The case of the *born frees* in Alice, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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A FOCUS ON MOBILE PHONES, IDENTITY AND THE LOCAL LANDSCAPE

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June 2020

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Note: The illustration on the front page is a scan of my own map of Alice (February 2020).

Summary

At the time Apartheid disappeared in South Africa, more people obtained access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Social media became the most common new category of ICT with the youth as the main users (Kleinhans et al., 2013). The (social) media are not only a source of public information and channels of communication. They also serve as important channels of the identities and interests of the various social groups in the South African society, especially for the *born frees,* the group of South Africans born after the Apartheid legacy. These evolving cultural, social and political identities result in the social and political development of Post-Apartheid South Africa these days.

This research contributes to a better knowledge of the use of mobile phones and (social) media, and how this influences the livelihoods of the *born frees* living in the small-town Alice (Eastern Cape, South Africa). Not only is there a lack of research about social and spatial structures in small towns, and the use of communication means in underdeveloped areas. But there is also a lack of knowledge about socio-economic opportunities in small towns and the opportunities that communication means can give. In other words, this research will extend understanding of identity and the local landscape of Alice under the influence of mobile phones and (social) media. The main research question is: *"How does the use of mobile phones and accessibility to (social) media influence the born frees in the way they value their local landscape and shape their identity?"*

Theoretically, globalisation increases the social, economic, and physical mobility of the population. This creates the development of new perceptions of place and space; which results in the democratic reclaiming of urban environments and Post-Apartheid *politics of aspiration*, which drives to self-stylization and identity formation, especially for (black) youth (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009, 363-364). However, the relationship between these concepts is way more complicated and other concepts need to be added to this process, such as; globalisation, cultural imperialism, digital colonialism, technology, media, social network sites, identity, and the local landscape. Additionally, this research focusses on a special research

site, Alice in South Africa. Therefore, concepts such as Post-Apartheid, nationalism, culture, segregation, social cohesion, and livelihoods also play an important role in understanding the complexity of Alice and provide an answer to the research questions.

I conducted my fieldwork in the small-town Alice, South Africa. In order to understand how the *born frees* use mobile phones and (social) media, 300 surveys were distributed among the *born frees*, youth between 18-25 years old, living in Alice. Next to this, eight interviews and the use of different qualitative methods, such as small talk and (participant) observation were used to try to understand the identity of the *born frees* and the way they value the local landscape of Alice. Once the *born frees* have access to a mobile phone and (social) media their view about the world, their own local landscape, and their own identity will change significantly.

This research focuses on the small-town Alice, in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Alice, including its suburbs, has around 15.143 residents, when including the townships, this number rises to 42.027 residents. Alice is known for its history, especially the foundation of the University of Fort Hare. Because of the University of Fort Hare, a high number of students live in Alice. However, as statistics show, most young people leave Alice after a while and move to different (bigger) cities. The *born frees* do not see any opportunities in Alice to create a bright future. However, there might be some opportunities in Alice. Informal economies can play an important role to boost the economy of Alice and can provide a source of income which helps the poor urban households in Alice escape poverty. Next to this, the municipality and different organisations also try to improve Alice and provide a better livelihood for its residents. But it seems that this is not enough.

Looking at the local landscape of Alice through the eyes of the *born frees*, there is not a strong connection with the small town. The *born frees* describe most places in Alice as dangerous and they only visit their own suburb/township or the centre of Alice. However, despite the dangerous places in Alice and the *othering* within the community, all the respondents said that they feel at home in Alice. It seems that the local isiXhosa culture, together with the history, are the drivers that keeps

the community together. History in this perspective is thus the traditional aspect which connects people more and causes a thick local resistance identity.

Although airtime and data are both quite expensive in South Africa, the *born frees* feel like they need to have their own mobile phone. The use of internet and Social Networking Sites (SNS) is popular among the *born frees* in Alice and it turns out that searching for information, especially educational information, is the main reason to go online and use data. Besides looking for information, social contact is also an important reason to use a mobile phone. Facebook is the most popular application among the *born frees* in Alice. Facebook enables media connections and new human connectedness. However, this connectivity is always the result of the steering effect of Facebook, whether as Facebook determines what you see and do not see (engineering connections). In this way the human connections are not a human thing, but a technological thing. Thus, media calls into question the authenticity of identities, relationships and practices of the *born frees*. These disruptions are the result of a movement from modern to postmodern times, in which time and space are compressed, people are more mobile, identities are multiple, communication is person-to-person rather than place-to-place, and communication media are ubiquitous.

Focusing on the use of mobile phones and (social) media of the *born frees* in Alice, it can be concluded that both mobile phones and (social) media have an influence on the way the *born frees* shape their identity and value the local landscape of Alice. Moreover, the mobile phone and (social) media give the *born frees* the opportunity to escape their local landscape, physical or virtual, by the increased access to information. Thus, the use of mobile phones and (social) media have the power to change the focus of the local landscape of Alice into a regional, national, or even international focus and the connection with the local landscape will probably fade out after a while. However, this does mean that the *born frees* are actually 'free'.

Preface

In July 2019 I finished my Bachelor's in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Utrecht University. After these excited three years, I was looking for a new challenge. I hoped to find this new challenge in the Masters: Human Geography (Globalisation, Migration & Development) at Radboud University. Soon, a research idea by Lothar Smith and Paul Hebinck, about the life and death of small 'former white' outback towns in the Eastern Cape in South Africa, caught my interest. Together we elaborated on this idea, and before I knew it, I was doing fieldwork in South Africa myself. After almost a year, I can say that I embraced the challenge fully, and it turned out even better than I could have ever imagined.

"'Enkosi[1]', this is your favourite isiXhosa word, right? You say it every time!" is what one of my respondents said to me during my fieldwork in Alice, South Africa. And she was right; I said it all the time. And I did not use this word because I enjoyed speaking isiXhosa, I said it because I was genuinely thankful. I want to use this preface to say thank you to all the people who made this thesis possible.

It goes without saying that this thesis would not have been possible without the openness and participation of many people in- and around Alice. First of all, I would like to thank all the respondents who took my survey, and especially the eight interviewees for their time. I want to give a special thank you to Nosisa Jacoline Marawana and Libhongo Macembe. These young women not only helped me with my research; they also became friends. Without their help it would not have been possible to find so many respondents for my surveys. I also like to thank Baxolile Lubisi and his family for their hospitality and for teaching me about their culture and traditions. Without understanding the cultural context, it would not have been possible to achieve this result.

During my fieldwork in Alice I lived in the most magical place I have ever been; Hogsback. My stay at 'Away With The Fairies' was wonderful and every day when I was driving back to

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[1] *'Enkosi'* means 'Thank you'

Hogsback, it felt like coming home. To all the staff, thank you for looking after me, creating a second home for me, and most of all, teaching me all the beautiful isiXhosa songs.

Not to forget, I want to give attention to all the great academics who helped me during this project. First, I want to thank Lothar Smith, my supervisor, for his guidance through this exciting process. His useful and inspiring suggestions and feedback helped me in making progress every time. Secondly, I want to thank Paul Hebinck for his enthusiasm and bringing me in contact with Teresa Connor and Elizabeth Thomas (University of Fort Hare). The passion of Lothar and Paul for the complexity of the South African society was very contagious and transferred to me. I would like to thank both of them for all their efforts, support and for sharing their knowledge and experiences, which greatly aided this master's project. Thirdly, I want to thank Teresa Connor and Elizabeth Thomas for their interest in my research and their help during my fieldwork. It was a great pleasure to work together.

Last, but definitely not at least, I want to thank my family and friends. Travelling to the other side of the world on your own can be difficult sometimes. But with all the support from home, I never felt alone.

The outbreak of COVID-19 caused an abrupt end to my fieldwork. I had an amazing time, and I was not ready to leave yet. Hopefully I can go back soon and see all the amazing people I met again; they will always be part of my heart. I wish you all the best.

For the last time, *enkosi*. Thank you.

Happy reading.

Anne van der Stelt
12-6-2020

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1. Introduction

> *"South Africa as a country does not have one heritage, or an easily delineated set of distinct identities. The cultures, languages and heritages of South Africa are multiple, diverse, and dynamic. Intersectional issues of gender, ethnicity, and race further complicate the matter of identity and make it highly inadvisable to categorise the different people contained within South Africa's borders. This is especially true in the wake of segregationist Apartheid policies which attempted to divide and conquer the majority of the country's population by emphasising the ontological immiscibility of different races. Yet somehow through the interchange of cultures and sharing of cultural influences in the age of globalisation, there defiantly remains a tapestry of phenomena which can identifiably and unambiguously to termed 'South Africa'."*
>
> *(SAHO, 2011)*

February this year, 2020, it was exactly thirty years ago that Nelson Mandela was released from prison and the ban on parties such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC) came to an end. The democratic transitions gave hope for a more equal society and would be the beginning of a new era. This started with the abolishment of Apartheid in the political structures in 1994. The old Apartheid political structures were reformed, and laws were changed in order to redress past injustices and to facilitate greater economic and social equity (Steyn & Ballard, 2014, 1). From this moment on, social-, economic-, political-, and cultural structures changed, such as the transformation of identities, the interaction of people and spaces, movements to the major cities, levels of racial desegregation, peripheral growth and employment decentralisation (Harrison & Todes, 2015, 160; Steyn & Ballard, 2014, 2).

Yet, it is clear that, despite the abolishment of Apartheid in the political structures, the society is still unequal, and racism appears to be prevalent. South Africa remains a deeply divided society, even when the fault lines shift and reconfigure. Foster (2005, 494) argued that *"the spatial distribution of housing and communities in cities and towns, remains relatively unchanged other than in limited areas"*. Moreover, Christopher (2005, 2305) observed that *"the post-apartheid city continues to look remarkably like its predecessor, the apartheid city"*. Steyn & Ballard (2014, 1) added to this that just like the time of Apartheid, the time of Post-

Apartheid points to an ethnicised and racialised organisation of space, where proximity is not reached yet. Hence, it would be better to speak of South Africa as a fragmented society instead of a united society. Nevertheless, the respondents of this research all identified as South Africans. In chapter five I will fully discuss the South African society, or perhaps it would be better to say the South African *societies*.

1.1 The Power of Communication Means

At the same time as Apartheid disappeared, more people obtained access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Social media became the most common new category of ICT, with the youth as the main users (Kleinhans et al., 2013). Social media allows users all over the world to communicate via text, instant messaging and Social Networking Sites (SNS). As a result, new global communities are established, which I will explain further in section 2.3. The social and political development of Post-Apartheid depends in this way to an important degree on the evolving cultural, social and political identities of the population. Moreover, it depends on the role of the media of communication in a new multicultural democracy (Zegeye & Harris, 2002). Thus, the media of communication are not only a source of public information and channels of communication; they also serve as important channels of the identities and interests of the various social groups in the South African society. Taking this into account, the media can determine the relative power, status and influence of a group.

One of these groups is the *born free* generation. The '*born frees'*[2] is the group of South Africans born after the Apartheid legacy. Because the *born frees* are born after the Apartheid legacy, they experience more freedom and they can activate new worries about rights, citizenship, belonging and autochthony (Mattes, 2011; Malila et al., 2013). For example, the abolishment of Apartheid made it possible for everyone to vote. In 2008, more than three in ten eligible voters were from the *born free* generation (Mattes, 2011, 139-140). Thus, the *born frees* take up their task as citizens, construct a civic identity, participate in politics, and enlarge their agency thus all indicate the potential of a vibrant democracy in South Africa (Malila et al., 2013, 416). In recent years, the media has been one of the most important means to make sense

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[2] From this point '*born frees'* will be written without quotation marks.

of this notions of citizenship and participatory democracy in ways that have been relevant and reliable to everyday live. I will discuss this further in chapter six and seven.

This research focuses on the *born frees* living in Alice, in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Alice is an interesting small town with a great history, which will be further explained in section 5.4. I am curious how the *born frees* living in Alice use communicative means, especially their mobile phones, and what this means to their identity and their view of their local landscape. I argue that the use of mobile phones and (social) media have an effect on how the *born frees* value their local landscape and shape their identity.

1.1 The Relevance of this Research

This research will clarify how the *born frees,* currently residing in Alice, use their mobile phone and (social) media. Findings of this research will contribute to a better knowledge of calling/texting and (social) media, and how this influences the identity of the *born frees*. On a geographical note, this research will extend understandings of the local landscape of Alice and spatiality under the influence of mobile phones. In this section I will further explain the societal and scientific relevance of this research.

1.1.1 The Societal Relevance

As mentioned above, this research is about the small-town Alice. Small towns have a strategic importance and can provide a lot of socio-economic opportunities. They represent valuable *sunk capital,* and there are many people who wish to live in them (Atkinson, 2009). However, nowadays, South African government services only uses small towns as service centres for the local population and for people in the rural hinterland. The lack of attention of the South African government is a major problem for the small towns, because it is difficult for the small towns to develop further while the government is undermining their economies (Atkinson & Marais, 2006). Moreover, the interest of the government in small towns as service centres for people in the rural hinterland increases the disparities between the urban, peri-urban and rural communities. As Smith (2011, 52) mentioned, *"the peri-urban and, even more so, rural population continue to bear the burden of unequal socio-economic development"*. To reduce the inequality between the urban and the rural, more research must be done on the small towns

to understand this spatiality. It is thus of great importance to focus on a small town such as Alice, as the South African government does not give enough attention to these towns

Another interesting asset of research on small towns in South Africa is the history of Apartheid and, nowadays the era of Post-Apartheid. Let's take Alice as an example. Alice is a small town which contained mostly black people during the Apartheid legacy. Nowadays this is still the case, and the black community thus still prevails in Alice. This shows that, even after the era of Apartheid, there were not much white people who decided to move to Alice. This is in line with studies suggesting that racial identity is still playing a major role in the structuring of everyday lives (Donaldson & Kotze, 2006). In other words, there is only a limited correlation between proximity of races and social interaction. However, it is argued that the rise of communication means, especially mobile phones with access to the internet, creates global communities and brings people together. Therefore, research on communication means and social media are important, since cultural backgrounds differ and different categories of online ICT platforms arise (Rodney & Wakeham, 2016). Yet, in South Africa there is not a lot of research done about these influences of communication means to the racial structuring. Perhaps the use of mobile phones can cause an interesting shift in the contemporary structure in South Africa. Maybe it could even bring the *black* and *white* community closer together. Moreover, it might even improve communication and result in better social-economic opportunities. Thus, examination of media motivations and usage across cultures will be an important area of research as presently social media are a world-wide phenomenon (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2018, 1).

1.1.2 The Scientific Relevance

Most of the research on Post-Apartheid South Africa is based on the livelihoods in the urban areas, and rural and peri-urban areas do not receive the same attention. Moreover, research that is done in the rural and peri-urban areas is mostly focussed on agriculture, economies, and tourism. As a result, there is a gap in the literature about social and spatial structures of rural and peri-urban areas in South Africa. Steyn & Ballard (2014, 2) argue that this lack of research might be the result of the positioning of rural areas within the imagined community of the nation as the black outback. Therefore, this research is an enrichment to the research of rural and peri-urban sites in South Africa, because it will focus on the social and spatial aspects of the small-town Alice in South Africa.

In this research I argue that the rise in the use of mobile phones has an effect on the social and spatial structures of the small-town Alice. The connection between the use of mobile phones and social and spatial structures in small towns has hardly been researched. Most research on mobile phones and social media have been conducted in developed areas, whereas little attention is paid to underdeveloped economies (Bolton et al., 2013). Especially Africa is an under researched place when talking about adaption and usage rates of mobile phones (Porter et al., 2012, 147). Nevertheless, South Africa is an interesting research site for this phenomenon. One can namely question what the mobile phone comes to represent when an individual is not part of a mobile globalised elite, but unemployed, and living on the margins of society? In other words, the use of mobile phones in developed countries may facilitate the creation of a society free from the confines of local geography and community (Schoon & Strelitz, 2014), this might not be the case in underdeveloped areas like the Alice. Thus, this research tries to fill the knowledge gap concerning the use of mobile phones in small towns in Post-Apartheid South Africa.

Furthermore, South Africa is an interesting research site, because of its cultural constructions. Especially the rural and peri-urban sites show strong traditional relations. This, for example, becomes visible in the cultural construction between different generations. However, the use of mobile phones, and especially (social) media, changes this aspect. Technology is a post-colonial construct that influences the way people see the world and can result in a deconstructive youth. Appadurai (2006, 44) argues that this is a result of globalisation. Globalisation makes emotions important, and by having a bigger knowledge, you will ask yourself what your position is on the world. However, globalisation is a force without a face, and it cannot be the object of ethnocide, the deliberate and systematic destruction of the culture of an ethnic group. Nevertheless, it seems that the *born frees* can. The *born frees* use their mobile phones to activate new worries about rights, citizenship, belonging and autochthony (Appadurai, 2006, 42). The emancipation of the *born frees* can be compared to other emancipation processes in the world, such as the liberation of the caste system in India, or the distancing from hierarchies. Thus, this research can be related to other liberating phenomena in the world. In addition to this, the role of a young researcher can be an important chain in the research about the *born frees*. It is more likely that a young researcher can intervene more easily in this process than an adult, especially when the visual data deals with socially sensitive issues.

1.2 Objectives and Questions

As mentioned before, this thesis aims to describe how the *born frees* use their mobile phones, shape their identity and value their local landscape. Taking these aspects into account, the following objectives and questions had been formulated.

1.2.1 Objectives

This research focuses on the small-town Alice, in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. As mentioned before, Alice is a small town which consisted mostly of black people during Apartheid. Nowadays this is still the case and the black community thus still prevails in Alice. After 1994 black people moved into the former white towns, but white people did not move to former black towns (Crankshaw, 2008; Kracker, Selzer & Heller, 2010; Christopher, 2005; Donaldson & Kotze, 2006; Rex & Visser, 2009; Donaldson et al., 2013). However, despite the former homelands staying black, they experienced more development. Because of this, Alice is the perfect site to investigate this dynamic process, because the small town is still developing, and the use of communication means is still rising. I will explain the current situation of Alice further in section 5.4. To summarize, this research will contribute to a greater understanding of the use of mobile phones and (social) media, and how this influences the daily lives of the *born frees* currently residing Alice. On a geographical note, this research will extend understandings of the local landscape and spatiality under the influence of communication means.

1.2.2 Questions

Particular interests for this master thesis are I) the use of mobile phones and (social) media by the *born frees* currently residing in Alice; and II) the way the *born frees* currently residing in Alice shape their identities and value their local landscape. The main research question therefore is the following:

> *"How does the use of mobile phones and accessibility to (social) media influence the born frees in the way they value their local landscape and shape their identity?"*

In order to be able to systematically provide an answer to this research question, the following sub-questions are formulated:

1) How do the *born frees* use their mobile phone?
2) How do the *born frees* use (social) media?
3) How do the *born frees* shape their identity?
4) How do the *born frees* value their local landscape?

These four questions capture different aspects of the main research question to give a well-researched overview of the *born frees* currently residing in Alice. The questions, however, might need some further explanation.

The first two sub-questions describe the use of mobile phones and (social) media. In the first place it is relevant to get an overview of the channels of communication which are used in Alice. Moreover, it is interesting to know where and how the *born frees* use these communication channels. Second, the focus will be on different social media platforms which are popular amongst the *born frees*. The answer to sub-questions one and two will be provided in chapter six. The last two sub-questions relate to the effect of sub-questions one and two and tell more about the deliberate (or less deliberate) strategies of the *born frees* in their daily lives. The local landscape and identity are interrelated concepts, which will be further discussed in the conceptual framework. Firstly, it is relevant to sketch the local landscape of Alice. To get a better understanding of how the *born frees* shape their identity. For example, is the identity of the *born frees* more land-based, or more spatially based? And how do the *born frees* living in Alice place themselves in this landscape? And is it better to speak about different local landscapes, or is it better to speak of one demarcated local landscape? There are different lenses through which to look at the local landscape of Alice, there can not only be a difference in generation, but also in socio-economic status. Question three and four will provide an answer to these questions, which will be presented in chapter seven. Finally, the use of mobile phones, and especially (social) media, influences the way in which the *born frees* value their local landscape and shape their identities. By answering these questions above it will be possible to find a relationship between these four sub-questions, and thus to answer the main research question.

1.3 Thesis Structure

In this section I will briefly explain what you can expect in the following chapters. After presenting my research objectives and research questions in this chapter, the next chapter will describe different theories, ideas and models related to these objectives and questions. Theoretical ideas about globalisation, cultural imperialism, digital colonialism, digital technology, (social) media, the construction of identity and self-representation, and the meaning of the local landscape are presented and form the scientific justification for this research. Moreover, the use of these concepts and definitions will provide a solid foundation for the next chapters. Following this, in chapter three a conceptual framework is given, which summarizes the ideas from the theoretical framework into a conceptual model. The conceptual model is the visual representation of the expected cause-effect relationship in this research, including the different concepts described in the theoretical framework. In chapter four it is explained how the research has been conducted and what methods have been used and why. At the end of this chapter more attention is paid to the influence of the outbreak of COVID-19 during this research. Following this, in chapter five, the research field will be analysed. The chapter starts with a general overview of the South African identity, South Africa's *black* and *white* spatiality, and urban-rural livelihoods in South Africa. Subsequently, the case of Alice, the research site will be further elaborated, on the basis of history, demographic numbers and the contemporary street view. It is important to first know more about the context before getting into the analyses of this research. Without a good knowledge of the context of South Africa and Alice, results can be interpreted differently. These results will be presented in the next two chapters, chapter six and seven. In chapter six the gathered data for sub-question one and two will be analysed in order to provide an answer to these sub-questions. Furthermore, a careful start will be made to connect these answers to sub-questions three and four, which will be fully discussed in chapter seven. Thus, chapter six focuses on mobile phones and (social) media, and chapter seven will link these results to identity formations and the view of the local landscape of Alice. Finally, in chapter eight all the results will be considered, and a conclusion will be formulated based upon this, in order to answer the main research question. In the last chapter I will also return to the title; '*Born free?*' and provide some recommendations for further research as I will reflect on this exciting project.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides a theoretical framework to help constructing the main argument for this research. As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis is based on the relation between mobile phones, (social) media, identity, and the local landscape. However, the relation between these concepts is more complex. To get a good understanding of these concepts, it is necessary to take the bigger picture into account; starting with globalisation, the global force without a face (Appadurai, 2016, 42). The rapid global transmission of money, resources, and information make distance less important. Moreover, it seems that the world is more connected than ever. More people have access to new technologies, including the internet and other high-tech information flows. These new technologies link people across the world, which blurs the line of the distinction between international, national, regional, and even the local. Globalisation in this research is thus the beginning of changing processes, like the rise in the use of mobile phones which consequently has an influence on the way people shape their identities and value their own local landscape.

