Network (ALMN), the Fruit Basket and the Holy Trinity LGBT Ministry, with the support of the GALA Queer Archive and other partners coordinated a fundraiser campaign to support members of the LGBTQI+ community in South Africa with an emergency fund. During this campaign priority was given to LGBTQI+ asylum seekers, sex workers as well as trans and intersex people, see www.gofundme.com/f/covid19-amp-lgbtqi-people-in-south-africa.
49 To preserve anonymity, interviewee’s country-of-origin information and exact ages will be omitted.
asylum on the basis of political persecution. She stays with a family who also migrated to South Africa from the same country of origin as herself. Ruth does not have a lot of personal contacts or friendships in Johannesburg.

Amahle, a lesbian migrant woman in her late twenties, lives in the metropolitan area of Johannesburg. Born in a Southern African country, she followed her mother to South Africa as a young adult. After several attempts she was able to obtain documentation – a temporary permit. Before the lockdown she was working in restaurants and in marketing while also advancing her formal education. She rents a room in a big yard where other persons live as well. She has stable friendships in Johannesburg and an ambivalent relationship with her mother who also lives in Johannesburg.

The narratives were conducted after I was on my second field research in February and March 2020 in Johannesburg for my PhD-project. As I had to leave unexpectedly due to the COVID-19 pandemic the narratives were conducted via WhatsApp messenger with persons who already participated in the research project during the first and second field research stay in Johannesburg. They were contacted via WhatsApp and asked to participate and share a written text or an audio message on how they feel, both in terms of health and mood, how they spend their waithood. In other words, I was interested in understanding where, with whom and how they were experiencing the lockdown, what impact the lockdown had on their life and living spaces, how they reorganized their daily life, and what this experience made them discover of new. The cases of Ruth and Amahle were selected since they both represent different and contrasting cases in terms of current age, age during migration, duration of stay, social network in South Africa, and housing situation.

Double Quarantine Inside: Staying at Home during the Lockdown as a Lesbian Migrant Woman

During the lockdown in March 2020, Ruth stayed with a family that hosted her in their apartment while Ruth was struggling to find shelter as South Africa does not enforce encampment.

'I stay with a big family of eight persons who gave me shelter in their apartment in Johannesburg. After they knew about my self-identification, which is different from what they believe in their culture, I found a loss of sympathy and faced kind of harassment. My luck was that they did not threw me out openly, because although they are here for many years, we all exiled our country for the same political issues.
I cannot search for another place in my community here, because I am afraid of a total loss when I still struggling to find my way out.\footnote{Ruth, 24 April 2020.}

Although Ruth was trying to hide her self-identification as a lesbian, the family eventually found out about her. Whereas the family did not accept her self-identification and Ruth subsequently faced harassment and a lack of understanding, they still provided Ruth shelter at the family’s apartment.

'I cannot forget to thank two persons in many who can even remember that I am a living one, ask how I am and gave support in this hard time.\footnote{Ruth, 24 April 2020.}'

In the above excerpt, Ruth described an encounter with two persons who supported her not in terms of basic supplies or shelter as the family did, but in terms of acknowledgment and acceptance. Both encounters point to different forms of solidarity. The family supported her because they faced the same political persecution in their country of origin. The two persons Ruth met supported her in terms of emotional solidarity that is different from the solidarity the family provided, as it is not on an abstract level, but a real interest in her as a living human being. The differentiation becomes clearer when Ruth describes the situation at the family’s apartment during the lockdown.

‘In these days of nationwide lockdown, it forces everyone to stay home. It is a challenge. None of them [the family] understands and wants to live and share the same place and other needs with someone [...] who has nothing for contribution than [being] a lesbian – what they call evil. So, in those unfamiliar living conditions, [...] mood is down to everyone. To me it is double quarantine inside. In the beginning I suffered a depression, went to the hospital and the doctor prescribed tablets for a whole month that I still swallow every night.\footnote{Ruth, 24 April 2020.}'

Ruth described the different facets of quarantine. For her, the lockdown at home doubled, as she also had to quarantine inside while she stayed with the family, because they did not accept her self-identification. The family also framed Ruth’s self-identification as evil which points to the perception of homosexuality as ‘un-African’ and sinful.\footnote{Gunkel, The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa.} The notion of double quarantine inside points to the fact that homosexuality for a long time was and in many countries is still seen as a disease in which a homosexual person must be separated from the others. Ruth’s case shows the specific burden lesbian migrant women had to face
during the lockdown and that discrimination can resonate affectively and lead to depression or the internalisation of discrimination.

As Ruth, Amahle also described being forced to stay at home as a challenge. She was renting out a room in a big yard where other persons live as well. Keeping good relations with everybody was essential for her as ‘now you have to spend each and every day with them.’

‘I have been trying to keep healthy […] by jogging and doing exercises, but now it is limited, because you cannot go outside and run and take walks freely. My mood this time is a bit worse, because you have to stay indoors actually the whole day. It is like we do not have any purpose or whatsoever. […] Sometimes I go to visit my family, but I am mostly reading and studying. […] I am just making sure that I do what I usually do every day. Like wake up in the morning instead of me waking up late. So, I try to wake up in the morning and do the housework duties. Just to keep busy so that the body does not get tired and try and eat properly, not overeat or not eat less and.’