This theoretical framework begins with a definition of globalisation, and as follows it will describe cultural imperialism. Next, these concepts will be related to the digitalized world, with reference to digital colonialism. After understanding these unfixed processes in a changing world, it is time to take a look at digital technology, especially mobile phones. The rise of these devices leads to a rise in the access to the internet, especially (social) media. Consequently, taking the previous paragraphs about cultural imperialism and digital colonialism into account, (social) media influences the way individuals shape their identity. Moreover, the access to mobile phones and (social) media results in a spatial overpowering of the local landscape. After explaining all the above, chapter 3 will summarize this theoretical framework into a conceptual model.

2.1 Globalisation as the Start of Cultural Imperialism

Globalisation is a comprehensive concept. According to Stroud & Mpendukana (2009, 363) globalisation is "*the increasing social, economic, and physical mobility of the population.*" Besides this, globalisation ensures development of new perceptions of place and space. For

example, the transition of space into place, where space is constituted through the language used in signage and in speakers' public displays, performances and interactions (Blommaert, Collins & Stembrouck, 2015). Furthermore, globalisation rests on the idea that nations in the world system are interdependent, which encompasses a series of processes that work transnationally to promote change in a world in which nations and people are increasingly interlinked and mutually dependent (Kottak, 2015, 34). These economic and political forces which promote globalisation include international commerce and finance, travel and tourism, transnational migration, and the media – including the internet and other high-tech information flows (Appadurai, 2001; Friedman & Friedman, 2008; Haugerud, Stone & Little, 2011; Kjaerulff, 2020; Kottak, 2015; Scholte, 2000). For example, people living in the Third World are dependent on the extent of getting an education and job at the local McDonald's. Thus, according to Eriksen (2014, 72) capitalism creates both wealth and poverty simultaneously in the lack of a state, or a transnational political body, serving the needs not only of the market but also of society.

These days there is a rapid global transmission of money, resources, and information. It seems that distance is not important anymore, while the world is more connected than ever[3]. New technologies link people across the world, which blurs the line between the distinction of international, national, regional, and even the local. This relates to the concept of *translocality*. In times globalisation, the local world does not cease to exist. Individuals are not fixed to a place, and at the same time places are changing meaning with growing communicative connectivity. Translocality from this point means that the local still matters, but that on the other hand, the locales are connected physically and communicatively to a higher degree. Thus, a translocality is a place where a transnational network attaches itself and is therefore connected to other translocalities. They serve as reference nodes and contain symbolic, cultural, social and economic capital associated with the network.

Lohnert & Steinbrink (2005, 100) argue that:

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[3] According to Marshall McLuhan (1964) the world is becoming a *'global village'*. This concept describes the trend of mass media increasingly removing the time and place barriers of human communication, enabling people to communicate on a global scale, which turns the world into a village. The internet and the World Wide Web are often seen as the actual implementation of the global village phenomenon.

> *"urban and rural livelihoods are often merely sub-systems of a translocal system, which through spatial diversification allows for a combination of diverse economic strategies in different locations. Through the social network relations between the household members in the different places, the opportunity structures in these places merge into the one opportunity structure of the translocal social space. Migration, co-operation and exchange are [thereby] the basic conditions which make this translocal livelihood system work."*

Yet, this connection can also cause a fear, which is manipulated for political reasons. It is not a surprise that many countries censor the internet and other mass media for political or moral reasons, while the media spreads ideas of the world as a dangerous place, which threats security and order everywhere (Kottak, 2015, 165). Thus, not everyone is enjoying the processes of globalisation. Especially local people are expected to adapt quickly, while outsiders and change agents are intruding in their lives, with tourism as the world's number one industry (Holden, 2005). Moreover, the local people experience the negative effects of globalisation, such as pauperization, loss of land, loss of tradition, and autonomy. However, according to Maybury-Lewis (2002), indigenous people and traditional societies found some strategies to deal with threats to their autonomy, identity and livelihood. Nevertheless, this ultimately requires new forms of cultural expression and political mobilization, which are emerging from the interplay of local, regional, regional, and international cultural forces (Kottak, 2015, 335).

2.1.1 Cultural Imperialism

The fear of the idea of a Western elite which is conspiring to culturally dominate others, relates to the concept of *cultural imperialism*. Cultural imperialism refers to the spread or advance of one culture at the expense of others, or its imposition on other cultures which it modifies, replaces, or destroys – usually because of differential economic or political influences (Kottak, 2015, 305). But actually, the rapid diffusion of Western culture is happening because the global network is Western built. Due to the perceived centrality of Western players within the hubs of global network capitalism, the growth of Western cultural domination seems unstoppable (Carah & Louw, 2015, 173). Thus, the Western players do not only build the networks, they also dominate the emergent hegemonic elite of global network capitalism. These days, Western cultural products can be found everywhere in the global media flows and transform identities and power relationships locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Especially smaller

cultures have difficulties with competing this dominant global culture machine. As a result, authentic local cultures are displaced (Boyd-Barret, 1977; Tunstall, 1978). As Thomlinson (1991, 173) argues, *"this process is involving cultural loss rather than cultural imposition"*. However, not every author agrees with this idea of the erase of cultural differences. Some authors think, on the other hand, that modern technology allows local cultures to express themselves and survive (Marcus & Fischer, 2014). Culture is a changing concept; people constantly make and remake culture as they assign their own meanings to the products, images, and information they get from outside. This process is called *indigenization*, the ability of people to modify borrowed forms to make them fit into their local culture (Kottak, 2015, 306). Indigenization occurs in cultural domains such as fast food, music movies, social media, housing styles, science, terrorism, celebrations, religion, and political ideas and institutions (Fiske, 2011; Wilk, 2006; Wilk & Barbosa, 2012).

Thus, studies of globalisation show many tensions involving what we call global and local, or universal and particular. Appadurai (2016, 39) explains this tension as a battle between competing universalisms such as freedom, market, democracy and rights. Eriksen (2007) summarizes these ideas about globalisation, culture and identity in a framework. See figure 1.
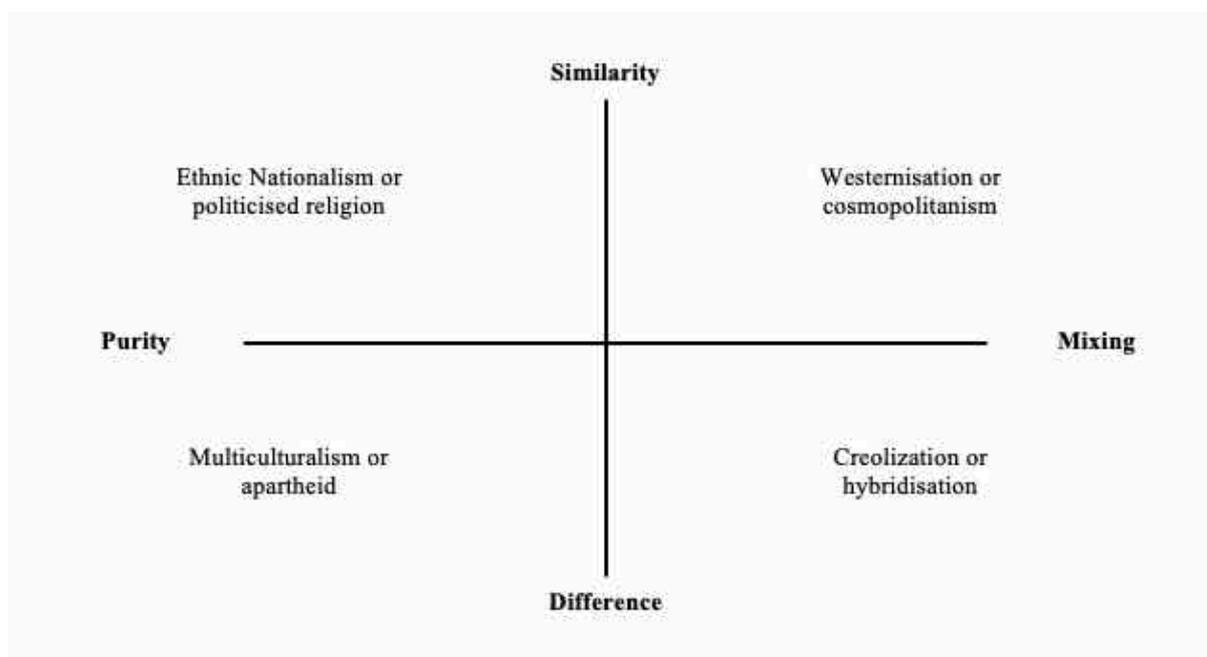
FIGURE 1. SOME POSSIBLE POSITIONS IN DISCOURSES ABOUT CULTURE AND IDENTITY (ERIKSEN, 2007)

This framework shows that the politics of identity are interwoven with cultural mixing in different ways. There is no clear relation between purity and ethnic nationalism, nor can it be assumed that mixing goes hand in hand with creolization. However, according to Eriksen (2014, 129), *"an ideology of cultural purity is very often accompanied by identity politics, which stresses the virtues of the in-group and by implication, stereotypes outsiders."* Appadurai (2006, 7) add to this that the line between us and them may have always been blurred at the boundaries and unclear across large spaces and big numbers. Globalisation exacerbates these uncertainties and produces new incentives for cultural purification. As the framework shows, at an ideological level, some promote purity, while others are favourable to mixing. Moreover, some argue for similarity in society, while others accept difference. Combining these four concepts, four different dimensions are created. The first one, ethnic nationalism or politicised religion, relates to the idea of the outside world as a source of contamination. The idea of a modern nation-state is based on the idea of national ethnos, where tolerance and multiculturalism are not important. The second one, westernization or cosmopolitanism, shows that westernization can be seen as a good thing (progress, education, etc), and cosmopolitanism as a bad thing (difference must exist, but they must be tolerated). The third one refers to multiculturalism or Apartheid. From this point of view, multiculturalism shows that different groups can live together, while Apartheid shows that different groups in one society lead to segregation. The last dimension describes creolization or hybridisation, which is unproblematic and virtuous. According to the research of Eriksen (2014, 130) *"the absence of clear boundaries is not seen as a problem, and the emphasis is on the individual's freedom to adapt or adapt the values and practices that he or she deems valuable."*

2.2 Digital Colonialism in The 21st Century

However, taking all the above into account, every assertion of the transformative or contagious powers of information and media technologies require a foregrounding of geopolitical histories (Aouragh & Chakravartty, 2016). Moreover, Aouragh & Chakravartty (2016, 567) argue that:

> *"we need a multi-layered approach of domestic resistance, regional geopolitics and global imperialism that intricate the relation between development, technology and capitalism to understand how exploitation and inequality are rotted both in general capitalist modes and systems and their 'local' social relations."*

From this point of view, geopolitics is the struggle over the control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension, and the use of such geographical entities for political advantage (Flint, 2016). Geopolitics is both practice and presentation, where geopolitical actions take on meaning to justify actions. Culture normalises this persecution of geopolitics around the world, also called ideological power. Thus, geopolitics is a cultural and political phenomenon. However, this view of geopolitics has a one-sided focus on representation and a passive view of the audience, where the popular media are considered to be powerful and the idea that powerful actors play the media.

2.2.1 From Classical Colonialism to Digital Colonialism

Years ago, Europeans dispossessed native people of their exercised extraterritorial governance, exploited labour, and perpetuated dependency and plundered through strategic development, also called *classic colonialism*. The Europeans took control of infrastructure in their pursuit of profit and power. Railroads were built to connect up the indigenous people, but actually it was built to serve immediate European needs (Kwet, 2019). These days, *classic colonialism* is replaced by *digital colonialism.* Although, these two forms of colonialism still have their similarities; both rooted in the tech ecosystem for the purposes of profit and plunder, the building of railroads is replaced by the building of communication platforms, like Social Networking Sites. Big Tech corporations use proprietary software, corporate clouds, and centralised internet services to spy on users, process their data, and spit back manufactured services to subjects of their data (Kwet, 2019).

In the 20th century, nation-states and corporations consider data as the most valuable asset. According to Coleman (2019, 424) Big Tech corporations move to African countries, with limited infrastructure, limited data protection laws, and limited competition, combined with political, social and economic power imbalances and a history of colonialism. Foreign powers are implanting infrastructure in the Global South for their own needs, to enable economic and culture domination while imposing privatised forms of governance (Coleman, 2018; Kwet, 2019). This domination of foreign powers in the Global South is based on the control of three pillars in the digital system: software, hardware and network connectivity. These three pillars immense political, social and economic power of the Western countries with GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft), other corporate giants, and intelligence agencies as

the new imperialists in the international community (Kwet, 2019, 4). These Western powers undermine local development, dominate the market, and extract revenue from the Global South. Assimilation of the Global South to these new technologies, led by the Western countries, constitutes a twenty-first century form of digital colonisation.

However, it is estimated that about 60% of the continent's population will still be unconnected to technological devices in 2020. According to Oyedemi (2019, 2045) "*the lack of investment in an internet infrastructure in Africa provides both challenges and opportunities for digital capitalists who, in their benevolent pursuit of digital capital, aim for global domination.*" As a result, digital corporations such as Facebook get the possibility to explore and capture the African market.

2.2.2 The Black Shadow of Facebook

In many parts of Africa, voice telephony on a mobile network is costly. Especially the youth have resorted to texting on social media platforms, with Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp (both owned by Facebook) as the dominant alternatives. According to Oyedemi (2019, 2053) this monopolistic tendency is a direct result of the culture of mergers and acquisitions that shapes the political economy of the digital revolution. However, the use of internet is also costly and so, access to the internet is not a common thing in developing countries. Moreover, the countries in the Global South are hindered by a lack of technological infrastructure and ignorance about what the internet can offer. Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, tried to change this by providing free access to a few selected websites through a Facebook application (Facebook Free Basics) in partnership with local cell phone network companies (Oyedemi, 2019, 2050). As a result, this Facebook application became an entry point to the internet, or more literally, Facebook became the internet for people in the Global South. Hence, there is a lot of critique about this view of Zuckerberg. For example, so argues Timothy Karr from the *'Save the internet campaign',* we should not ignore the motivation of Zuckerberg to *dominate the global internet landscape* (Shearlaw, 2016). Nevertheless, Facebook, and other big technological companies, can control how the connectivity structure is built and to what applications and services users have access to. With millions of users all over the world, and especially millions of Africans using the Facebook Free Basic application, Facebook is the centrepiece of control for extremely valuable data sets, at no benefit to the users or the countries themselves (Coleman, 2018, 431). Furthermore, while the core values of the internet are

openness and access to information, Facebook uses their users to increase the number of Facebook users and thus Facebook's market and revenue (Oyedemi, 2019, 2051). Finally, there is a lot of discussion about the privacy of Facebook users. Analytics allow different companies to understand users' emotions, and even predict how this will affect future behaviour. Coleman (2018, 427) argues that this information can affect the global economy, workforce development, small- and large-scale investments, resource allocation, advertising, presidential elections, and every single segment of global capitalism. Thus, by using neoliberal code words such as *equality*, *democracy* and *internet as a basic human right*, Facebook is only busy with collecting data on *the next billion* (Coleman, 2018, 430).

2.3 Media in Everyday Life

"Connections to a wider world, real or imagined, online or offline, is a way to move beyond local standards and expectations, even if the escape is only temporary and vicarious. Despite (and/or because of) their independent or rebellious temperaments, characteristics such as Elizabeth Bennett in Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice almost always found a happy ending. Nineteenth-century readers found such a heroine's success 'deeply satisfying', because there were so few opportunities in real life (the local community) to see such behaviour and choices".

(Ignatius, 2007, A21)[4]

Nowadays, with the influence of globalisation, more people in different places imagine a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before. Appadurai (2001, 197) point to mass media as one of its most important sources. Modern media can diffuse the cultures of countries not only within, but also beyond their borders (Anderson, 2006). For example, millions of Africans used to be cut off, by geography isolation or illiteracy, from urban, national, and international events and information. But right now, they can participate in a larger *mediascape[5]* (Appadurai, 2001), through media and the internet (Kottak, 1990a; 2009).

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[4] Ignatius (2007) describes the escapist value of 19th-century English novels, whose strong heroines pursued *free thought and personal freedom,* rejecting the *easy comforts and arranged marriages of their class* in a quest for something more.

[5] The mediascape refers to the electronic and print media in global cultural flows (Appadurai, 1991).

Sports, movies, TV shows, video games, amusement parks, and fast-food restaurants have become part of a national and international culture. These elements offer a framework of common expectations, experiences, and behaviour overriding differences in region, class, formal religious affiliation, political sentiment, gender, ethnic group, and place of residence. (Kottak, 2015, 263). Yet, there is still a difference between groups and individuals. For example, individuals make their own interpretations and have their own feelings. Nevertheless, the common information and knowledge that people acquire through exposure to the same media illustrates culture. According to John Fiske (2011) any individual's use of popular culture is a personal creative act. Fiske (2011) argues that the personal meanings are most pleasurable when they relate to the individual's everyday life. The media are in this way an asset to find things people miss in their daily lives. The media, especially social media, gives local people the chance to think into a web of connections that can provide information, contact, entertainment, and potential social validation, which is not available in their local network. Moreover, the media and the internet do not only give space for connections, but it also manifests itself as a medium to make new connections between people, ideas and things. Van Dijck (2012) argues that concepts such as democracy, collectively and participation are connected to online platforms to show their value as new carriers of the public sphere[6]. Thus, the internet is becoming a potential space for the creation of a networked public sphere, while it is facilitating social interactions and information sharing (Bosch, 2013, 127).

2.3.1 Social Media

As mentioned in the introduction, in the last decade, the number of innovative ICT platforms raised quickly, with social media as the most common new category of ICT and the youth as the main users. While social media are not that old, the rate of adaption have been faster than any other interactive ICT conduit in history. Social media allows users all over the world to communicate via text, instant messaging and Social Network Sites (SNS) (Kleinhans et al., 2013) thereby establishing a global community. This communication can take on many different forms such as SNS (Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+), blogs and micro-blogs (Twitter), collaborative projects (Wikipedia), video-sharing communities (YouTube), virtual

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[6] Facebook cannot be a public space, because there is always a connection with commercial principles (Van Dijck, 2012).

game worlds (World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (Second Life). Although most of these social media categories are often collectively referred to as SNS (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to Bosch (2013), social media are inherently private, but public and private spheres are overlapping and interlinked in the online world, dominated by the cultural and economic elite.

The social media have the capacity to enlighten, by providing users with unfamiliar information and viewpoints and by offering a forum for dissident voices (Kottak, 2015, 165). Especially the youth use the social media to develop a new kind of citizenship, characterized by more individualistic forms of activism. Yang (2015) describes different ways how youth show their voices online. The first one is the authoritative voice, which they use to represent the young population. The other one is the critical voice, where they challenge the dominant views. But, does these voices really make sense? And what is exactly the role of digital technology?

2.4 The Role of Digital Technology

Taking all the above into account, it is interesting to take a specific look on the actual role of digital technology in everyday life. Duck & McMaham (2018) describe in their book *'Communication in Everyday Life'* the different perspectives on technology. They distinguish three different perspectives, namely 1) technological determinism, 2) social construction of technology, and 3) social shaping of technology.

1. Technological determinism beliefs that technologies determine social structure, cultural values, and even how people think. Thus, people are powerless against the force of technology. Taking this to the extreme, everyone in the audience will be affected in the same manner.
2. The social construction of technology beliefs that people determine the development of technology and ultimately determine social structure and cultural value. This perspective points at more factors which are involved in the development and emergence of technologies beyond the technology itself.
3. The social construction of technology beliefs that both people and technologies exert influence on social structure and cultural value. The supporters of this perspective believe that many factors are involved in the development and

emergence of technologies beyond the technology itself (Bijker, Highes & Pinch, 1987).

Combining all these perspectives, it shows that technologies are inherently relational in their understands and use; communication fosters community. Relationships among people have been the one constant throughout all human technological development. According to Duck & McMahan (2018, 253), a relational context is the most valuable way to understand technology and media in everyday life. So is the use of technology and media a shared relational activity, which informs people about relationships. Furthermore, technology and media function as alternatives to personal relationships. And finally, technology and media help individuals by creating their own identity. In other words, individuals actively select, evaluate, and interpret media in ways that make sense to them, which creates an identity.

2.4.1 Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are one of the relational technologies mentioned above. They do not only connect people with other people and provide information, but they also create and maintain personal and relational identities. Duck & McMaham (2018, 261) argue that: *"perceiving and using technology in a manner consistent with these groups assists in establishing membership into these groups and developing particular identities."* For example, some groups use their phone as a mean to display their social status, while others use their phone to contact others. Anyway, a mobile phone gives individuals the opportunity to be constantly connected and available to others, without any deep conversations. As a result, this ability to be constantly online, regardless of the geographical location, creates a symbolic connection[7]. Furthermore, the reason why individuals connect with their contacts is most often to confirm that the relationship still exists and that it has value (Duck & McMahan, 2018, 263). However, as a result, the content of the message can be valued less important than the contact itself. On the other hand, mobile phones are not only a mean to continue relationships, using a mobile phone also gives individuals the opportunity to develop new relational expectations. Because of the constantly availability, people expect an immediate response, if this does not happen it can constitute a violation in the relationship. Thus, using a mobile phone and being constantly

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[7] Geographical location and the body are the most important differences in creating identities online and offline, but this does not mean that (intimate) relationships can no longer arise in the absence of this.

available, influences how relationships develop, are maintained, and dissolved (Bergdall et al., 2012).

2.5 Construction of Identities and Self-Presentation

As described above, with the use of relational technologies, online platforms give individuals the opportunity to create an online identity and present themselves to others. All messages, comments, activities, and pictures on Social Networking Sites can be used in this construction of identities. Additionally, most people believe that they are better able to convey their identities online than offline. As a result, people strategically use Social Network Sites (Appel, Gerlach & Crushius, 2016; Duck & McMahan, 2018, 267).

Because the online identity is disembodied, it is possible to show different identities online. An individual's identity is based on their own character combined with their family and social roots, which is continually changing. Besides, an individual can be in the intersection of multiple different social identities (intersectionality). This shows that an identity consists of multiple factors and that individuals have the agency to influence which parts of themselves they present to the world (SAHO, 2011). Online, individuals can have different identities on different platforms. For example, an individual who uses Facebook and LinkedIn show different identities on these platforms. As Turkle (1996) argues: *"The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times. The life practice of windows is that of a decentred self that exists in many worlds, that plays many roles at the same time."*

Goffman (1987) agrees with Turkle and add to this that the self cannot longer be understood adequately as a single unified entity as a result of *impression management*. Individuals play different roles based on social expectations of their audience. By playing these roles individuals are constantly aware of their self-presentation; controlling how they look to others through impression management. Yet, individuals do not always have the control, for example by unintentional grammar mistakes, or the influence of others. Moreover, the ability to construct an online self-presentation is limited and dependent on communicative resources that makes a platform available (Baym, 2015, 123). Firstly, online platforms provide different opportunities to construct a personal identity. Secondly, these opportunities differ on different platforms, such as basic information and opportunities on the platform.' For example, on Facebook you can

share interests, on LinkedIn you can share business data. This is also known as *identity cues*. These cues limit the process of self-presentation, because you cannot tell the same things about yourself on all platforms.

As mentioned above, individuals are constantly aware of the image of themselves that they transfer to their (imagined) audience. The idea of the audience influences what information the individual makes public and what information the individual hides. However, this idea often does not correspond to the actual audience, which sometimes leads to some dire situations. This audience is also called the *disembodied audience.* The disembodied audience is the audience where you do not have the control over the message. This can result in a context collapse, where different messages end up by people you not intended to. Anyway, the audience is one of the most important aspects to create an identity. Let's take Facebook as an example. Individuals (audience) can use the number of Facebook-friends to make social judgements about the user. When a user has many friends, it shows that this person is outgoing and socially connected (Tong et al., 2008). But, when the number of Facebook-friends reaches a certain point, the appearance of a socially connected person will be diminishing (Zwier et al., 2011). Another example is the physical attractiveness of Facebook-friends. It has been discovered that the physical attractiveness of friends influences perceptions of the user's physical and social attractiveness (Jaschinski & Kommers, 2012). Essentially, people with good-looking friends are more likely to perceived as good looking. And finally, female users were judged positively when friends left socially positive comments and were judged negatively when friends left socially negative comments. Male users, on the other hand, were actually judged positively when friends left comments about drinking, promiscuous behaviour, and similar morally questionable behaviour (Duck & McMahan, 2018, 266). By understanding these different observations, individuals can strategically shape their online identities.

However, in the end, the identity that an individual creates, is always based on the information the individual has access to. This is also called the *filter bubble*. The filter bubble describes the unique universe of information for each individual, which fundamentally alters the way individuals encounter information and ideas. In other words, the filter bubble is the personified version of the internet. By filtering results and matching the search history and interests, it hides certain resources and pushes others forward. This gives individuals their own information bubble, which is a world constructed from the familiar and in which there is nothing to learn (Baym, 2015).

2.6 Spatial Overpowering of the Local Landscape

In this paragraph I want to give attention to the local landscape of an individual. In the paragraphs above I explained the construction of the online identity, however, as mentioned before, this online identity will be different from the local identity (offline identity). Anyway, technologies, and in this case the mobile phone, still play a significant role in the shaping of this local identity. Furthermore, the media, especially social media, gives local people the chance to think into a web of connections that can provide information, contact, entertainment, and potential social validation, which is not available in their own local network. Moreover, it gives individuals the opportunity to enable and strengthen social and economic relationships at a distance. As a result, mobile phones blur the line between lives and livelihoods (Donner, 2009, 91). However, this does not mean that an individual does not belong to its local livelihood anymore. Individuals do belong to their local norms and structures, and mobile phones may even create a stronger communal network that bind users to the local and facilitate a kind of *stuckness*. Thus, is the local landscape still local anymore? Globalized influences, forces, experiences and outlooks become the core of locally situated livelihoods. For example, it is not necessary to go to Italy to taste an Italian pizza or to go to China to eat Chinese food. Television news brings distant conflicts into the intimate spaces of individuals living-rooms, and assumptions individuals make about the health and security of their families now routinely factor in an awareness of global contingencies such as environmental risk or stock-market stability.

Especially in the Global South, the mobile technology raised quickly in a few years. The increased use of mobile phones resulted in an increased knowledge of socio-economic issues, which resulted in more improved and sustainable livelihoods. However, whereas the use of mobile phones in developed countries may facilitate the creation of a society free from the confines of local geography and community (Schoon & Strelitz, 2014), this might not be the case in underdeveloped areas. Thus, the mobile phone has brought new opportunities in livelihoods, but also new hazards and new forms of appropriation, at diverse scales from the local to the global.

2.6.1 The Positive Effect of Mobile Phones on Livelihoods

In the introduction, I raised the question: *"What does the mobile phone become when an individual is not part of a mobile globalised elite, but unemployed, and living on the margins of society?"* Livelihoods, the complex set of strategies and practices that people develop to navigate poverty and the broader socio-economic conditions that reinforce that poverty, are the result of the recognition of the complexity of both poverty and of poor people's response to their conditions. Nevertheless, being poor also means that there is a lack of necessary communication channels to convert one's own resources into valuable activities (McNamara, 2003). Chambers (1995) argues that livelihoods entail the activities, means, entitlements and assets by which people make a living. Mobile phones can be one of these important means to overcome poverty.

Sife, Kiondo & Lyimo-Macha (2010) did a study about the contribution of mobile phones to rural livelihoods and poverty reduction in Morogoro region, Tanzania. They found that mobile phones provide rural households with fast and easy modes of communication. Thereby it increases their ability to access livelihood assets, undertake diverse livelihoods strategies, and overcome their vulnerabilities (Sife, Kiondo & Lyimo-Macha, 2010, 13). However, the study also found that this does not made any important contributions to improve their incomes. Anyway, poverty has multiple causes and manifestations beyond lack of income, such as social isolation, vulnerability, powerlessness, and a lack of services and opportunities. Thus, mobiles phones can also contribute to people's livelihood, especially in poor areas.

According to the study of Sife, Kiondo & Lyimo-Macha (2010) there are three different positive changes in the rural landscape by using mobile phones. Firstly, the mobile phone expands and strengthen social networks. This makes it easier to deal with emergencies, reduce costs, and increase productivity. Secondly, travel costs are cut down, physical risks are minimized, and outcome necessary journeys are maximized. Moreover, it is easier to send and receive money. Lastly, mobile phones help rural traders and farmers to secure better market and prices, save money and time, and communicate business-related information.

To conclude, the mobile phone creates more socio-economic knowledge, which can enhance the socio-economic relations, which can have a positive effect on the local landscape. Thus, the accelerated communication of information can increase productivity, widen markets, simplify transactions, prevent crime, improve governance, and create new socio-economic

opportunities, among many other benefits (Butner, 2003). As a result, there can be a positive link between communication, information and development.

3. Conceptual Framework

In the previous chapter I provided a theoretical framework. In this chapter I will present a conceptual model, based on the previous mentioned theories and concepts. Altogether, this conceptual framework sets the foundation for the following chapters. But, before introducing and explaining the conceptual framework, I want to give some attention to the study field: Human Geography. Geographers view the world through a geographical or spatial perspective and have their own sub-disciplines. Using a geographic perspective, geography and society are mutually constructed. Regarding Human Geography, the focus is especially on the spatial organization of human activity, also the systematic study of what makes places unique, and the connection and interaction between places (Flint, 2016). Geographers use different scales, in which individuals or groups range their actions. These scales are in relation to each other (local, national, internal, etc). Therefore, this research uses a multi-layered approach that takes local resistance, national geopolitics and global imperialism into account. By doing this, the relation between globalisation, technology, nationalism and imperialism will become clear to understand how exploitation and inequality are rooted in capitalist modes and systems, and their local social relations (Aouragh & Chakravartty, 2016, 567).

The theoretical framework started with the concept of globalisation. Globalisation shapes meta-geography, which is the spatial structure in which people order their knowledge of the world targeting globalisation networks and social structures between politics and economy (Flint, 2016). More detailed, globalisation increases the social, economic, physical mobility of the population. This creates the development of new perceptions of place and space; which results in the democratic reclaiming of urban environments and Post-Apartheid *politics of aspiration*, which drives to self-stylization and identity formation, especially for the (black) youth (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009, 363-364). However, the relation between these concepts is way more complicated, and other concepts need to be added to this process. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, this research focusses especially on globalisation, cultural imperialism, digital colonialism, technology, media, Social Networking Sites, and identity. Additionally, it must not be forgotten that this research relates to a special research site, the local landscape of Alice in South Africa. Thereby, by constructing the conceptual model, concepts such as Post-Apartheid, nationalism, culture, segregation, social cohesion, and livelihoods also play an important role in this research.

Figure 2 shows the conceptual model of this research. This model summarizes the researched phenomenon in this thesis and therefore summarizes the points made in the chapters before.
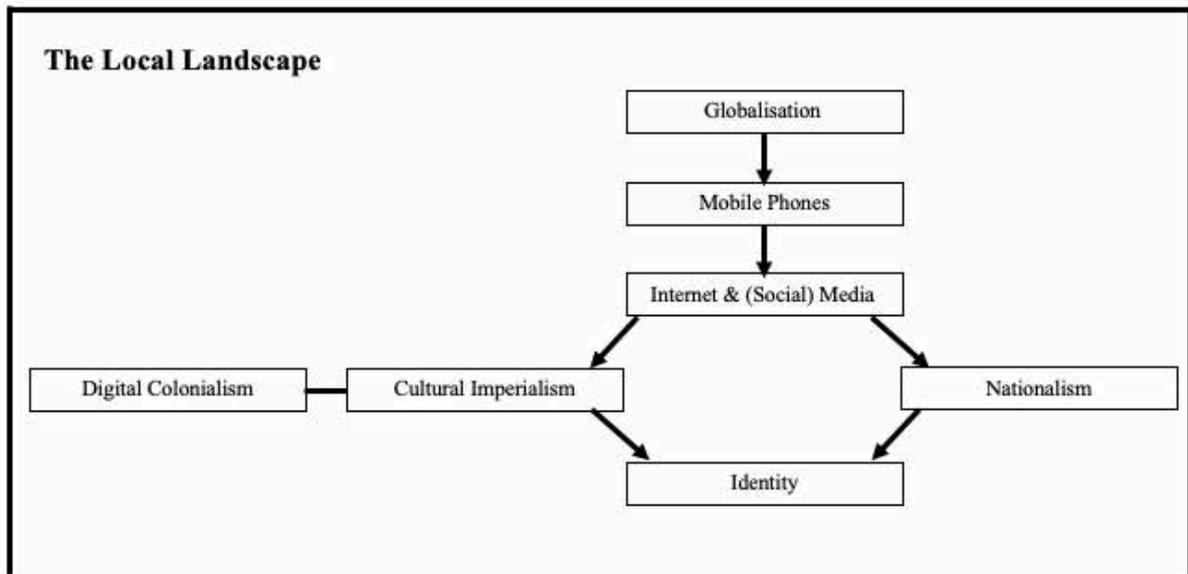
FIGURE 2. CONCEPTUAL MODEL (AUTHOR, 2020)

The conceptual model starts with the concept of globalisation. Globalisation leads to the rise of mobile phones and the increasing access to mobile phones. By using a mobile phone, the access to internet and (social) media becomes easier. However, as described in the theoretical framework, powerful actors are playing the internet and (social) media. On the one hand, cultural imperialism, where the Western players are at the centre of the hubs of global network capitalism. And on the other hand, nationalism[8], where the South African media are contributing to a sense of national identity and a sense of shared experience, with the goal to build a nation. Thus, geopolitical ideas and statements reach the public through the media, however, not only through news, but also through film, TV series, comic books, novels, applications, etcetera. Thus, the shared ideas about the world order threats, enemies, friends, conflicts, identities and the place of conflicts.

As Müller (2008, 328) says:

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[8] Where networks (by cultural imperialism) transcend countries, nationalism transcend regional and local differences.

"much of geopolitical writing starts from the assumption of the autonomous subject who has control over texts, knits them into narratives, and thus turns them into a vehicle through which it exercises power. Narratives are here associated with the agency of subjects as individuals. Individuals produce narratives. These narratives then become manipulated, usually by elites, as a strategic resource for pursuing certain interests".

As a result, both by the influence of the global players and the national players, individuals' identities are shaped. All these processes take place in the local landscape. Thus, the local landscape plays a significant role. In the next chapter, I will further explain the local landscape of Alice, the research site of this research. To continue, as the conceptual model shows, all processes take place in the local landscape. Figure 3 shows how the position of the local landscape, influenced by these different factors such as globalization, development, social cohesion, influence identity stories.
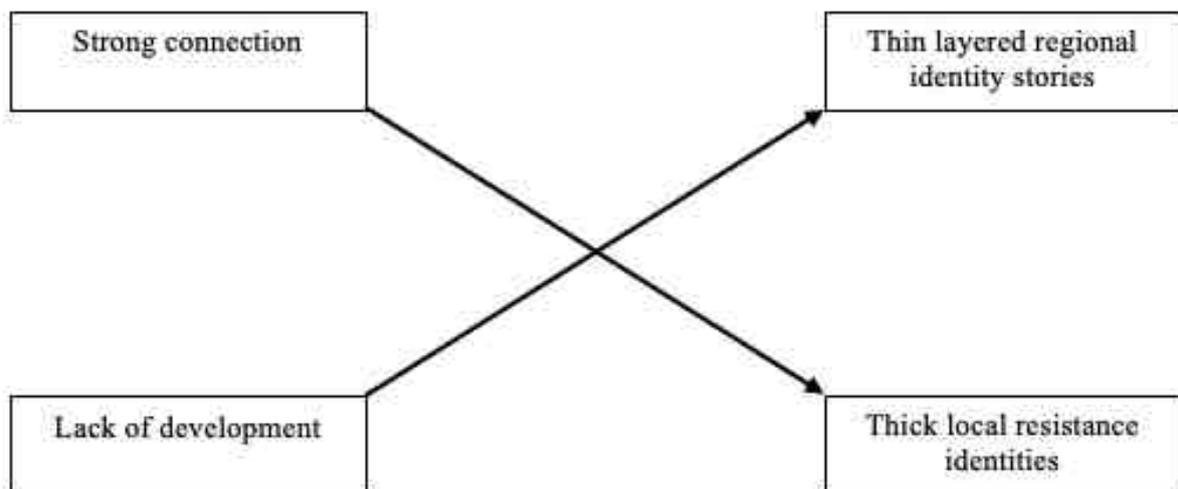
FIGURE 3. TRADITIONALISM VS. MODERNISM IN IDENTITY STORIES (TERLOUW, 2019)

Looking at figure 3, the left side represents the past (traditional), while the right side represents the future (metropole). The intersection in the middle represents the truth. The difference between traditionalism and modernism can also relate to the difference of provincialism-cosmopolitanism, populism-double liberalism, periphery-city, and thick and thin identity

stories. When there is a strong connection to the local landscape, traditionalism will lead to thick local resistance identities. This results in thick, stable identities in a pre-modern tradition. On the other hand, when there is a lack of development in the local landscape, modernism will lead to layered regional identity stories. These identities are more flexible and are the result of a post-modern choice.

Concluding, both by the influence of the global players, as from the national players, in (social) media; individuals' identities are shaped by the use of their mobile phone. This shaping of identity is always connected to different scales. In short, this chapter sketched a conceptual framework, with a conceptual model in which all the theories and concepts mentioned in the previous chapter are related to each other. By keeping this theoretical framework and conceptual model in mind, the next chapter will give an overview of the different methodologies used in this research.

4. Methodology

"I would like to thank Anne for everything she has done, I appreciate the questions you have asked, I felt comfortable. At least it was so easy, thank you."

(Respondent, March 2020)

While previously separated cultures were explored individually, contemporary research is more holistic, and every facet is included. More attention is paid to the flows of people, technologies, images and information. However, this also entails some problems. Because people are always on the move it becomes difficult to define the field. Additionally, there is more influence from outsiders and external organizations. In short, research used to focus on time and place, now, due to globalisation, there are pauses, boundaries, separation, cultural differences in hybrid cultures. Davis & Konner (2011, 5) argue that we have to stretch our boundaries, our conceptions of reality, and our expectations and beliefs to get close relevant cultural information. This kind of stretching is an exercise of our own humanity, pushing and pulling all that we take for granted in our mental, psychical and emotional make-up.

In the following chapter, relevant methodologies and research methods are discussed and the choice for the methodological approaches is explained. Initially, the study would consist of eleven weeks of fieldwork in Alice, after which the data would be analysed from home and processed in a thesis. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the fieldwork ended prematurely, and the research process changed. The data in this thesis is based on six weeks of fieldwork, after which contact was subsequently maintained online with the respondents, using WhatsApp and Facebook. The different methodologies used in the field and back home are further explained in this chapter.

To answer the main research question: *"How does the use of mobile phones and accessibility to (social) media influence the born frees in the way they value their local landscape and shape their identity?"*, the four sub-questions represented in the introduction has to be answered first. To provide an answer to the sub-questions I adapted different research methods. In the next paragraphs the methodological choices, the research strategy, and the data processing are explained. And finally, there is some attention to the methodological reflection.

Before I get into the methodological choices, I want to emphasize that all the choices are made out of an ethical perspective and with informed consent[9]. Research in Post-Apartheid South Africa brings ethical dilemmas, especially as a female young white Western researcher. During this research it was important to mention the role of the researcher, but it was more important to mention the role of the respondent. Firstly, it was important to ask oral/written permission of the respondents. Secondly, it was important to protect the privacy of the respondents and informants. Information about respondents is not shared with others. Besides, the data is protected and not accessible for others. Finally, the trust and anonymity of the respondents is guaranteed. In this thesis pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

4.1 Methodological Choices

The local landscape of Alice is the research site of this research. All different processes explained in the theoretical framework and the conceptual framework come together in the local landscape of Alice, such as: globalisation, westernization, nationalism, technologies, mobile phones, etcetera. But also, other concepts such as history, politics, culture, and traditions play an important role in the landscape of Alice. Moreover, not to forget, the University of Fort Hare, with its internet connection, international literature and students from all places, has an influence on the formation of local landscape of Alice. I will further describe the landscape of Alice in section 5.4. Either way, Alice is not only a mix where different processes come together, it is also a hotspot. Alice is therefore the perfect research site for this research.

As mentioned in the introduction, I have researched the *born frees* and their use of mobile phones and (social) media, and how that shapes their identities and the way they value their local landscape. In order to gain an insight of the use of mobile phones and the concepts of identity and the local landscape, quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The quantitative methods were useful to measure, rank, categorize, and identify patters. On the other hand, qualitative methods were used to describe, interpret, contextualize and gaining in-depth insight of specific concepts and phenomena. The addition of qualitative methods to quantitative

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[9] Informed consent is the agreement to take part in research, after having been informed about its purpose, nature, procedures and possible impacts (Kottak, 2015, 49)

methods gave the possibility to confirm the results and to cross-validate the data of the quantitative methods. Moreover, qualitative methods were used as an addition to explain unexpected results of the quantitative data. Mixing these methods ensured a combination of numerical measurement and in-depth exploration. In short, the use of triangulation, the use of several research methods to determine the reliability of one's data, was employed in the data collection in order to best explore the influence of the use of mobile phones and (social) media on the identity of the *born frees*.

4.1.1 Situational Approach and Place Perspective

Although the specific focus of this research is new and therefore not yet studied that much, the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) developed by Glaser & Straus (1967) is not appropriate for this research, because of the strong inductive character of this approach. The Grounded Theory Approach explains the role of qualitative research in the development of hypotheses and theory. Glaser & Straus (1967) developed this theory with the idea that ethnographic research was too much describing instead of explaining of social phenomenon, and they wanted to give researchers a new research strategy. This strategy takes the data as the core in the theoretical description of a phenomenon to explain it. The most important component in the analytical process of the Grounded Theory Approach is the constant comparison. The goal of this constant comparison is to describe the variation, which is found in phenomena. Thus, this Grounded Theory Approach by Glaser & Straus (1967) does not fully fit in this research as a method for analysis. However, the Grounded Theory Approach of Glaser & Strauss (1967) received much follow-up, but there was also a lot of criticism. There was a particular need for further elaboration of the developed methodology, and as follows, different academics developed another way of interpreting the Grounded Theory Approach. In this research, I used the Situational Approach of the Grounded Theory by Clarke (2005).