During the lockdown in March, Amahle spent her time studying for her degree. Like Ruth, the effects of the lockdown and the restriction of movement and especially being forced to stay inside challenged Amahle’s mental health. Besides reading, she tried to hold up a routine, to keep busy during the lockdown. In contrast to Ruth, Amahle had family in South Africa, namely her mother and brother, to whom she could turn to. Amahle described the relationship with her family as ambivalent as during the time of her coming out as a lesbian her family did not accept her self-identification and she faced violence and discrimination from them. During the lockdown the relationship with her mother became essential for Amahle, especially when she had a bad car accident, and her mother took care of her during her recovery. In some way the lockdown brought her closer to her mother. This was also possible because she was able to leave her mother’s place for her own flat when they had dispute. Amahle’s and Ruth’s housing situation as well as their social networks differed from each other which also related to their different duration of stay.

‘At least I see family unity even if I am not a part of it. But it also brings for me more work in the house for being busy and forget my rejection and loneliness. Washing dishes, cleaning, and reading. Nothing changed for my routine life like before lockdown, because I was jobless despite sometimes, I went out to search for something to do, to try and so on.’

54 Amahle, 29 April 2020.
55 Amahle, 29 April 2020.
56 Ruth, 24 April 2020.
Ruth is attempting to draw something for her own from the happiness of the family unity she can observe. Albeit her own feelings of loneliness and rejection that she tried to process through keeping a routine and taking over housework for the family – work usually done by members of a family or who are seen as part of the family.

Clearly, the experiences of the lockdown for lesbian migrant women in South Africa intensify as they face confined living conditions and were forced to stay inside – sometimes with people who did not accept their self-identification and who harassed and discriminated against them for being lesbian. This exacerbated through other forms of social marginalisation. Economic exclusion such as the exclusion from social grants as well as xenophobic violence which in combination with homophobia regulated the life of these women, such as being in danger when going outside or staying at home with persons who devalued these women.

Re-Organizing Daily Life and Routines

Amahle and Ruth both reorganized their life through keeping a routine and being busy to – as Amahle put it – making sure, ‘the body does not get tired’. This highlights not only the effects of the lockdown on the mental health, but likewise on physical well-being. Furthermore, the relation to persons with whom they shared their living spaces gained more importance. Ruth especially highlighted the challenges arising from the fact that everybody stayed at home.

‘I see barriers are still the same even more than before, because they [the family] used to go out and come back late with minimal time of talk, some were at school.’

As she was not able to avoid closer contact with the family during the lockdown, processes of exclusion, experiences of discrimination, and lack of safe housing increased for her and she did not have any alternative places to go to or to stay. This also refers to the restriction of movement during the lockdown. Both women were stuck at their apartments and had to wait. This resonates with the asylum process in South Africa that leaves applicants in a state of limbo and forces them to wait for a decision on their asylum application – sometimes for decades. Ruth and Amahle navigated this time of waiting through keeping a routine and being busy, but their approaches differed. Although describing challenges to her mental health, Amahle highlighted some positive aspects of staying at home.

\footnote{Ruth, 24 April 2020.}
‘The experience is making me discover a whole lot of new things like where I want my life to be next year, my new values, what else I might be good at doing and I am actually enjoying working out indoors.’  

Ruth highlighted the challenges of the loss of livelihoods and the lack of food security and related them to the broader situation of refugees in South Africa.

‘But inside things changed clearly in the eyes of the house members, where you see fear of hunger, missing every day needs and afraid of next time of missing food. Like other struggling refugees who don’t have stable income.’

In the beginning of the lockdown, non-citizens were excluded from financial and social support grants like the SRD and informal migrants are still excluded from those grants. Before the lockdown, the family was able to provide Ruth with shelter and food, but with the loss of livelihoods, this became a challenge.

**Conclusion: Double Quarantine Inside and the Fracture of the Rainbow Nation**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown in general and in South Africa do not affect all people the same way. From an intersectional perspective it is suggested that the impact of the lockdown is related to the social position of an individual both in terms of the hetero-patriarchal as well as the racialised-national order.

The narratives of Amahle and Ruth show the different facets and levels of the effects arising from the lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. The already challenging and contradictory situation of lesbian migrant women in South Africa prior to the pandemic became intensified. This refers to, among others, the lack of access to economic and social assistance as well as to save housing, protection from discrimination and violence. While contrasting the cases of Ruth and Amahle, we can see that the access to safe housing and protection from discrimination are important factors in relation to the experiences of lesbian migrant women in general, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The so-called Rainbow Nation was fractured already prior to the pandemic that means that the South African society was and still is divided to a certain extent, especially in terms of class. From an intersectional frame: migrant communities face xenophobic violence; the LGBT community faces homo- and transphobia. In particular, the fracture of the Rainbow Nation becomes clear through the situation of LGBT migrants and lesbian migrant women, who are not ever-present in organisations, projects and programs. The fracture has been exaggerated through the global COVID-19 pandemic, the enforced

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58 Amahle, 29 April 2020.
lockdown and the lack of ‘migration-aware and mobility competent policies and programmes’ particularly for lesbian migrant women. The omitted inclusion of the experiences of lesbian migrant women explicitly in policy responses to mobility and the COVID-19 pandemic can lead to what Ruth described as ‘double quarantine inside’: enforced quarantining both from society and from their self-identification. Individuals of the most vulnerable groups are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown in South Africa the most. While this is not a new finding, we can see that policy responses to mobility and sexuality in general, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic need to be re-surveyed from the perspective of intersectionality. This can be achieved through the study of the experiences of lesbian migrant women in South Africa and bringing forth their ability to re-organize their lives and their experience of waiting.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants for generously sharing their time, stories, and experiences. I also thank the reviewers and editors for their feedback and Katharina Hoffmann for comments on an earlier version of this article.

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