Clarke (2005) proposes to supplement Glaser's & Strauss's (1967) Grounded Theory Approach with a *situation-centered approach*, in which the researcher focuses on (pragmatic) actions and interactions as well as discourses - narrative, visual and historical - in situations or an organization. Clarke's (2005) commitment was to link what is perceived as *true* or *given* (facts) to ways of thinking or speaking (discourses) about this. The *situational analysis* of thinking in terms of maps is the vehicle for this. The map is a tool to connect both ways of thinking (the

modern and postmodern) about a situation. Clarke (2005) uses three different maps: the situational map, the social worlds/arena-map, and the positional map.

1. The situational map is the basis for mapping out the social phenomenon. This map focuses on the various components and the relationships with other components. These components can be both human and material in the situation. In addition, this map not only shows information of the *knowing* subject (via interviews, for example), but also of the situational *other* knowledge (the environment, influences from the environment).

2. The social words/arena-map emphasis the display of shared involvement of relationships and places. Questions that can be asked here are: What are the patterns of social cohesion within the local landscape? What are the main social aspects that influences this? What role does the mobile phone play in this? In this way, the social world of the phenomenon is mapped.

3. The positional map shows the positions of specific outcomes. In the positional map, the relationships of the different elements along two axes are shown; horizontal and vertical axis. The goal is to further clarify a particular position found in the study by showing its location on the map. A position on the positional map represents a position within a discourse. For example, what is the position of the *born frees* in a local landscape influenced by international, and national powers? And, can the emancipation of the *born frees* be related to other emancipation movements?

Together, these three maps visualize the complexity surround a (social) situation. In this research, a combination of these three maps is used to get an understanding of the *born frees* in Alice. Furthermore, this research made use of a *place perspective strategy.* Using the place perspective strategy, it was possible to observe how different trajectories/mobilities came together. Focussing on one place gave a better insight to see how various networks intersect in that place and how the world, and all its networks and relations, move around it (Gielis, 2009). In sum, the emphasis of this method of research is on mapping (temporary) networks of relationships around a social phenomenon.

4.1.2 Research Population and Sampling Method

As described before, this research focusses on the *born frees* between 18 and 25 years (no difference between male and female). The *born frees* live in a totally different world than their parents, with no history of official limits where they can go, work or live, or even on who they can date or marry. Moreover, they have the possibility to consume news provided by a reformed public broadcaster, have access to privately own radio and television broadcast news, and even have access to internet (Mattes, 2011). It is important to focus on the *born frees*, because it is a new generation that might can change the current systems in South Africa. With the black youth also participating in schools and universities, it seems that the society becomes more equal. Thus, as Mattes (2011) argues, theories of socialization would provide us with strong reasons to suspect that this new generation, with vastly different economic and political experiences and opportunities than their elders, and taught under a new school curriculum, may provide more fertile soil in which a strong democratic culture may take root and help consolidate South Africa's fledgling democracy.

In this research, respondents were found by reaching out to organisations and schools, approaching people on the street, and searching for people on Facebook. After collecting the first respondents, I used the snowball method to find other respondents. This snowball method is the use of the current respondents to find other respondents. A critical note of this method is the possibility of staying in the same group of people, which can provide the same data. To prevent this, different school were visited to keep the research population as broad as possible. Furthermore, a special Facebook-page was developed to follow the respondents online, stay in contact, and make new relations. In the end, more than 300 surveys were conducted. In the survey, respondents had the possibility to leave their contact details for a follow-up interview. Around 240 respondents left their contact details, and eight respondents have actually been interviewed. Next to the survey and the interviews, more data was received through conversations with other people from organisations, institutions, or just random people from Alice.

4.2 Research Strategy

The fieldwork in this research had a constructive structure. In the beginning, different qualitative methods such as being there, hanging out, small talk and participant observation were used to get to know the residents and the local landscape of Alice. After this exploratory phase, it was time to collect data to answer the first two sub-questions *("How do the born frees use their mobile phone?"* and *"How do the born frees use (social) media?").* These questions were researched mostly in the beginning of the fieldwork, because it gave a solid base to research the other questions.

The survey[10] was used as the main method to provide an answer to sub-questions one and two. The survey questions were divided in three parts; 1) basic information, 2) communication means, and 3) internet access. Part two of the survey, focused on the use of mobile phones, like calling and texting. Part three focused on the access to the internet, using Wi-Fi or data, and the use of Social Networking Sites. This part provided a snapshot of media access amongst the *born frees*, as well as an insight into their general media use. Interviews were used as a tool to further explore the above and dive deeper into the findings and thus, dive deeper into the social media aspect. Because social media are very dynamic tools, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of it. Using the media in ethnography, the focus is specifically on media texts, contexts and identities (Smith, 2011). As Moores (1993) has asserted, media ethnography requires the researcher to engage with *local settings* as well as with the *macro context*.

After collecting the data for the first two sub-questions, it became possible to answer sub-question three and four ("*How do the born frees shape their identity?"* and *"How do the born frees value their local landscape?"*) as well. These questions were researched by doing different interviews. During these interviews, different strategies were used like *value ranking* to research the value of the local landscape of Alice. For example, is the feeling of belonging to Alice different when you are in another place, like Cape Town, or even further away in another country? Moreover, mapping was a method which gave an overview of the local landscape of Alice. By analysing social maps, social networks and interactions an understanding was gained of the respondents' perspectives, as well as later on to confirm identified spatial-social patterns.

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[10] See Appendix 1.

During the fieldwork, a logbook made sure that the research was organized. The logbook gave a chronological overview of every appointment, activity, etcetera. Moreover, it was an easy tool to look up things and find a relationship. The logbook also included an agenda. In this way, the past and future activities were captured in one document. Besides, the logbook provided insights in the missing data and helped to evaluate the actions and further plans. It is important to stay focussed and not missing parts of the research. By analysing, missing information was identified and new insights were gained. Another way to come up with missing data was the use of member validation, where feedback was asked from the respondents. This allowed the respondents to describe whether the findings were true and to what extent they agreed with them (Boeije, 2010, 177). In addition, member validation was also an important tool for removing my own bias as much as possible.

4.2.1 Surveys

As mentioned before, most of the data in this research is obtained by surveys. A survey is an important tool in geography for years. The goal of a survey is to acquire information about the characteristics, behaviours and attitudes of a population by administering a standardized questionnaire, or survey, to a sample of individuals (McLafferty, 2016, 129). While surveys were first used in the field of behavioural geography to examine people's environmental perceptions, travel behaviour and consumer choices, nowadays they are used in almost all branches of human geography and tackles much more research objectives (McLafferty, 2016).

The aim was to conduct the survey over 100 *born frees* residing in Alice, but in the end more than 300 surveys were conducted online and on paper. After analysing these surveys, 300 surveys were included in the analysis. The surveys were conducted in Alice under the *born frees* between 18-25 years old. Respondents were found on the streets of Alice, at KFC and at Champs. But also, at different school such as; Lovedale TVET College, Fort Hare University, Enkwenkwezini Senior School, Gcato Ss School, Imingcangathelo High School, Emdeni High School, Mpambani Mzimba School (See Picture 1), Nzululwazi SS School, Phandulwazi Agric High School and Siyabonga Ss School. Most surveys were conducted with the attendance of the researcher, which made it possible for the respondents to ask questions. Moreover, the researcher was, in most cases, accompanied with a local informant who spoke fluently English and isiXhosa. These local informants made it possible to translate some question when

respondents had difficulties with answering a question. Nevertheless, the attendance of a local information created a trustful environment between the researcher and the respondents.

At the end of the survey, respondents had the chance to leave their contact details for a follow-up interview, around 240 respondents actually did this. All these respondents were contacted and asked to share the online survey[11] with others. Moreover, the online survey link was shared in different Facebook communities, such as *Lovedale TVET College*, *Fort Hare Students Alice Campus*, and *Made in Alice*. As described above, the survey consisted of three different parts and 53 questions, mostly multiple choice. It took the respondents approximately 10 to 15 minutes to take the survey.

PICTURE 1. RESPONDENTS TAKING THE SURVEY AT MPAMBANI MZIMBA SCHOOL (AUTHOR, 2020)

[11] It was not possible to take the online survey twice.

4.2.2 Being There, Hanging Out, Small Talk and Participant Observation

Methods like, being there, hanging out, small talk and participant observation, were used during the fieldwork of six weeks in Alice. These methods gave not only the residents of Alice the possibility to get to know the researcher, but it also gave the researcher the chance to get used to the field. In fact, this means that a researcher is informally observing the research population (Driessen & Jansen 2013, 251). Using these methods in the beginning, it helped the researcher to gain a general understanding of the environment, population and the cultural context. Through the use of these methods, a report was created and a better understanding of the local way of talking and dealing with social phenomena was obtained, both verbally and non-verbally. In addition, it allowed the researcher to make the first contacts in an informal way and gaining access to the first important information and the first informants.

Participant observation, observing and participating in daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, 1-3), was not necessarily relevant to answer the research questions, but it was an important strategy to distinguish the most fundamental building blocks of a culture and discover themes and phenomena. By applying participant observation and thereby placing yourself deeper in the community, a broader insight into abstract concepts such as the local landscape, identity and spatiality was gained. Moreover, using participant observation, socially desirable answers about socially sensitive issues such as mutual discrimination were intercepted. Data gathered by these methods was recorded in field notes and pictures to analyse verbal and non-verbal expressions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, 87, 165). Yet, during the fieldwork there was not always a chance at any time to write things down, for example during participant observation or driving. When this happened, jot notes or head notes were used.

4.2.3 Interviews and Mapping

The large number of respondents who left their contact details in the survey, gave the opportunity to make a selective choice to approach people for the interviews[12], which resulted in eight interviews[13]. The choice for these respondents was generally based on the amount of

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[12] See Appendix 2.

[13] More interviews were planned, but due to the unexpected early end of the fieldwork, these interviews did not take place.

years they were living in Alice, whether they were studying or not and their age. The interviews were intended to be recorded; however, distrust is still present under the youth in South Africa. Moreover, the youth are suspicious when it comes to technology. Recording was therefore not the adequate method in this study, and the data was gathered in notes. The conducted interviews took place in Alice Town, mostly at KFC, which is a public spot. The interview lasted about 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the respondent.

During the interview, different techniques were used, such as active listening, sensitive silences, the uh-huh prompt, repetition feedback and summary feedback (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, 142-149). Thereby, questions were asked to give the respondents the opportunity to tell more and clarify answers (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, 149-150). Using these techniques optimal answers were obtained, because the respondent had the opportunity to think deeper about the subject and give their own insights. Moreover, during the interview different methods were used, like value ranking and social mapping. Value ranking was a technique used to capture the feelings of belonging to Alice. Social mapping was another technique, to identify the spatial-social patterns. Social mapping involves talking to an individual to discover locations of importance to the study topic and how residents connect to and think about these locations and the geosocial or activity spaces that connect them (Chirowodza et al., 2009). With social maps, social networks and interactions were analysed and used to gain an understanding of respondents' perspectives. In other words, social mapping techniques were used to document social behaviour, movement patterns, and spatial relationships in the local landscape of Alice.

4.3 Data Processing

The data processing contained three different stages. Firstly, a constant comparison has been used, with the aim to describe the variation and position this variation in the context. Subsequently, an analytical induction was done to develop a theory about the causes of a certain behaviour. Finally, creative ideas from the research data were developed by looking at the data from a certain perspective.

On the one hand, the analysis of the quantitative methods in this research was based on numbers. Before starting the analysis, the data was checked for missing data. After adding the missing data, the results of the survey were analysed by using SPSS. A hierarchical cluster analyses was

used to make clusters on the basis of age, gender, and the percentage of a person's life living in Alice. These clusters had an added value to gain an insight of the *born frees* living in Alice. Other results of the survey were summarized in different graphs and tables. On the other hand, the data retrieved from the different qualitative methods such as being there, small talk, hanging out were written down in detail. Moreover, the interviews were transcribed, and a thematic analysis was conducted. After, the qualitative data was analysed by the use of codes. For this process, the computer program ATLAS.ti was used. ATLAS.ti gives the opportunity to upload transcribed documents and field notes which can be analysed by coding, starting with open coding. Open coding means the distinguishing of categories from the data found (Boeije, 2010, 96). All the gathered data was divided into different categories. These categories were based on different concepts retrieved from the theoretical framework and context. After the open coding, it was possible to start axial coding. Axial coding is the discussion and analyses of the open coding (Boeije, 2010, 108-109). By axial coding, the main themes and structures were distinguished, and the relevance of the categories were determined.

4.4 Methodological Reflections

Every research has its limitation, also this one. Some of these were foreseen, others not, like the outbreak of COVID-19, different strikes at the University of Fort Hare and the changing weather which made driving sometimes impossible. During this research the validity and reliability has been harmed to some extent. Nevertheless, I am convinced that this research still gives a valid and reliable answer to the research questions. Fortunately, enough surveys were conducted, and the data gained from the interviews was valuable. Moreover, a lot of respondents were enthusiastic, and left their numbers to help me further. This gave me the opportunity to continue the research back home. In this section I like to give more attention to the challenges during the fieldwork in Alice, as a researcher, as a white person, as a young woman; which all influenced the process of this fieldwork. And moreover, the challenges back home, as a researcher on distance.

4.4.1 Fieldwork in Alice

It should be noted that during the fieldwork in Alice there were many *off-the-record* conversations with residents of Alice. But also, I gained knowledge from people in other

cities/towns outside Alice, about Alice and its population. All these conversations (small talk) with people have been meaningful during the fieldwork. By having these conversations, I gained more knowledge about Alice and its residents, which made it easier to put the data in the right context. Yet, the use of small talk should be criticized because it can be vague sometimes, which questions the validity and reliability. Moreover, it has a close relation to gossiping, which raises ethical issues. As a research you come in contact with different groups, who gossip about other groups. Thus, adjustment is required and as a researcher it is important to stay open-minded. Self-reflection was thereby one of the main instruments I used as a researcher. As I researcher it is important to be critical at every moment of the research on the role as a researcher. In this sense, it was important for me to reflect continually to my behaviour, actions and the choices I made in the field, to keep the reliability and validity in the research. But it was also important to reflect on the position of the researcher, taking into account how participation in the field and perception of the researcher might influence the results. An example of this is the Hawthorne-effect, this effect describes the effect of the researcher's presence on the population (Franke & Kaul, 1978). Because of the presence of a researcher, people often behave differently, this decreases over time, but never disappears.

However, all results in this thesis are based on the choices I made in the field as a researcher. One of these choices was the approaching of respondents in the research. Only specific schools in Alice were visited[14], and only specific individuals on the streets, at KFC, or at Champs were asked to take the survey, also depending on the time/date. For example, the estimation of the age of the people on the streets or at the KFC/Champs mattered. It could be that potential respondents were not asked to complete a questionnaire, as it was assumed that the person in question did not fit in the 18-25 age group.

Safety was another important aspect during the fieldwork. Stories of raping's, robberies, and thefts circulated every day, and different respondents warned me. This resulted in the choice for doing interviews in public spaces, instead of at the respondent's houses. The aim was to interview the respondents at home, because being in a comfortable and private area gives respondents the opportunity to talk about sensitive and hard subjects, expected that they will not do this in common places like a church, store, etcetera. Moreover, walking interviews were

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[14] It was also intended to visit other schools, but due to the premature end of the fieldwork, there was no time to do this.

not an option in Alice[15]. Even the respondents indicated not to walk through Alice but to take a taxi instead. Finally, during the fieldwork, students of Fort Hare were striking which led to unsafe situations, which blocked my access to Alice for many days.

4.4.2 Research on Distance

The outbreak of COVID-19 caused an unforeseen end to the fieldwork in Alice. All appointments that I had made for the next weeks were cancelled, and all the other intended plans were not performed. The pandemic brought this research to a whole different level; it was more challenging and keeping focus was quite difficult sometimes. Not only, it was difficult to leave the residents of Alice behind in a place with 'bad' health services, also it was difficult to suddenly change my normal lifestyle in the Netherlands to a 'lockdown lifestyle'. On the other hand, this pandemic also showed me how the *born frees* in Alice cope with a pandemic. It was interesting to see, via social media channels, how fast they had to adapt to a different lifestyle. This showed what is really important for the *born frees* when they are locked down at home, and which structures lasts during these uncertain times. However, I chose to not put COVID-19 at the centre of this research.

As described in other paragraphs, the research continued back at home. All the collected phone numbers and Facebook-friends gave me the opportunity to keep in contact with my respondents. Yet, this was not as easy as I thought it would be. While I have fast and continual connection at home, my respondents were struggling with their internet access. Especially during the Lockdown in South Africa, when the schools were closed and there was no access to Wi-Fi connections, it was difficult to keep in contact with some of my respondents. The respondents were staying at home and did not have enough money to buy airtime or data to be online all the time. As a result, online interviews were not an option. Nevertheless, some respondents were able to access the Facebook Free Basics application. Thus, it was possible for me to follow my respondents online. But it should be noted that the data collected from Facebook is not always objective, because Facebook works with algorithms and even I, as a researcher, have my own filter bubble.

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[15] Instead of walking interviews, driving interviews were planned to generate data that is inspired by meanings and experiences that are related to the surrounding environment. But due to the unforeseen early end of the fieldwork these driving interviews were not conducted.

Unfortunately, due to the unexpected end of the fieldwork, different methods were not used (properly), such as group interviews, and the use of visual data and pictures. Group interviews could have led to interesting and relevant discussions, while it gives respondents the opportunity to share different ideas. Moreover, the use of visual data was not grounded enough to use in this analysis, because I was still improving this method during the fieldwork. Nevertheless, I am convinced that this research still gives a valid and reliable answer to the research questions, also without the use of some methodologies. I will present the results of this research in the following chapters.

5. Diving into Context: South Africa and the Case of Alice

After more than two decades of formal democracy, South Africa is still struggling to overcome the years of Apartheid. At the moment, South Africa ranks among the most unequal in the world. Besides, economic inequality within the society has increased. As Kwet argues (2019, 5) *"racial disparities are high with respect to income, wealth, employment, and education, while residential segregation has persisted."* Although the ANC delivered some modest services to the poor, poverty is still a daily problem. With 55% of the population living under the poverty line of $3 per day, and 63% of Africans (blacks) under poverty line, compared to just 1% of whites, the country still remains highly segregated (Kwet, 2019). So, is *Post-Apartheid* the right term to describe the era South Africa lives in, or is it better to change it into *neo-Apartheid*?

In this chapter I will give an insight in the demography of South Africa. First, as already mentioned in the introduction, the South African society will be explained. As follows, there will be some attention for the spatiality of *black* and *white* people in South Africa. Next, small towns are positioned in the South African context. And finally, the small-town Alice, the case of this research, will be described. It is necessary to have knowledge of the subjects that are mentioned in this chapter to position the results of the following questions in a context and provide an answer to the research questions.

5.1 'The' South African Society?

As mentioned before, there is a current lack of homogeneity and social cohesion in South Africa. Even after the Apartheid regime, it seems that the country is still unequal and dealing with racism. As Steyn & Ballard (2014, 1) argue *"just like the time of Apartheid, the time of Post-Apartheid points to an ethnicised and racialised organisation of space, where proximity is not reached yet".* However, looking at the framework of Eriksen (Figure 1), South Africa does not relate to Apartheid anymore. But, how can we position South Africa in this framework? And what influence did globalisation had on this? Is South Africa still based on purity instead of mixing, and difference instead of similarity? Or is there a change? Right now, it is difficult to position South Africa in this framework, while South Africa is still a changing

country, with the Apartheid regime fresh in mind. However, as the next paragraphs will show, the South African government tries to unite the citizens of South Africa, with the help of new technologies, to a national unity. But is this possible, with all the different languages, cultures, and heritages in South Africa? And is it perhaps better to speak about South African societies instead the South African society?

5.1.1 New Technologies in South Africa

In South Africa, there are over 10 million people, between the age of 18 till 30[16], who are owning a mobile phone, with three out of four having access to internet and social media via mobile devices (Barenblatt, 2015). Looking worldwide, the World Wide Worx and Student Brands (2015) report that that communication is the overriding factor for students' use of technology, with 97% of them using Facebook. The youth are seduced by any ICT service that makes their lives easier, especially via innovative and efficient apps (Rodney & Wakeham, 2016). They live in a technological context, which necessitates them to be continuously connected and online, as well as have a preference for engaging with brands on social media, and shopping online (Barenblatt, 2015; Barney, 2011; Tapscott, 2009).

Anyway, how positive this rise of communication means sounds, there is also some critique. As mentioned before in the theoretical framework, it seems that there is a form of digital colonialism taking place in the 20th century. Instead of conquering new parts of the land, big technology corporations are colonising digital technology. For example, the following functions are all dominated by a handful of Western multinationals: search engines (Google); web browsers (Google Chrome); mobile phone and tablet operating systems (Google Android, Apple iOS); desktop and laptop operating systems (Microsoft Windows); office software (Microsoft Office); cloud infrastructure and services (Microsoft, Google); Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Twitter); transportation (Uber); business networking (LinkedIn); streaming video (Google YouTube, Netflix); and online advertising (Google, Facebook) (Kwet, 2019, 6). Integrating these big technology products in the South African society, the Western multinationals will obtain enormous power over their economy. Moreover, they will create technological dependencies, which will lead to perpetual resource extraction. As the Vice Chancellor of Wits University, South Africa warns: *"Considerations of [technological*

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[16] People between 13-30 years old are the main users of social media in South Africa (Ephraim, 2013).

innovations] have not even entered the public discourse and we are at a collective risk of once again merely being victims of economic forces and processes beyond our control." (Kwet, 2019). Anyway, the question here is; How does these Western powers influence the South African society? Or is it better to speak about South African societies, as mentioned before? And what role does (social) media actually play in this case? This will be explained further in the next paragraph.

5.1.2 South African Society or South African Societies?

As mentioned above, there is a lack of proximity in South Africa these days. Therefore, this lack of proximity can reinforce the perceived need for a singular South African identity and a unified nation. However, efforts of homogeneity and cohesion have often been at the expense of difference and heterogeneity (Smith, 2011). Yet, there is a factor which can unite the South Africans and promote a South African identity, as well as helping in maintaining indigenous languages and cultural identities, namely the media. Right now, the focus of the South Africa's national public broadcaster (SABC) is on the support of the South African culture, while developing programmes that are identifiably South African and contribute to a sense of national identity, to a sense of shared experience and the goal of nation building (SABC Editorial Code, 2004). Although, the trajectory of this focus also includes differences and begin to promote a broader *African identity*. That is to say, while globalisation infers assimilation and homogenization as a consequence of blurred boundaries, cultural fragmentation, Eurocentrism and Americanization, it simultaneously induces a move towards indigenous local cultures (Smith, 2011). These indigenous local cultures are mostly centred in rural areas. As South Africans become more mobile, the socio-economic inequalities that exist within the society put pressure on the digital divide. However, because of the unequal distribution of access to ICT tools, there are some doubts of the actual possibilities of Africa's success in the global media sphere (Ephraim, 2013).

Stroud & Mpendukana (2009, 363-364) argue that globalisation ensures a social, economic and physical mobility of the population. Moreover, there is a development of new perceptions of place and space, which results in a democratic reclaiming of urban environment and a Post-Apartheid politics of aspiration which drives intense consumerist orientations to self-stylization and identity formation. Especially in South Africa, where youth identities (especially black) are determined by the politics of aspiration, propagated by the media (Nutall, 2004). This shows

that, the social and political development of Post-Apartheid South Africa depends on the role of media and communication in a new multicultural democracy (Zegeye & Harris, 2002). Thus, the media of communication are not only a source of public information and channels of communication. They also serve as important channels of the identities and interests of the various social groups in South African society. Taking this into account, the media can determine the relative power, status and influence of these groups. It thus might be better to speak about South African societies instead of one delineated South African society.

5.2 Spatiality of 'Black' and 'White' People in South Africa

The years of Apartheid were based on the reverse of the Contact Hypothesis[17] (Allport, 1954), with the aim to avoid contact between racial categories (Foster, 2005, 497). However, in the Contact Hypothesis, there was a lack of attention to the spatial dimension (Dixon, 2001). Space is very important for human interaction; we act different in different spaces. Moreover, some spaces enable or constrain particular kinds of action. Thus, spatiality captures the ways in which the social and the spatial are inextricably realised one in the other (Keith & Pile, 1993, 6). Foster (2005, 498) argues that when space allowed to disappear, so do bodies and temporal sequences. From this moment, *contact* becomes a neutral event, hollowed out from the bodily practices which constitute it, and which endow it with different meanings. On the other hand, contact can also have positive effects, like the reduce measures of prejudice towards racialised *others* (Foster, 2005, 499). For example, whites tended to regard the contact as an invasion of their previously privileged *whites-only* preserve (being pushed out of space), whereas black people, who welcomed the new opportunity for shared use of public space, saw whites as running away (white flight) (Foster, 2005, 499). Furthermore, when people feel threatened by other, for example by being stereotyped, they go back to their comfort zones. In this way they reproduce segregation. Attracting whites to black spaces, by investing in the spaces and making them desirable, will change the racial patterns of invasion, flight, and succession, which has become the basis of race relations in Post-Apartheid South Africa (Durrheim & Dixon, 2004, 635).

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[17] The reverse Contact Hypothesis states that points of contact inevitably produce friction and friction generates heat which may lead to conflagration (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003, 2).

This basis of these race relations is both visible in the rural and urban livelihoods of South Africa. Lichter et al. (2007) argues that within urban places economic and spatial incorporation are going hand in hand. While in rural places black and whites remain highly separated. After 1994 black people were moving to the former white towns, but white people did not move to former black towns (Crankshaw, 2008; Kracker, Selzer & Heller, 2010; Christopher, 2005; Donaldson & Kotze, 2006; Rex & Visser, 2009; Donaldson et al., 2013). For example, within the rural communities the white population has stagnated numerically, while black and coloured populations have grown significantly (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015, 95). After Apartheid, the new politics of racial desegregation were based on low-costs housings projects, but moreover it has occurred on a class basis and through the market. In some city's desegregation occurred in higher-income areas, in others it was highest in low- and middle-income areas (Harrison & Todes, 2015, 158). Besides, the closer black income is to white income, the less segregated blacks are expected to be from whites; economic incorporation accelerates spatial assimilation (Parisi, Lichter & Taquino, 2015, 134). However, while many areas have become more racially mixed others have *resegregated*, i.e. they have gone through a cycle of becoming more mixed racially to becoming completely black (Donaldson & Kotze, 2006). In other words, the white people mainly remained in their places, while the black people are moved to almost every municipality. It is in the majority in most municipalities sampled, and in some municipalities the proportion of the white, coloured and Asian population is tiny and/or has declined in absolute terms (Harrison & Todes, 2015, 158).

5.3 Positioning Small Towns in South Africa

Since the 1970s, cities in South Africa are growing, and following the industrial and mining developments from the early 20th century, it was noted that rural South Africa had entered a phase of depopulation (Nel et al., 2011, 396; Todes et al., 2010). As a result, currently, nearly two-thirds of South Africans live in urban areas (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2015, 95). Harrison & Todes (2015, 153) argue that individuals and households in South Africa are *voting with their feet* by moving into places which are better able to provide livelihoods. This mobility is not only an individual choice, it is also related to broader livelihood strategies of household and family networks, which in the end can increase vulnerability. According to the research of Hall et al. (2015), in South Africa, youth between 15-24 years old is most mobile; 50% moved from an urban to urban area, 25% moved van a rural to urban area, 20% moved from an rural to rural

area, and 8% moved from an urban to rural area. The research also showed that youth temporarily migrate for educational and economic reasons, while permanent migration is the result of marriage or separation.

As the research of Hall et al. (2015) shows, a lot of African people decided to leave the rural sites and migrate to urban areas, including small towns. Small towns are more urbanised and have more opportunities; they have a strategic importance and can provide a lot of socio-economic opportunities. Besides, much of the retail sector has been taken over by non-South Africans or big chain stores, with the result that local residents can derive a livelihood from it. As a result, people from the rural sites move to these small towns. Due to this migration from the rural sites to the small towns, there is a rise in diversification of the rural economies of small towns, because the migrants have other skills and capital to invest (Donaldson, 2007). Besides, many small towns reinventing themselves in a post-industrial era and experience economic growth through a series of new drivers (Nel et al., 2011, 398). In addition, Nel & Hill (2008) note that, many larger, centrally placed small towns have grown economically, supplying the retail and servicing needs of a larger hinterland in an era of improved transportation and the economic decline of smaller settlements in their hinterlands. These spaces are closer to urban centres, suggesting improved spatial access (Harrison & Todes, 2015, 155). However, the poor people in the rural site do not profit from these processes. The poor people are either evicted from commercial farms or unable to find their own land to farm, rather than being attracted by urban employment opportunities (Krige, 1997; Aliber, 2017). Thus, the rise of population and economic growth does not always have a positive effect on the rural hinterlands.

5.4 The Case of Alice

> *"A car behind me is honking. I look in my mirror, and I see the lights of the car behind me flickering. I go to the left side of the road, and the car overtakes me. The driver waves at me enthusiastically and honks again. I am on my way to Alice. The road to Alice from Hogsback is breath-taking. I see small villages on the left and right side of the road, and occasionally people are hitchhiking along the way. After twenty minutes, the centre Alice is appearing in the distance."*
>
> *(Diary Author, 2020)*

Alice is an urban small town in the Eastern Cape. Although, in theoretical terms it can be called urban, residents of Alice describe it more as a rural place. Alice is part of the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, and is one of the bigger towns next with Bedford, Adelaide, Seymour, Blinkwater, Fort Beaufort. Alice is situated 20 kilometres from the slightly bigger town called Fort Beaufort, and 60 kilometres away from King Williamstown. The nearest city is East-London, which is located 120 kilometres away from Alice.

As mentioned in the methodology Alice is not only a mix, it is also a hotspot, and Alice is therefore the perfect research site for this research. The conceptual model showed how different processes relate to each other in the local landscape. However, different concepts such as history, politics, demography, culture, and traditions also play an important role in the landscape of Alice. Moreover, not to forget, the University of Fort Hare, with its internet connection, international literature and students from all places, has an influence on the formation of local landscape of Alice. This section will provide an overview of the history, demography and street view of Alice, to gain a deeper understanding of the local landscape of Alice.

5.4.1 History of Alice

In 1824 European missionaries settled the area of Alice and named it Lovedale, after Dr. John Love of the Glasgow Missionary Society. During the Frontier Wars, the skirmishes between the isiXhosa and Afrikaner *trek boers*, the mission station was abandoned and rebuilt on the west bank of the Tyhume River. On the east bank of the river, a military fort was built called Fort Hare. Out of this fort, a town emerged, which was named Alice in honour of the Queen of England's daughter, Princess Alice.

In 1916, the University of Fort Hare was founded as the first historically black institution in South Africa. The university has a long-standing tradition of non-racism, characterised by intellectually enriching and critical debate. During the Apartheid years, when the liberation movement was formed and black South Africans were pushing for the abolishment of the oppressive regime, a lot of intellectual leaders met at Fort Hare. Leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Govan Mbeki and Robert Sobukwe studied at Fort Hare, all of whom were known for their fearless leadership and great political strategies (SouthAfrica.co.za, 2019).

5.4.2 Demography of Alice

Alice has 15.143 (3716 households) residents. 1300 people live in the centre of Alice, the other residents live in the suburbs surround it, namely; Fort Hare (4696 residents), Golf Course[18] (3157 residents), Happy Rest (1026 residents), Hill Crest (659 residents), and Ntselamanzi (4304 residents). Furthermore, around Alice and her suburbs there are different townships which belong to Alice. See table 1.

TABLE 1. WARDS OF ALICE

Ward	Sub Places	People	Households	% of people in age range		
				0-9	10-19	20-29
2	Sinakanaka, Mtwaku, Ntselamanzi, Gqumashe, Fort Hare	8076	1897	15%	16%	30%
5	KwaNgobe, eNgwabeni, Gaga, Mgquba, Lenge, Nonzwakazi, Mavuso	5803	1732	22%	18%	14%
6	Alice Town, Golf Course, Happy Rest, Hillcrest	6142	2383	21%	16%	19%
10	Binfield, KwaKayaletu, Hala, Komkhulu, Zininene, Hopefield, Lower Hopefield, Jomlo, Macibini 2, Paleni, KwaMpundu, KwaNomadolo, KwaGuquka, KwaNotenga, KwaKayaletu, Mmangweni, Velani, Magxagxeni, Gcado	6788	2003	21%	24%	10%
11	Fort Hare, Dyamala	3362	272	5%	14%	61%
12	Pefferskop, Gwali, Msobomvu, Bergplaats, Macfarlan, Rwarwa, Upper Nera, Majwareni, Melani, Bowburn, Magwala, Mazotshweni, eSigingqini B, Majwareni, Kwezana A	6405	2010	22%	20%	11%
15	KwaSawu, eDrayini, Efama, Jojozi, Mtombo, Red Hill, Lalini A, KwaTyutyza	5451	1526	23%	21%	12%
Total number		**42.027**	**11.823**	**11.823**	**7.847**	**8.491**
Number in percentage		*100%*	*28.1%*	*28.1%*	*19.7%*	*20.2%*

* Source: Raymond Mhlaba Municipality. Draft reviewed integrated development plan 2019/20.

The municipality is divided in different wards. This table includes the names of the subplaces (suburbs and the townships), the number of people, the number of households, and the percentage of the age groups, which are relevant to this research. Because the research population are youth between 18-25 years old, it is also interesting to take the age group of 0-9 years into account, to see any migration patterns. The table shows that every ward has a decrease in the number of people, except for ward 2 and 11. The reason for this is the high number of students living in these wards. Ward 2 deals with students from Ntselamanzi (Lovedale TVET College) and Fort Hare (University of Fort Hare), and ward 11 also with student from the

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[18] Golf Course is a new area, built by the government.

University of Fort Hare. While the University of Fort Hare has, almost, enough space for all the students in the residences, students from Lovedale TVET College are struggling with providing these places causing that students move to the Ntselamanzi. On the other hand, the decrease in the number of people can be caused by migration, or even early deaths.

Thus, the decrease in the number of people in all the wards, except for the wards with residences, can tell us something about how the *born frees* value their own local landscape. Probably, most of the *born frees* leave Alice and migrate to another town or city. So, what is the need to live in a small town such like Alice for the *born frees?* Moreover, is Alice just a small town, or is it more something like a steppingstone before moving to a big city? I will further discuss this in the next chapters.

5.4.3 Street View of Alice

As mentioned before, Alice is a small town located between Fort Beaufort and King Williams. The main road passes Alice (R63), which make it an easily accessible town. Figure 4 shows what the centre of Alice, together with the suburbs, look like.

When you enter Alice from King Williams, you first pass the entrance of the University of Fort Hare. The University of Fort Hare can be seen as the economic centre of Alice and the town's principal employer. Students in Fort Hare are drawn from the local area, but also from across the province, the country, or other countries (Lesotho and Zimbabwe). After the University, you enter Alice Centre, beginning with a KFC and petrol station on the left side, and the entrance to the small mall (Spar, cash machines, hairdressers and other small shops) on the right side. Continuing this road, you see different informal economies on the left side followed by Champs. On the right side, there is a big taxi rank surrounded by different informal economies. The street parallel to this street contains the municipality building, post office, library and other formal and informal business as Figure 4 shows. In the centre of Alice, there are also some other small supermarkets, local cafes, taverns, etcetera. Lovedale TVET College and the Victoria Hospital are located just near the centre of Alice, in Ntselamanzi.
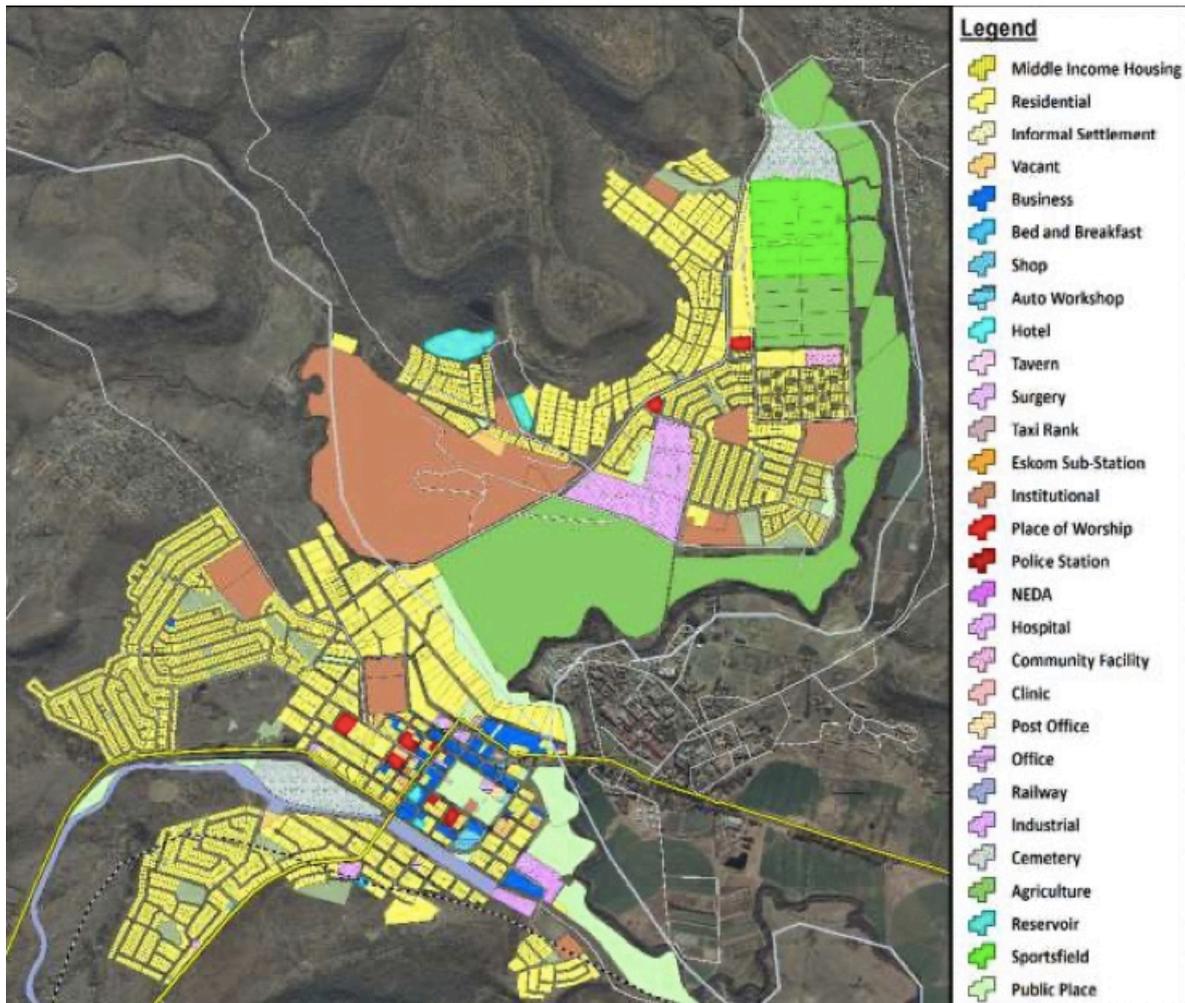
FIGURE 4. ALICE (RAYMOND MHLABA MUNICIPALITY, 2019-2020)

Taking a specific look at the businesses in Alice, the informal economies plays an important role fort the local residents. The informal sector consists of small-scale, self-employed activities (with or without hired workers), typically at a low level of organization and technology with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes (McLaughlin, 1990). These activities generate incomes that are unrecorded in the national economy. Thus, the sector encompasses all the economic activities undertaken by entrepreneurs who sell legal goods and services within a space deemed to be public property (Tshuma & Jari, 2013, 250). According to Tshuma & Jari (2013) informal economies are important to help boost its economy, it can provide a source of income which helps the poor urban households in Alice escaping poverty.

Therefore, with the right support and trading conditions, some of these small informal businesses can become large enterprises[19].

Also, the government, municipality and other organizations are trying to improve Alice. One of the programs is the *Small-town Regeneration Programme*. Other interventions are trying to unlock opportunities and encourage further investments into Alice, whilst also providing tools towards the spatial integration of Alice and University of Fort Hare (UFH). According to the Integrated Development Plan, the two catalytic interventions right now, are middle-income residential developments for students and middle-upper income earners and upgrading of the CBD and creation of a civic core. However, there are other key interventions that are suggested as part of Alice Regeneration Programme, like the ICT Development (Implementation of Broad-Band Technology), Heritage Preservation and Tourism, and Promotion and Development of Agriculture value chain. Next to these programs, there are also some organisations which try to improve Alice and create a better future for its residents, like *The African Footprints of Hope*, *Born2Shine*, and *World Vision*.

This chapter set the foundation to provide an answer to the research questions, which will be answered in the next chapters. It is important to have knowledge of the complexity of South Africa and the context of Alice, to understand the gathered data provided in the next chapters. The next chapters will provide an analysis of the use of the mobile phones and relate this to the formation of identities and the position of the local landscape of Alice.

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[19] Hence their development is imperative to a country's growth otherwise remain dependent on the formal sector which has failed to absorb a great number of the population. Be that as it may, the factors constraining these businesses from growing should not be overlooked (Tshuma & Jari, 2013, 259).

Summary Chapter 5

In South Africa there are over 10 million people, between the age of 18 till 30, who are owning a mobile phone, with three out of four having access to internet and social media via mobile devices (Barenblatt, 2015). Integrating these big technology products in the South African society, the Western multinationals will obtain enormous power over their economy. Moreover, they will create technological dependencies, which will lead to perpetual resource extraction. Yet, on the other hand, (social) media can also be a factor which can unite the South Africans and promote a South African identity, as well as helping in maintaining indigenous languages and cultural identities. Thus, the media of communication are not only a source of public information and channels of communication. They also serve as important channels of identities and interests of the various social groups in South African society. Taking this into account, the media can determine the relative power, status and influence of these groups. It thus might be better to speak about South African societies instead of one delineated South African society.

The biggest categorization of South Africans is still the difference of black and white people. After Apartheid, blacks got the opportunity to move to white places. However, the whites tended to regard this contact as an invasion of their previously privileged whites-only preserve (being pushed out of space), whereas black people, who welcomed the new opportunity for shared use of public space, saw whites as running away (white flight) (Foster, 2005, 499). But, not only did blacks move to white places, they also left the rural sites and moved to urban areas, such as small towns and cities. Small towns can be perceived as transit towns between the rural areas and the urban areas, because they are more urbanised and have more opportunities. This research focuses on the small-town Alice, in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. Alice is known for its history, and the foundation of the University of Fort Hare. Because of the University of Fort Hare, there is a high number of students residing in Alice. However, as statistics show, most young people leave Alice after a while and move to different (bigger) cities. Young people do not see any opportunities in Alice to create a bright future. However, there might be some opportunities in Alice. Informal economies can play an important role to boost the economy of Alice and can open up a source of income which helps the poor urban households in Alice escape poverty. Next to this, the municipality and different organisations also try to improve Alice and try to provide a better livelihood for its residents.

6. Communication: Mobile Phone, Internet and Social Networking Sites

According to the latest statistics of 2011 (Statsa, 2011) only 60-80% of the households in Alice have a television at home. However, after speaking to people and visiting different houses, it seems that currently almost every household has a television at home. Informants mention that probably 95%-100% of the households have a television at home. Moreover, the number of the use of mobile phones is rising. Walking on the streets of Alice, doing groceries, visiting schools; many people were busy using their phone. According to the research of Rodney & Wakeham (2016), over 10 million millennials[20] in South Africa use a mobile phone, with three out of four having access to internet and social media via a mobile devise. Only the use of a computer or laptop is not really common yet, but also these numbers are rising, especially under students, according to the respondents.

As mentioned before in the methodology, three hundred completed surveys and additional qualitative data were used in the analysis to provide an answer on the sub-questions: "*How do the born frees use their mobile phone?*" and *"How do the born frees use (social) media?"*. This chapter gives an overview of the retrieved data and provides an answer on the first and second sub-question. Thus, this chapter provides a better understanding of the use of mobile phones and (social) media by the *born frees* in Alice.

6.1 Overview of the Born Frees in Alice

This thesis focuses on the *born frees*, in this case youth between 18-25 years old, currently residing in Alice. Three hundred *born frees* participated in the survey; 92 18-year olds, 65 19-year olds, 40 20-year olds, 41 21-year olds, 14 22-year olds, 17 23-year olds, 17 24-year olds and 14 25-year olds. 143 of these respondents were male and 157 were female. 127 respondents lived in Alice for longer than 76% of their lives, 24 respondents 51-75% of their lives, 32

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[20] Generation from 18 to early thirties.

respondents 26-50% of their lives, and 78 respondents 1-25% of their lives[21]. On the basis of this data, a cluster analyse is constructed, see table 2.

TABLE 2. CLUSTER ANALYSES BASED ON AGE, GENDER AND PERCENTAGE OF LIFE LIVING IN ALICE

	Age	Gender	Percentage of life living in Alice	Number of people
1	18-19	Female	76%-100%	35
2	18-19	Male	76%-100%	31
3	20-21	Male	76%-100%	28
4	18-19	Female	1%-25%	26
5	18-19	Female	26%-50%	19
6	20-21	Female	76%-100%	14
7	20-21	Female	1%-25%	12
8	18-19	Male	1%-25%	11
9	22-23	Male	1%-25%	10
10	18-19	Female	51%-75%	9
11	20-21	Male	1%-25%	9
12	18-19	Male	51%-75%	8
13	18-19	Male	26%-50%	7
14	22-23	Female	76%-100%	6
15	24-25	Female	76%-100%	6
16	24-25	Male	1%-25%	5
17	20-21	Male	51%-75%	4
18	24-25	Female	1%-25%	4
19	24-25	Male	76%-100%	4
20	20-21	Female	26%-50%	3
21	20-21	Female	51%-75%	3
22	22-23	Male	76%-100%	3
23	20-21	Male	26%-50%	1
24	22-23	Female	1%-25%	1
25	22-23	Male	26%-50%	1
26	24-25	Female	26%-50%	1
27	22-23	Female	26%-50%	0
28	22-23	Female	51%-75%	0
29	22-23	Male	51%-75%	0
30	24-25	Female	51%-75%	0
31	24-25	Male	51%-75%	0
32	24-25	Male	51%-75%	0

* Source: Author, 2020

This table shows that the biggest group I had access to during the fieldwork were females of 18-19 years old living for more than 76% of their lives in Alice. In total, there are 32 different combinations that can be made in this cluster analyses. The table shows that there are only six clusters with no respondents in it. This means that the group of respondents I had access to during the fieldwork was really diverse. As mentioned before, most respondents were between

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[21] No data for the other 39 respondents.

the age of 18-22 years old. However, these respondents do not all live in Alice for the same amount of time of their lives. Thus, this cluster analyses gives a structured overview to which groups I had access to during the fieldwork in Alice.

In addition to these main points, other basic information was retrieved from the respondents. One can namely mention that the most common language used by the respondents is isiXhosa; 282 of the respondents speak fluently isiXhosa. Besides this, 88 respondents mentioned that they also speak fluently English, others mentioned that they have enough knowledge of the English language to understand others and make themselves understandable. Only 12 respondents speak Afrikaans. These respondents went to a primary school with Afrikaans as the leading language. Furthermore, 284 respondents are students, which can explain the number of respondents speaking (fluently) English. The other 16 respondents are unemployed. Three out of four respondents live with their family, the other part is renting a house or room while they are studying at Lovedale TVET College or Fort Hare University.

As mentioned in previous chapter, the migration rate is high in South Africa. This is also visible in the results of the survey. For example, only 24 respondents said they have no family living outside Alice. However, looking at figure 5, answering the question *"How often do you visit other cities in South Africa?"*, it seems that the *born frees* are not travelling a lot, and thus they do not visit their family member regularly.


Choice	Total
Never	47
Once a year	192
Once a month	45
Once a week	6
Twice a week or more	10
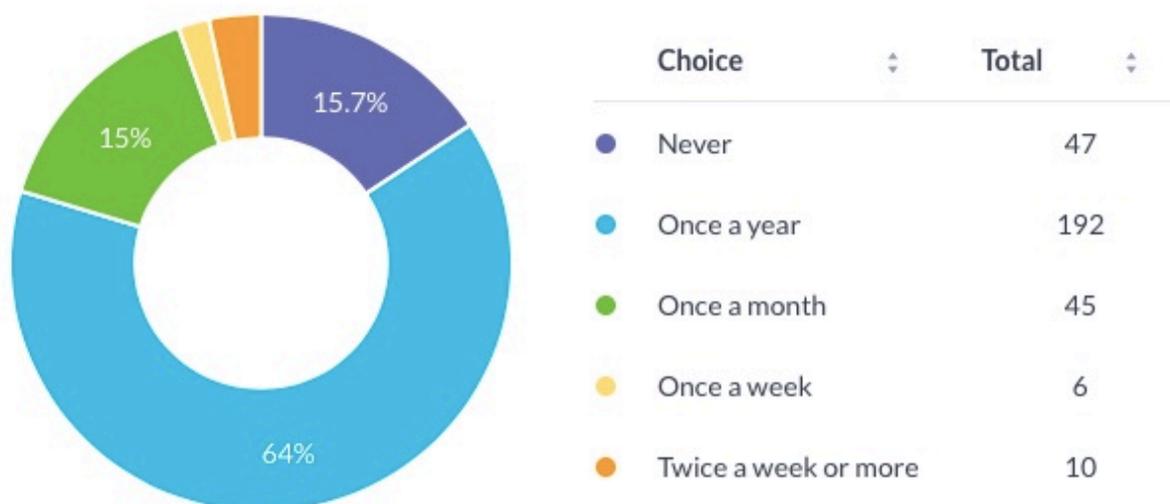
FIGURE 5. NUMBER OF VISITS TO OTHER CITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA (AUTHOR, 2020)

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the rapid global transmission of money, resources, and information make distance less important. Moreover, new technologies link people across the world, which blurs the line of the distinction between international, national, regional, and even the local. It is thus not necessary for the *born frees* to visit other cities, and for example visit their families, when having a mobile phone. I will explain this further in the next sections. However, 190 respondents said that they want to move to another city or town. Looking again at table 1, this number corresponds to the decrease in the number of *born frees* living in Alice. Some respondents even mentioned places they want to move to. Most of these places are bigger cities in South Africa, like Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria. But also, some closer cities like Durban, Port-Elizabeth or East-London were mentioned by the respondents. Results shows that social and economic reasons are the greatest motivations for moving and staying. The respondents want to live closer to their families, and/or they want to be independent, have a stable job, educate their children, etcetera. Interesting here is that the respondents feel like they will only have this economic opportunity in the cities in South Africa, and not outside South Africa. They do not feel the need to move out of the country and thus show a strong national identity.

6.2 The Use of Mobile Phones

In South Africa, there are over 10 million people between the age of 18 till 30 who are owning a mobile phone, with three out of four having access to internet and social media via mobile devices (Barenblatt, 2015). This research is in line with these number and shows that the *born frees* all have access to a mobile phone and are also active in using their mobile phone. All respondents started using a mobile phone during their teenage years, after they got it from a family member; mostly mother or father. Half of the respondents even uses more than one mobile phone or sim-card. They spent averagely 34R to 75R on airtime in a month. 72% of the respondents said that they borrow this money from family or friends. The difference between the lowest and highest number of Rands is quite big. This shows that some respondents use their mobile phone more actively than other respondents. As a result, the more active respondents use their phone, the more contacts they have on their contact list. Figure 6 shows how many contacts the respondents have on their contact list.
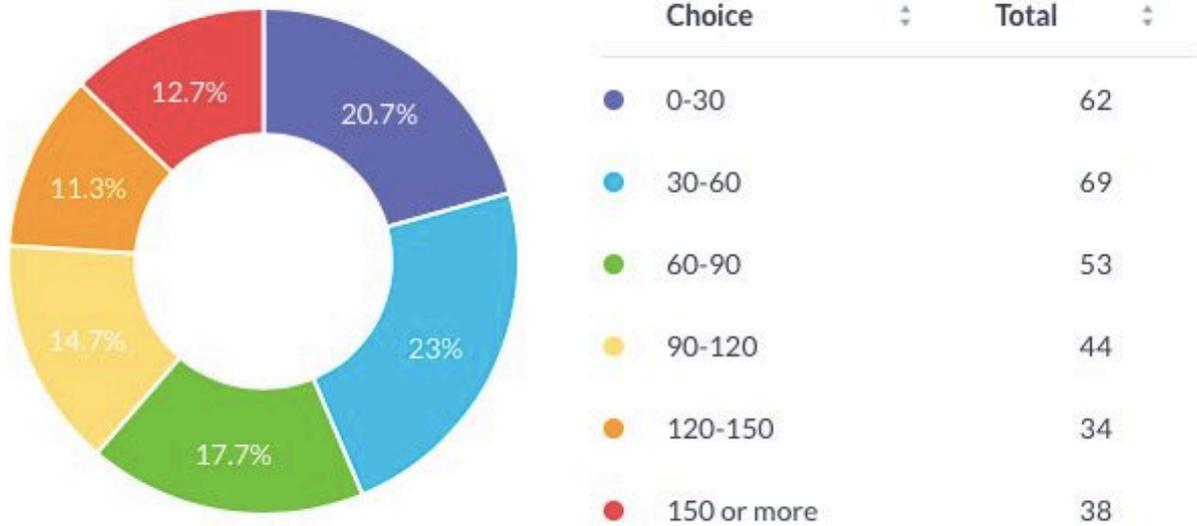
FIGURE 6. NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN PHONE CONTACTS (AUTHOR, 2020)

Looking at the numbers in figure 6, it shows that the amount of phone contacts is not that high since sharing your phone number with others is a result of boundaries and closeness. When an individual decides to deny someone access to their phone number, this establishes both the boundaries and the degree of closeness desired and expected within the relationship. Thus, figure 6 shows that the *born frees* living in Alice are more closed than open to others, looking at the number of their phone contacts. This is not a surprise, while different respondents mentioned that they do not have a lot of friends, because they do not trust others, except their family. Taking this a little bit further, table 3 give some more information about the background of the phone contacts. The numbers in the table relate to the number of respondents. For example, 62 respondents said that 0%-20% of their phone contacts live in/around Alice.

TABLE 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION PHONE CONTACTS

	0%-20%	*20%-40%*	*40%-60%*	*60%-80%*	*80%-100%*
Phone contacts living in/around Alice	62	107	65	51	15
White phone contacts	240	42	8	8	2

* Source: Author, 2020

Respondents indicated that they use their contacts living in/around Alice mostly for information and social contact. Only 13% of the respondents said that they use their contacts for economic

reasons. However, Porter et al. (2012) argued that there is a blurred line between social and economic contacts on the phone, because most work-related contact are family. This is in line with the observation made above, about trusting others. Especially when it is about work and money, individuals only trust their families. Moreover, they have more contact with their families, because the connection is stronger and more meaningful. Thus, this shows that the *born frees* not use their mobile phone as a strategic mean to create a society free from the confines of local geography and community, as Schoon & Stelitz (2014) argued in their research. At the same time the mobile has brought new opportunities, for example to connect with more people, it also brought new hazards and new forms of appropriation at diverse scales from the local to the global. Yet, some of the *born frees* do use their mobile phone to access livelihood assets, undertake diverse livelihoods strategies, and overcome their vulnerabilities. This is in line with what Sife, Kiondo & Lyimo-Macha (2010, 13) found in their research. Thus, there can be a positive link between communication, information and development. However, this depends on the *born frees* themselves.

According to the surveys, respondents do not have a clear preference for the use of calling or texting. More than half of the respondents make only calls of 5 minutes or less in a week, same for texting. The average time people spent on calling also differs. But approximately half of the respondents said that they spent 5 or more minutes on calling people. One of the observations made in the field is the phenomena of *buzzing*, where people call another person, letting the phone ring once or twice, and then disconnect. *Buzzing* is a phenomenon known in more African countries, it is also called *flashing* or *beeping.* However, this phenomenon can have a different meaning in different contexts. People *buzz, flash, or beep* others to say, 'call me back, I do not have airtime' (Slater & Kwami & Smith, 2006). On the other hand, for some people it just means that you want to let the other person know that you think about him/her. So, by *buzzing, flashing,* or *beeping*, different meaning can be derived. Sometimes the content of the message is less important than the contact itself. Duck & McMaham (2018, 263) add to this that *"connections with another person re-establishes the existence and importance of the relationship, confirming for both parties its existence and value in their lives."* Thus, *buzzing, flashing,* or *beeping* are easy ways to maintain relationships at a low cost. Anyway, in this study, *buzzing* someone means that you want the other person to call you back. And *buzzing* multiple times in a row increases the urgent need to call back.

There is no clear preference for the use of calling/texting or application. Where 122 respondents said they rather call or text people, using airtime, the other 178 respondents said that they rather use applications to stay in contact with other people. In the end, it does not matter what you use, having a mobile phone is the most important thing. Some respondents even said that they rather want to have a mobile phone than a car.

> *"Well, with a mobile phone you can communicate. It is easier to communicate with someone abroad. And yes… You do not need a car. We have public transport. You do not have to travel, just call."*
>
> (Sisa[22], March 2020)

Nevertheless, the urgent need of mobile phones can also create some dire situations. There are some stories about girls who sell themselves in ways of sex for mobile phones, or money to buy airtime and data. This is one of the most negative effects of the use of mobile phones, together with charging, theft, pornography, etcetera. But, in the end, the positive effects of mobile phones are bigger, because it can provide not only empowerment, but also financial support, social support and employment as mentioned above. Moreover, mobile phones give the opportunity to change the mobility landscape of the *born frees*. On the one hand, it enhances the physical mobility, because it becomes easier to go to other places. On the other hand, it enhances the virtual mobility, because the *born frees* feels more belonged to other places by using their phone. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, globalisation ensures this development of new perceptions of place in space. As a result, it seems that the local world does not cease to exist. The *born frees* are not fixed to a place, and at the same time places are changing meaning with growing communicative connectivity. Translocality from this point means that the local still matters, but that on the other hand, the locales are connected physically and communicatively to a higher degree. Thus, living in Alice does not necessarily mean that you only feel connected to Alice, the *born frees* also feel connected to other places. As one of the respondents said: *"By using a mobile phone, you know what is happening in other places. So you do not have to go there." (Lithemba, March 2020)*. Therefore, mobile phones play a significant role in the lives of the *born frees*.

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[22] In this thesis I used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of my respondents.

Moreover, as described in the theoretical framework, technology influences our moral unconsciously and consciously. Moreover, it influences our relation, shapes our institutions and moral values. This is also the case for the *born frees* living in Alice. Duck & McMahan (2018, 252) make the distinction between technological determinism, social construction of technology, and social shaping of technology, this research takes on the perspective of social shaping of technology. However, it seems that the perspective of technological determinism also make sense, but that not everyone is affected in the exact same manner. The *born frees* actively interpret and evaluate media in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons. Yet, they do not determine the development of technology and social structure and cultural value (social construction of technology). Concluding, the social shaping of technology seems the best perspective that fits in the case of the *born frees* in Alice, especially looking at the use of mobile phones. The *born frees* may ultimately determine what they do with their phone, but once they see the very possibilities of using applications, they exerted strong consumer influence on the development of mobile phones towards those abilities.

6.3 Internet and Social Networking Sites (SNS)

As indicated in the previous chapters, not only there is a rise in the use mobile phones, but also there is a rise in the use of internet and Social Networking Sites. In this research 280 respondents mentioned that they have access to the internet and Social Networking Sites on their mobile phone. The respondents spend an average of 39R to 82R on data per month to access the internet. Same as for the money spent on airtime, the difference between the highest and lowest number of spent Rands is quite big. This becomes also clear in the way the respondents use their data, because half of the respondents said that they only use their data when they need something. Furthermore, 75% of the respondents turn off their data most of the time, and only turn it on when they need something. Figure 7 shows for what kind reasons the respondents use the internet. It turns out that searching for information is the main reasons to go online and use data. Figure 8 shows the kind of information the respondents mostly search for or receive. The figure shows that educational information is the most important thing for the *born frees* to search for on the internet. Porter et al. (2012) argues that the youth considers a mobile phone as a way to create more life changes. Therefore, a phone can ensure a rise in economic status, and a rise of development by job search, trade networks, remittances, and most important e-learning, which is in line with the previous paragraphs.

Choice	Total
Searching for information	222
Economic reasons	30
Communicate with friends/family	142
Entertainment like series, movies and games	61
Other:	7
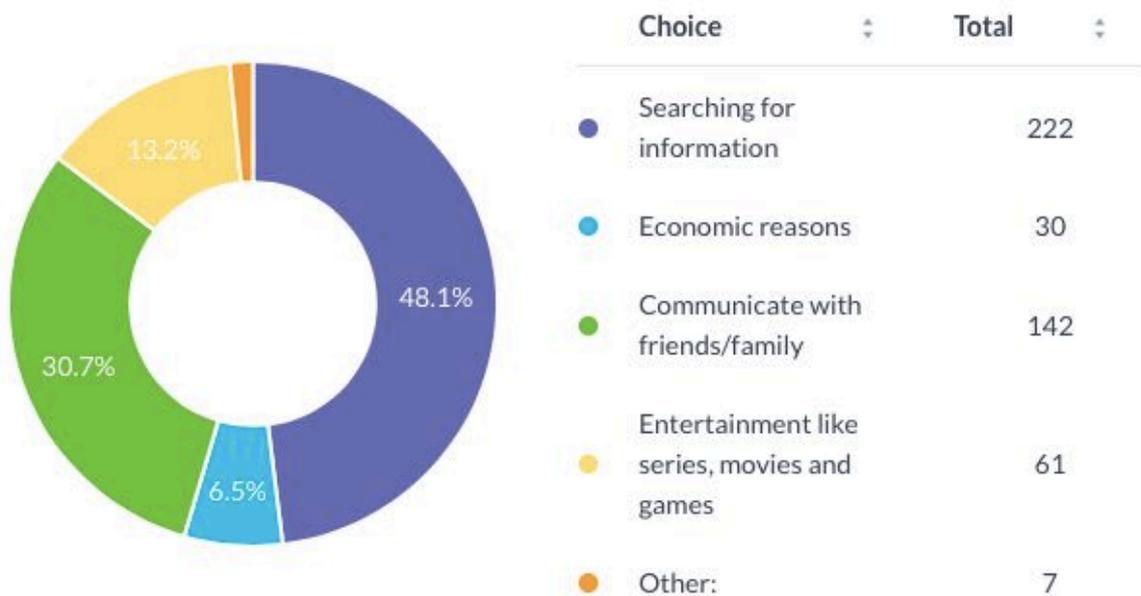
FIGURE 7. REASONS USING THE INTERNET (AUTHOR, 2020)

| Choice	Total
Educational	243
Jobs	55
Entertainment	71
Local news	56
International news	48
Other:	18
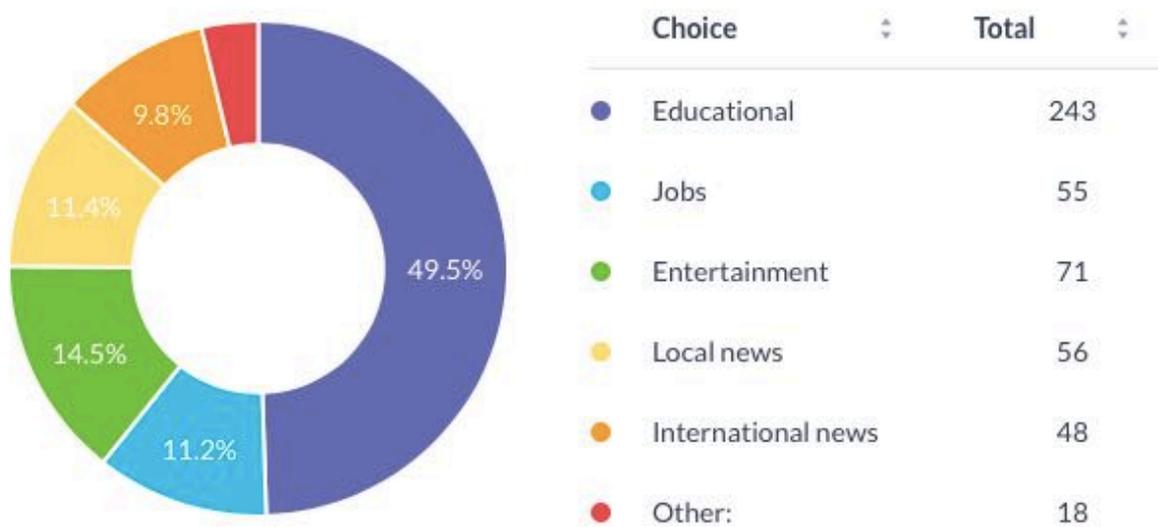
FIGURE 8. KIND OF INFORMATION LOOKING FOR ON THE INTERNET (AUTHOR, 2020)

6.3.1 Online Freedom

As mentioned in the theoretical framework social media gives the opportunity and freedom to act like a different person online. With the influence of globalisation, more people in different places imagine a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before. A simple way to see this is the name people use on the internet. According to the survey, 54% of the respondents use their real name online, 33% of the respondents use their real name combined with a nickname, and 13% uses only a nickname. Moreover, most of the respondents said that their online profile pages are accessible for everyone. But there are also respondents who said they use more than one Facebook profile; one public and one private. Doing this, they try to protect their privacy to the public, also called networked privacy. I will discuss Facebook in full extent in the next paragraph.

Nevertheless, online identities provide a way to act in a way you prefer. Language is one of the aspects which helps to create an online identity. While conversations on the internet are mostly dominated by the English language, the *born frees* also start using more English. Relating this to this research, the respondents also said that they usually use English on the internet instead of isiXhosa. But there is a wide range of sides and varieties, for example a newly mobile and aspiring language (isiXhosa mixed with English), more often used in the urban areas, which is far from the deep isiXhosa. As a result, people from the rural sites, who do not speak English, are more often excluded from these online spaces. This leads to inequality between the people who speak English and can participate in the online spaces, and the people who do not speak English and cannot participate in the online spaces.

For all the people who can access internet and social media; modern media can diffuse the cultures of countries not only within, but also beyond their borders (Anderson, 2006). For example, millions of Africans used to be cut off, by geography isolation or illiteracy, from urban, national, and international events and information. But right now, they can participate in a larger mediascape (Appadurai, 2001) through media and the internet (Kottak, 1990a; 2009). However, this mediascape is influenced by Western powers, and looks like a form of digital colonialism. Foreign powers are implanting infrastructure in the Global South for their own needs, to enable economic and culture domination while imposing privatised forms of governance (Coleman, 2018; Kwet, 2019).

Despite this digital colonialism, mobile phones and social media gives the *born frees* in Alice more freedom. First, the *born frees* use their mobile phone as a tool to avoid, but also create interactions. For example, when the *born frees* are in the mood to talk to someone they use their mobile phone to text, call or use Social Networking Sites, to look for interaction. But on the other side, if the *born frees* ae not in the mood to talk someone, they have the possibility the let calls go or even ignore texts. Secondly, the *born frees* have the freedom to search for everything they want on the internet and create their own online identity. In other words, it offers them control to regulate their social environment and manage their encounters. As Sisa says, *"I think I have more freedom, because I can access everything. You are able to express yourself. So, I do have freedom." (Sisa, March 2020)*. In other words, a mobile gives the *born frees* more freedom, which most *born frees* do not have at home, because of restrictions or a lack of resources.

Social Networking Sites are the spaces where traditional set-ups of age, gender and religion do not count (Ephraim, 2013) and therefore they provide a space for the *born frees* to express themselves. As described in the theoretical framework, Yang (2015) describes different ways how the *born frees* share their thoughts online. The first one is the authoritative voice, which they use to represent the young population. The other one is the critical voice, which they use to challenge the dominant views. Not all respondents agreed to these different voices. However, some respondents said that they indeed feel that they have a voice on the internet, and they can use it to challenge dominant views together with other young people.

> *"Yes, I feel like a have a voice. Especially Twitter, it helps to get the attention from the government. It is easy to be on Twitter, and the Hashtags are helping. For example, with the strike going on, the students use #UFHshutdown."*
>
> *(Lithemba, March 2020)*

Or, as Gift (March 2020) says: *"Yes, I think so. With Facebook it is easier to spread the word. Moreover, you can use your friends to spread the word."* An example of a successful online demonstration is the student-led protest movement of the removal of the statue of the British colonialist, Cecil John Rhodes. This campaign started on March 9th, 2015, and the statue was removed one month later.

As Bosch (2015, 1) explains:

> *"The campaign known as Rhodes Must Fall led to a wider student-led political movement which calls for widespread transformation of the university, including 'decolonizing' the curriculum, raising issues around the low number of senior black academic staff, and an awareness raising campaign around artworks on campus which are seen by the movement to promote institutional racism."*

Thus, the movement was in the end not about a statue, it became a general movement against institutionalized racism and demands for the Africanization of the university. To return to the subject, this movement took place both offline and online. In the end, the Social Networking Sites became the centre of the organization of the campaign. And the hashtag #RhodesMustFall (later #RMF), was used as a centering tool to bring together local and national contributors. To get back to this research, the students at the University of Fort Hare (UFH) also used the power of the internet in their movement against the policy of the University of Fort Hare. This movement was, same as the case of Rhodes, both executed offline and online. Online the students used the hashtag #UFHshutdown[23]. Another example of strength of the internet as a space for dissent voices is the subculture of *Black Twitter*. Black Twitter uses a special language associated with a marginalized and oppresses culture group in order to claim an online space (Baym, 2015, 77)[24]. According to the research of Brock (2012) and Florini (2014) many African Americans on Twitter use hashtags to make themselves visible and connect with each other. In sum, the social media discussions on, mostly Twitter, and the resultant emerging networked public of #RhodesMustFall, #UFHshutdown or #BlackTwitter set the agenda for the public debate in online spaces, as well as in mainstream media. Moreover, this Twitter discourse played a key role in the public perception of the movement. However, hashtags used on Twitter are nowadays also used on Facebook, and other Social Networking Sites such as Instagram, or LinkedIn. Thus, nowadays, Twitter is not the only Social Networking Site to make a hashtag trending and get the attention in the public debate and mainstream media.

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[23] See Appendix 3 and 4 for examples of Tweets and Facebook posts with #UFHshutdown.

[24] Silver (2000) argues that race is often routed around online, rather than brought to the frond. For example, when you are creating an online profile, sites ask for name, gender, but almost never for race. It might be the case that online sites assume that their customers are white.

Furthermore, Social Networking Sites can also provide a platform to share announcements for demonstrations as picture 2 shows. Same for the protests at Rhodes University and Fort Hare University, the challenging voices online also continues in the daily lives, by protests and demonstrations. Social Networking Sites give action groups the possibility to get attention and share information for demonstrations or other gatherings.

PICTURE 2. A FLYER DISTRIBUTED IN ALICE AND ON FACEBOOK (ALICE ACTION GROUP, 2020)

Thus, as Mattes (2011) argues, theories of socialization would provide us with strong reasons to suspect that this new generation, with vastly different economic and political experiences and opportunities than their elders, and taught under a new school curriculum, may provide more fertile soil in which a strong democratic culture may take root and help consolidate South Africa's fledgling democracy.

6.3.2 "I use Facebook, so I exist"

Facebook is the most used Social Network Site in the world, followed by WhatsApp. This is also the case in this research. Not only Facebook is popular because of the application itself, citizens of South Africa have also access to Facebook Free Basic and do not need any data to use this application. Besides Facebook, WhatsApp is also really popular, because it is cheaper than using SMS. Other Social Networking Sites are not that popular in and around Alice yet, only 18% of the respondents uses Instagram followed by 10% Twitter and 8% Snapchat. Respondents said that they use Facebook mainly to get information (173), followed up by social contact (142) and, finally economic reasons (35). Again, information is the main purpose for the *born frees* to use Facebook, same as the use of internet. This relates to the research of Shaya & Chinyamurindi (2018) which argues that youth spend a significant time interacting on Facebook for the purpose of gaining knowledge to enhance their understanding of life and academic aspects.

In this research, only two respondents do not use Facebook. All the others use Facebook, some in an active way, others more passive, which is visible in the following number of Facebook friends, where 12% of the respondents has 0-100 friends on Facebook, 17% 100-300, 10% 300-500, 9% 500-700, 11% 700-900 and 41% 900 or more. Thus, almost half of the respondents have more than 900 friends on Facebook. The high number of Facebook-friends might be a strategy to look more popular. As a result, respondents are adding strangers on Facebook to increase their number of Facebook friends. On the other hand, they also add strangers to get to know more people. Observations on Facebook let to the conclusion that the *born frees* on Facebook are always looking for identification. After the *born frees* add a stranger on Facebook, they sent a message in which they introduce themselves and ask the other person to do the same[25]. In short, the *born frees* add strangers on Facebook to meet new people and enhance their network. This is in contrast with another study from Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield (2006) in the United States of America. The research of Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield (2006) suggests that Facebook users engage in searching for people with whom they already have an offline connection, more than they search for complete strangers to meet. Following this research, the communication on Facebook with strangers is rare. Facebook is in this case more often used to communicate with close friends and casual acquaintances rather than to communicate with

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[25] See Appendix 5.

strangers. However, in this research, the high number of Facebook friends does not mean that they have met in real life (before). As table 4 shows, most of the respondents said that they do not have met a most of their Facebook-friends in real-life.

TABLE 4. MATRIX FACEBOOK-FRIENDS

		Percentage of Facebook-friends met in Real Life					
		0%-20%	20%-40%	40%-60%	60%-80%	80%-100%	
Percentage of Facebook-friends living in/around Alice	0%-20%	11	12	8	5	1	= 37
	20%-40%	13	47	23	10	5	= 98
	40%-60%	3	17	29	23	5	= 69
	60%-80%	2	15	24	20	3	= 64
	80%-100%	0	4	6	10	10	= 30
		= 29	= 95	= 90	= 62	= 22	298

* Source: Author, 2020

For example, 95 respondents said that they have only met 20%-40% of their Facebook-friends in real life. Out of these 95 respondents, 47 respondents said that 20%-40% of their Facebook-friends lives in Alice. This table shows, looking at the colours, that when a respondent has met half of their Facebook-friends in real life, also half of its Facebook-friends are from Alice (for the most of them). On the other hand, there are no respondents who have met 0%-20% of their Facebook-friends in real life and have 80%-100% Facebook-friends from Alice. Appendix 7 shows five different tables in which this table is divided based on the percentage of years of a respondent's life living in Alice. These tables confirm that there is no difference between the duration of someone's life living in Alice related to Facebook-friends met in real life, and Facebook-friends living in/around Alice.

Nevertheless, the number of Facebook-friends not met in real life relates to the answers of the respondents on the question about the hometown of their Facebook-friends. 138 respondents said to have contact with people from other parts in the Eastern cape. 76 respondents said that they also have contact with people living in the bigger cities of South Africa, and 44 respondents even said they have contact with people outside South Africa. Therefore, Facebook-friends show potential relationships that are structurally enable, but not have been activated, also called a latent tie. Facebook has in this way a social status, which enable media connections and new human connectedness. Anyhow, the *born frees* in Alice do not have many white Facebook

friends. 201 respondents said that between 0% to 20% of their Facebook friends are white and only 11 respondents said that their Facebook friends consists more than 50% of white people. However, this connectivity is always the result of the steering effect of Facebook, so Facebook determines what you see and do not see (engineering connections). When you are in a *black environment* of Facebook, it will be difficult to reach white people. In this way, the human connections are not a human thing, but a technological thing.

As mentioned before, there are some respondents who use more than one Facebook profile, one public and one private. They create two accounts, to protect their privacy to the public, called networked privacy. The public account has more friends than the private account, and the shared posts are less personal. However, one should keep in mind that social media are inherently private, but public and private spheres are overlapping and interlinked in the online world, dominated by the cultural and economic elite (Bosch, 2013). Nevertheless, the *born frees* make their own choice in choosing their friends on Facebook. On the other hand, Facebook provides the option to block people from seeing their posts or stories. Blocking is also a personal choice and have different reasons for the *born frees*. For example, they do not want an old friend to see their pictures with new friends. Or they do not want their family to see pictures of themselves drinking etcetera. In the end, all messages, comments, activities, and photographs on Social Networking Sites can be used in this construction of identities (Appel, Gerlach & Crushius, 2016; Duck & McMahan, 2018, 267).

Another illusion of Facebook is the idea that everything is true. However, Facebook does not make a difference between real and fake news, also the risk of *sensationalism*. Moreover, most people only react to the articles through clickbait headlines, instead of reading the whole article, which makes it also difficult to detect fake news. This is particularly jarring given the way that Facebook Free Basics uses lots of advertisements. This misleads users of Facebook Free Basic and makes them think that these sites and services are the essential tools (Solon, 2017). Moreover, Facebook creates *filter bubbles* and *echo chambers,* this leads to users only identifying with similar ideas. Also called the problem of the *diversity of viewpoints* and the polarization of the political climate. Once entering your own world, constructed from the familiar, there will be nothing more to learn. Thus, it is difficult for the *born frees* to learn more on Facebook and find more information if there are already in their own filter bubble. Facebook observations show that most of the *born frees* look for pages about jokes, love, and sexual relations, and it will be therefore difficult to leave this filter bubble and get access to information

that will help them forward in their lives. In the end, Facebook, and other big technological companies, will always control how the connectivity structure is built and to what applications and services the *born frees* have access to.

Taking all this into account, Facebook is one of the most important Social Network Sites used by the *born frees* in Alice. Using Facebook gives them the feeling that they have a voice, and they can create their own (online) identity. As Duck & McMahan (2018, 267) argue *"beyond photographs, all comments and activities on Social Networking Sites can be used in the construction of identities and may be given a great deal of attention."* Therefore, it is not a surprise that the *born frees* believe that they are better able to convey their identities online than offline (Appel et al., 2016). The next chapter will explain more about these identities and relate this to the local landscape.

Summary Chapter 6

According to the research of Rodney & Wakeham (2016), over 10 million millennials (18-30) in South Africa use a mobile phone, with three out of four having access to internet and social media via mobile devise. Although airtime and data are both quite expensive in South Africa, the born frees feel like they need a mobile phone. However, looking at the phone contacts of the born frees in Alice, it seems that the born frees are more closed than open to others, while they not share their phone number with a lot of people. This is not a surprise, different respondents mentioned that they do not have a lot of friends, because they do not trust others, except their family. Thus, despite the born frees live in a world in which nations and people are increasingly interlinked, this does not mean that they actually form new meaningful relationships. Therefore, they are still dependent on their families.

Nevertheless, the use of internet and Social Networking Sites is popular among the born frees in Alice. It turns out that searching for information, especially educational information, is the main reason to go online and use data. Porter et al. (2012) argued that the youth considers a mobile phone as a way to create more life changes. Therefore, a mobile phone can ensure a rise in economic status, and a rise of development by job search, trade networks, remittances, and most important e-learning. Moreover, the mobile phone gives the born frees more freedom, which most youth do not have at home, because of restrictions or a lack of resources. Thus, it gives space for young people to express themselves and challenge the dominant views. Moreover, mobile phones give the opportunity to change the mobility landscape of the born frees. On the one hand, it enhances the physical mobility, because it becomes easier to go to other places. On the other hand, it enhances the virtual mobility, because the born frees feels more belonged to other places by using their mobile phone.

Facebook is the most used Social Networking Site among the born frees in Alice. Again, information is the main purpose for the respondents to use Facebook, same as the use of internet. According to Shaya & Chinyamurindi (2018) youth spend a significant time interacting on Facebook for the purpose of gaining knowledge to enhance their understanding of life and academic aspects. Next to the search for information, social contact is an important reason to use Facebook. This social contact goes further than real life friends, or acquaintances, it even includes strangers on the internet. Thus, the high number of Facebook friends does not mean that the user has met all these friends in real life before. Therefore, Facebook-friends show potential relationships that are structurally enable, but not have been activated, also called a latent tie. Facebook has in this way a social status, which enables media connections and new human connectedness.

7. Identity and the Local Landscape

As described in the chapter before, media calls into question the authenticity of identities, relationships and practices of the *born frees* in Alice. These disruptions are the result of a movement form modern to postmodern times, in which time and space are compressed, people are more mobile, identities are multiple, communication is person-to-person rather than place-to-place, and communication media are ubiquitous. However, within these cultural changes, media can become a certain routine as they are increasingly embedded in everyday life. These thoughts, as elaborated in the prior paragraph, lead to the following sub-questions in this thesis: *"How do the born frees shape their identity?"* and *"How do the born frees value their local landscape?"*.

Eight respondents of the survey found the time for a small interview. These eight respondents include males and females living in Alice since birth, but also students who live there for a shorter time. Besides, the sample includes unemployed youth, High School students, and University students. The eight interviews and additional qualitative data were used in the analysis to provide an answer to the sub-questions, which are presented in this chapter.

7.1 Identity

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, a person's social identity is shaped by interaction and is always changing. It is made up of a combination of factors, and individuals are able to influence which part of themselves they present to the world (SAHO, 2011). Especially social identity refers to the aspects of our selves that define us as group members. Some of these aspects are involuntary, such as ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, nationalities, etcetera. Other aspects are more voluntary like the relation with education, religion or other socio-cultural aspects. However, these voluntary aspects are mostly influenced by the Western overpowering, also cultural imperialism. Western products can be found everywhere in the global media flows these days, which transforms identities and relationships locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. The *born frees* in Alice listen to American music, go to KFC, watch American series and movies, etcetera. As a consequence, culture is a changing concept and people constantly make and remake culture as they assign their own meanings to the products, images,

and information they get from outside (indigenization). Indigenization occurs in cultural domains such as fast food, music movies, social media, housing styles, science, terrorism, celebrations, religion, and political ideas and institutions (Fiske, 2011; Wilk, 2006; Wilk and Barbosa, 2012). As a result, also for the *born frees* in Alice sports, movies, TV shows, video games, amusement parks, and fast-food restaurants have become part of their local landscape. This relates to cultural imperialism which refers to the spread or advance of one culture at the expense of others, or its imposition on other cultures, which it modifies, replaces, or destroys – usually because of differential economic or political influence (Kottak, 2015, 305). However, the *born frees* do not experience this cultural imperialism as a negative thing. They feel that the adaption to Western cultures might give them more economical opportunities and give them a place on the world stage, because they can participate in a bigger mediascape.

All things mentioned above shape the identity of the *born frees*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, they can shape their online identity and chose on every platform which identity fits best (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2018, 2). This can start with the use of a nickname online. Furthermore, individuals can change their personal information online. Facebook observations showed that some respondents change their hometown or current city they live. They prefer to show their audience that they live in bigger cities, like East-London or Port Elizabeth, instead of using Alice. This shows that they do not want to let their audience think that they are from Alice, or that they currently live there, and shows a low sense of belonging to Alice. Another way of presenting identity online is the use of pictures. Respondents said that the 'best pictures' they share online are *selfies* or pictures of themselves. Observing these different pictures, most pictures are taken in Alice. Respondents also indicate that they mainly post pictures taken in Alice (219). Other pictures are taken in the rural sites in South Africa (72), or in bigger cities in South Africa (63). Observation of Facebook profile pictures and Facebook posts with pictures, showed that there are almost no pictures of the landscape itself. All the pictures that are shared online include people in the pictures, mostly pictures of the *born frees* themselves. These pictures are mostly 'normal' pictures. For example, in most pictures, girls do not wear lots of make-up and guys do not wear suits. However, what stands out, is that people share lots of pictures and change their profile pictures multiple times. Moreover, some people share the same pictures over and over again. This indicates that they are proud of the picture, and like other people to see it multiple times. On the other hand, it can also indicate that they want more likes or reactions of other people. Anyway, Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert (2009) argue that the majority of users indicate that their pictures help them express who they are to other users.

The eventual online identity is the result of *impression management*, where individuals habitually monitor how people respond to them when presenting themselves (Goffman, 1978, 123).

During these years, the respondents are entering the adolescence. This is a period of self-discovering and awareness, where they battle with decisions and create an identity for themselves (Ephraim, 2013, 277). As King (2009, 36) argues *"adolescents manipulate their online personification to fit the stereotypes around them and they are changing profiles to match what they want to be."* They can even use the new media to create an identity to gain more popularity. Furthermore, the ICT services make the lives of the respondents easier, especially with efficient and innovative applications (Rodney & Wakeham, 2016, 24). Most of the respondents use Social Networking Sites for a few years and have a positive awareness and knowledge level towards it. Not only in the way they shape their identities, but also how they understand relationships and their actions within relationships based on media representation. *Born frees* have the ability to compare media depictions of relationships with relationships observed or enacted in their physical lives. But media representations of relationships may create an unrealistic image of how relationships should look.

However, in the end, online relationships rather build bonding than bridging capital and expands networking activity as previous mentioned in the theoretical framework. Yet, as the respondents say, in real life they do not have many friendships. It seems that trust and fear are the main reasons in avoiding strong relationships. The respondents said that they know many people, but these are not indicated as real friends. Especially the unemployed respondents said that they do not have many friends. In the first place, there is no need for them to leave their houses, moreover they do not have any school friends left. On the other hand, the students living on campus said that they have a few friends, these are mostly classmates, however these friendships will probably fade out after a few years. This might be one of the reasons why 190 respondents said that they want to move to another city of town, especially the bigger cities. It seems that the *born frees* living in Alice feel more attracted to bigger cities, and that living in Alice does not necessarily mean a lot to them. I will further explain these in the following paragraphs.

7.2 The Local Landscape

Mobile phones blur the lines between lives and livelihoods (Donner, 2009, 91). However, this does not mean that people do not belong to their local livelihood anymore. They do belong to their local norms and structures, and mobile phones may even create a stronger communal network that bind them to the local and facilitate a kind of *stuckness*. On the other hand, social media gives local people the chance to think into a web of connections that can provide information, contact, entertainment, and potential social validation, which is not available in their local network. According to John Fiske (2011) any individual's use of popular culture is a personal creative act and the personal meanings are most pleasurable when they relate to the individual's everyday life. This makes the local landscape of Alice an important concept in the study about the *born frees.*

Taking this into account, multiple questions arise. When media can connect you to more places and more people, what is your home? Moreover, more knowledge changes your attitude towards the local landscape. Do the *born frees* still feel that they belong to their local landscape? But also, what does it even mean to live in an isolated area with minimal possibilities? Is the municipality improving enough, do they create enough possibilities? Furthermore, what does the Post-Apartheid era mean for the local landscape? Statistics shows that cities are changing, but what is the meaning of the rise (or decline) of those activities/phenomena?

7.2.1 Post-Apartheid or Neo-Apartheid?

"A better life for all" was the name of the manifesto with which the ANC won the first free elections in 1994, however, Mandela warned for euphoria during the campaign. People should not think that they could drive around in a Mercedes the day after the elections and life would not change dramatically, according to Mandela. He said: *"You become a citizen in your own country, but you have to be patient."* (Meredith, 2010).

However, according to the respondents, after thirty years the local landscape of Alice did not change that much. It seems that the race relations between black and white still play a role as the black people in Alice form the majority these days, with almost no white people living in- and around Alice. The disappearing of white people in the area decades ago also led to a decline in development.

"First the infrastructure was dominated by white people, now it is dominated by black people. You can see that it changes into the wrong direction. Right now, there is a lack of infrastructure and a lack of employment. There is a lot of unemployment here in Alice right now."

(Gift, March 2020)

Furthermore, respondents argue that they do not feel like they are more connected to white people these days. The rise of communication means, and the rise in the use of Social Networking Sites creates global communities and brings people together. However, this is not the case for more proximity of black and white people in South Africa. Although, some of the *born frees* have a few online connections with white people, it does not necessarily make them feel closer to them. However, they all describe them as *open* and *friendly*. But, as Sisa says, black people approach white people still in a certain racist way.

"For me, as much as they privileged, I feel like indirectly, we try to oppress them. If I say, and then I say, black only. Not racist, but if a white person come up with something only of whites it is racist. We do not give them the freedom."

(Sisa, March 2020)

In the citation above, Sisa explains that white people do not only oppress black people, but black people also have a negative attitude to white people in a certain way. When white people invent something new, or when they have more privileges, black people will always see this as the result of Apartheid. Globalisation exacerbates these uncertainties and produces new incentives for cultural purification and mixing.

On the other hand, same as for white people, black people are also described as *open* and *friendly* by the respondents. But they are, according to the respondents, more carrying people, with more humanity. As Lithemba says: *"We have our things, but we look out for each other; we do fight for things until we get." (Lithemba, March 2020)*. This humanity might also be an aspect of the local isiXhosa culture. Moreover, the culture keeps the connection with the local landscape, even as with the history. It seems that, especially the history of Fort Hare plays an important role in this local landscape of Alice. The black empowerment in Fort Hare might be start of a more connected feeling of the local residents. Moreover, Fort Hare is described, by

every respondent, as the best place of Alice. However, as the previous chapter shows there is a lot of dissatisfaction under the students nowadays. Students of the University of Fort Hare usually strike twice a year, in September and in February. However, this year, February 2020, the strikes were more violent and resulted in the closing of the University for a short period of time.

PICTURE 3. STRIKE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE (FACEBOOK, 2020)

As the picture 3 shows, and the Tweets and Facebook posts in Appendix 3 and 4, the strike in February 2020 was about the exclusion of students from the University. The University of Fort Hare made a change in the registration fee, which resulted in the exclusion of some students who could not afford to pay the registration fee. As one of the Tweets says: *"Black Child, you are on your own. Our only sin is to seek Free basic education which was promised to us by the government."* Thus, even after the years of Apartheid, the *born frees* still feel left behind, and it might be better to talk about neo-Apartheid instead of Post-Apartheid.

7.2.2 Mapping the Local Landscape

During the interview, the respondents made their own map of Alice. When they finished the map, they coloured the areas which they often go green and the areas they never go red/pink. These maps identify spatial-social patterns and provides an understanding of the respondent's perspective on social behaviour, movement patterns, and spatial relationships. In the figures below you see the mapping of Palesa (Figure 9), Gift (Figure 10) and Nikki (Figure 11). Palesa is female of 18-19 years, lives in Alice for 76-100% of her live and is a learner in high school. Gift is a male of 22-23 years old, lives in Alice for 1-25% of his live and studies at the University of Fort Hare. Nikki is a female of 24-25 years old, lives in Alice for 76-100% of her live and is unemployed. Choosing these three respondents, a comparison can be made between their views on Alice, all from a different perspective (based on age, percentage of life living in Alice, and occupation).


FIGURE 9. MAPPING PALESA (PALESA, 2020)
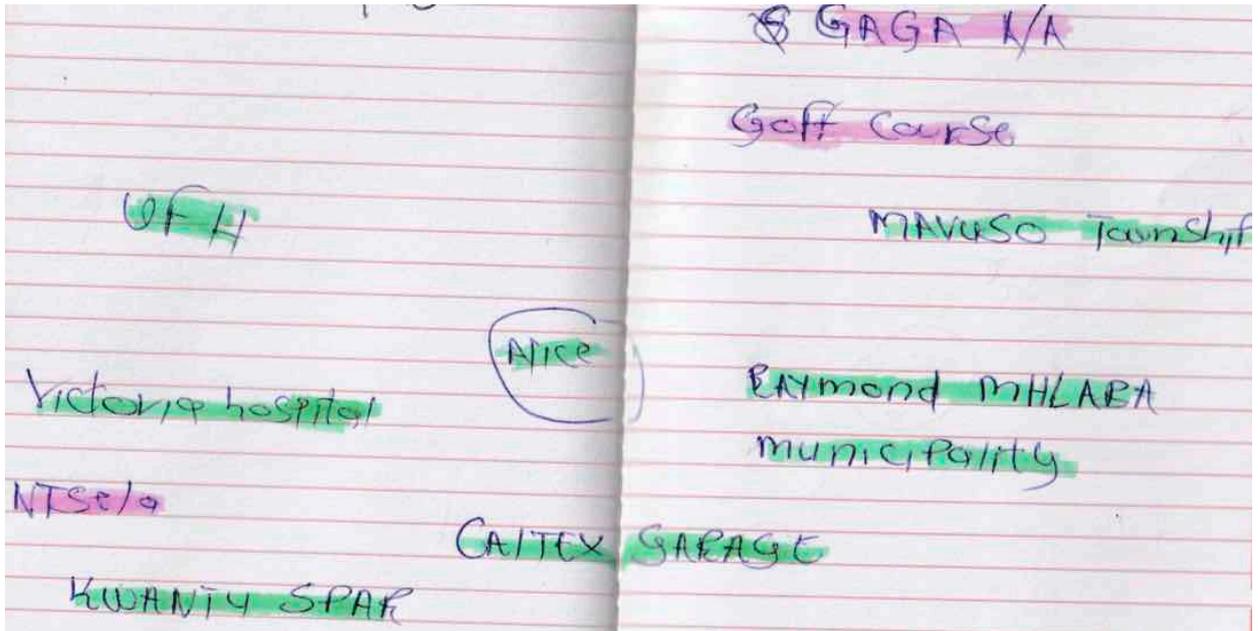
FIGURE 10. MAPPING GIFT (GIFT, 2020)
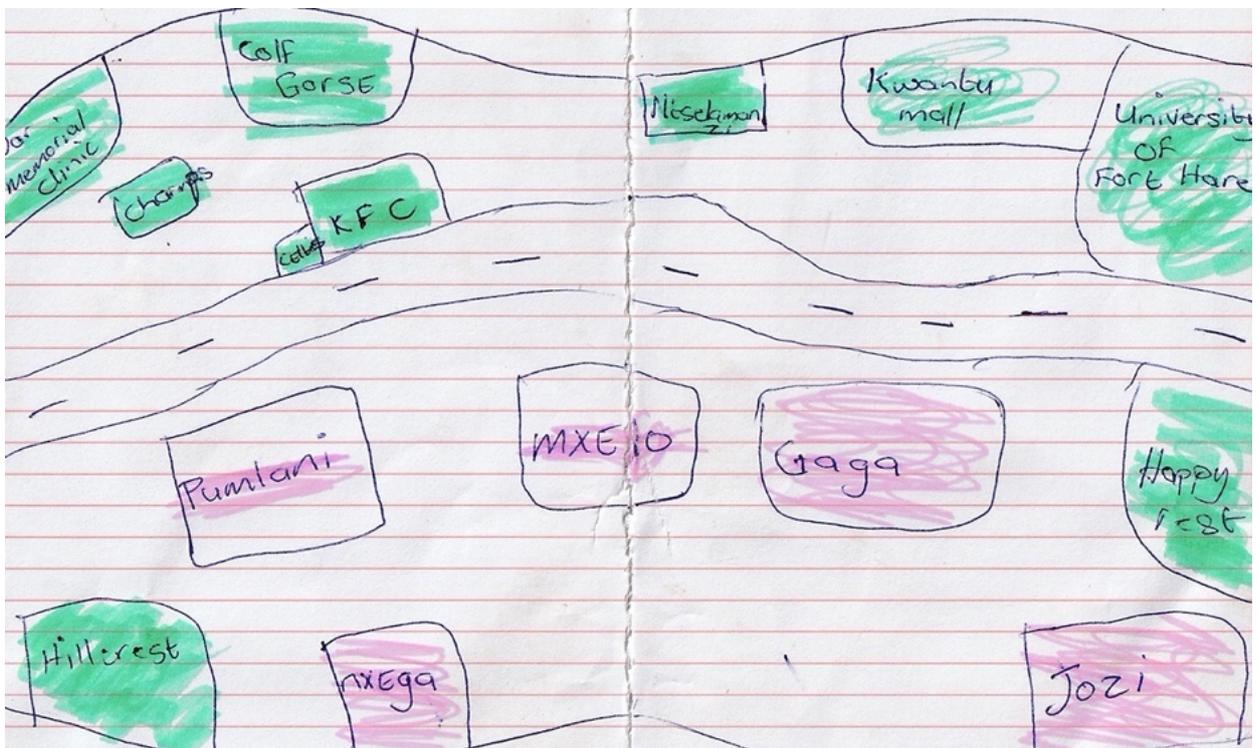
FIGURE 11. MAPPING NIKKI (NIKKI, 2020)

As all three figures shows, the respondents mostly make a distinction between different townships, schools, and shops. What all these three maps also have in common, that the centre of Alice (figure 2) is described as a safe place where they often go. Anyway, the centre of Alice is also most Westernized and developed. So, the question is here, does development and Westernization automatically go with safety? This seems to be the case in Alice, because the respondents also indicate that (specific) townships are not safe. They explained this by the high rate of unemployment which results desperation and finally in criminal behaviour.

> *"So, you have the townships. You should not go there. There is a high crime rate. There are lots of robbing's and killings. I have a few friends who are robbed there. The places which I marked green are safe places, and also public spaces. I feel safer in public spaces."*
>
> *(Gift, March 2020)*

This criminal behaviour shows a lack of social cohesion between the residents of Alice, because they are scared to meet new people and go to different places in Alice. They rather stay in the place they live which they indicate as safe. Moreover, mobility in and around Alice is based on the use of cars, mostly taxi's, because the unsafe feeling of the respondents to go by feet. However, despite the dangerous places in Alice, all respondents said that they feel at home in Alice. On the other hand, most students who live at campus said that they do not feel belonged to Alice. One of the reasons, might be the social cohesion of the residents of Alice.

> *"Alice is a small town. In Alice, almost everyone knows each other. So, as an outsider, people will recognize you. There is not much to do in Alice, what attracts students, even not for the small children. Personally, I don't feel like an outsider, because I know my friends. Moreover, the language plays an important role. In this area, people speak a special dialect, so you can easily recognize where people are coming from through the way they talk."*
>
> *(Lithemba, March 2020)*

This quotation shows that belonging always create *othering*. However, even when you are an outsider *(the other)*, you can feel belonged to this place. It is not only about how the residents consider belonging, but also how they introduce people to their town. It seems that the residents

of Alice are welcoming to new people, like students. However, these students will never say that they are from Alice, they rather name their city of birth. The respondents who are in High School, or unemployed, said that they are from Alice, even when they are in other provinces. Only when someone asks them outside South Africa, they would say that they are from the Eastern Cape. This shows that the respondents born in Alice have a deeper sense of belonging to the small town.

7.2.3 Belonging to Alice

The residents of Alice should live together, it is a small town and there is less room for escape from others. This makes it an interesting research site in the analysis of spatiality and identity. As described before, Alice is a small town in the Eastern Cape, with its own suburbs and townships. However, as the results show, not everyone in Alice has the same idea about the centre, the suburbs and the township and they all form their own view about this area. For example, they do not visit other suburbs or townships, except for Alice Town. It is therefore not surprising that they consider other places of Alice to be dangerous, because of the *othering* within the society. Except for Hogsback, a small village on top of the mountain, which is perceived as beautiful. Although, not all the respondents have been there, because they do not have the transport or money to go there. On the other hand, the white people who live in Hogsback do not feel belonged to Alice at all. They describe Alice as a dangerous place, and they never go there, unless they need something specific from that side. However, the black people from Hogsback do go to Alice, sometimes even multiple times a week, and feel more belonged to that side.

When the *born frees* in Alice are describing Alice, the views differ from each other. Some respondents said that Alice is a *nice place*, and that you can do a lot of things in town. However, when the respondents mentioned Alice as a nice place, they did not sound really enthusiastic. Other respondents said, mostly the students, that Alice is a small town which is not developed and provides no opportunities besides school. Especially roads and health care are issues in town according to them. Moreover, crime is a subject which is mentioned by all of the respondents.

"Well, for me I would say it is small town. It is up to the person how they use their resources to destruct themselves or to build on sometimes. We do have a rate of people who drop out of school and do drugs, on the other hand there are people who are reaching their goals."

(Sisa, March 2020)

Another thing all the respondents agreed on is the view of Alice as a rural area. This might be the reason why they also want to move out of Alice, to an urban area, because they think there will be more economic opportunities in bigger cities. Because the respondents think that there are no opportunities in Alice, the time they live in Alice can be perceived as a transit period. They have the opportunity to finish College or University in Alice, and after that they have the ability to go to other places and build up a life. From this perspective, Alice is more a steppingstone for the *born frees* and provides the transition from rural to urban. Nevertheless, to get back to the point, the respondents perceive Alice as a rural area, and they see only the centre of Alice and the University of Fort Hare as more urban. The rural sites of Alice, according to the respondents, carry negative effects, such as crime and drugs. Moreover, the government does not pay any attention to these rural sites. The respondents said that the bad roads annoy them the most. Moreover, according to the respondents who are studying, they said that there is not enough accommodation in Alice (centre and suburbs). But, on the other hand, the unemployed respondents said that there is enough. Either way, what all the respondents agree on is that the centre of Alice with the University of Fort Hare is the only improved area. This creates anger under the *born frees*, especially under the respondents from Hillcrest.

"Especially in Hillcrest right now, it has been neglected for so many years. I do not know why, maybe because it is a small place. But look at the community hall, it is nothing. Comparing it to Golf Course, this is a new improved area. We are a bit angry about that. The government started to build Golf Course, while Hillcrest was not even improved. And Hillcrest is one of the first places in Alice, the government should have improved this area first before start building new places."

(Nikki, March 2020)

Fortunately for the residents of Alice, there are some organisations which are trying to improve Alice. During the fieldwork in Alice, organisations like *The African Footprints of Hope*, *Born2Shine*, and *World Vision* presented their work in Alice. For example, picture 5 shows the

work of *The African Footprints of Hope* in Hillcrest. This organisation organizes twice a week a clean-up in Hillcrest with (young) volunteers from Hillcrest, most of them unemployed. As a result, the area of Hillcrest looks clean and the volunteers get the opportunity to do something good for their suburb. Residents of Alice are not always aware of these different organisations and their work. However, they all appreciate the work they do, while the government is holding back.

PICTURE 4. CLEAN-UP AFRICAN FOOTPRINTS OF HOPE IN HILLCREST (AUTHOR, 2020)

In short, Alice can be described as a small town with lack of development. Relating this to the framework in figure 3, modernism causes thin layered regional identity stories in the future. However, this is already the case for the residents of Alice. They do not necessarily have a strong connection to the local landscape of Alice, but more to the area and especially bigger cities in this area. They almost always take Fort Beaufort and King Williams Town into account, but also East-London is a place which they often visit and feel belonged to. However, on the other hand, Alice has its own history, which connect the people of Alice. History in this

perspective is thus the traditional aspect which connections people more and causes a thick local resistance identity. In sum, it is difficult to say if the identity of the *born frees* is more land-based, or more spatially based. Yet, as the previous chapters described, globalisation has the power to change the focus of the local landscape into a regional, national, or even international focus. The connection with the local landscape will probably fade out after a while, especially with the help of internet and (social) media.

7.2.4 Future Perspectives of Belonging to Alice

"I want to be happy in the first place. I am a goal driven person; I want to do my honours and masters. And I want to move to a different place with more opportunities."

(Sisa, 2020)

As mentioned before, globalisation increases the social, economic, physical mobility of the population. This creates the development of new perceptions of place and space; which results in the democratic reclaiming of urban environments and Post-Apartheid *politics of aspiration*, which drives to self-stylization and identity formation, for especially (black) youth (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009, 363-364). The *born frees* want to be their own bosses, be independent, educate their children, etcetera. They all want to do this in South Africa and think that once moving to the bigger cities they can achieve this. In Alice there are only a few opportunities, and especially the *born frees* think that it will be difficult to build a stable life in Alice. It almost speaks for itself that young people leave Alice and find another place to start a new life. This shows that the culture of domestic migration from small towns to bigger cities is quite strong.

Nevertheless, growing up in a small town like Alice, does not mean that the *born frees* do not have any aspirations in life. High Schools and other organisation pay a lot of attention to the future of the *born frees* in Alice, like the Career Day organised by the organisation Born2Shine at Enkwenkwezini High School, see picture 4.

PICTURE 5. CAREER DAY AT ENKWENKWEZINI HIGH SCHOOL (AUTHOR, 2020)

Conversations with the *born frees* showed that many of them do not know what kind of opportunities there are in life. Most of them said that they want to have a bright future, but they do not even know how to get there. Moreover, they do not even have a structured plan to make this happen. Career days, like the one organized by the organisation Born2Shine make high school learners aware of the opportunities they have and how to get there. However, some of the *born frees* are stuck; they have to take care of their family, or even their own kids.

> *"After my studies I need to assist my mom with my siblings. I need to help at home, because my other little sister is also studying, so she doesn't have the time to help at home."*
>
> *(Lithemba, 2020)*

Thus, it might be true that the increased use of mobile phones results in an increased knowledge of socio-economic issues, what can result in more improved and sustainable livelihoods. And that mobile phones are thus one of the important means to overcome poverty, because it increases the ability to access livelihood assets, undertake diverse livelihoods strategies, and overcome vulnerabilities. But in the end, it is not that easy for the *born frees* living in Alice to actually make these things happen in their local landscape. However, what all the *born frees* have in common is the aspiration to have a bright future. This is expressed in a poem by Linamandla Sibanga, see the next page, during the career day of Born2Shine.

To conclude, the rapid global transmission of money, resources, and information make distance less important. These new technologies link people across the world, which blurs the line of the distinction between international, national, regional, and even the local. In times globalisation, the local world does not cease to exist, while individuals are not fixed to a place, and at the same time places are changing meaning with growing communicative connectivity. Thus, the locales are connected physically and communicatively to a higher degree. As a result, born frees who live in Alice, do not necessarily have to feel belonged to Alice. However, this does not mean that the local landscape does not matter anymore. Thus, it might be better to speak about different local landscapes instead of one demarcated landscape, because the residents of Alice have their own look on their local landscape and have their own strategies within the local landscape. Moreover, the *born frees* do not only take part in a physical local landscape, as the chapter before described, the *born frees* also position themselves in a virtual landscape.

If not me, then who?
If not me who is going to prepare for my future, then who will?
If I don't stand up right now, and know what I want tomorrow, then
who will know?

If not me, ngubani ozothi ngenyimini athi
"nankuya umntwanam ehamba pha,
eqaqambisa ifuture yakhe, eyiveza phambi kwabantu"
Ngubani ozotsho, ukuba ayingomamam ophakama phambi
kwabantu athi
"nankuya uLinamandla Sibanga, ezivakalisa ebantwini".

If not me, who?
If I cannot be the president,
If I cannot be the person I want to be,
Ngubani othe andizufika, ngubani othe andizukwazi,
Ndiyafunda ndingumfundi ndiyafika

If not me, then who?
It starts with who I am
If you don't believe in yourself, then who will?
Who will believe in yourself?
We should stand out an understand that we are capable of creating
our own future with the understanding that God has given us

We are able, we can

I am a poet,
I am a president,
I am a motivational speaker,
I am a teacher,
I am a good people to my learners, and then I can be able to go to
the future and purchase.
Andizunqandwa ngumntu, ndiyafika

(Linamandla Sibanga, 2020)[26]

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[26] See Appendix 7 for the translation of this poem.

Summary Chapter 7

Media calls into question the authenticity of identities, relationships and practices of the born frees. These disruptions are the result from a movement form modern to postmodern times, in which time and space are compressed, people are more mobile, identities are multiple, communication is person-to-person rather than place-to-place, and communication media are ubiquitous. Social media gives the opportunity to take on a different identity and choose which one fits best (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2018, 2). Moreover, the rise of communication means, and the rise in the use of Social Networking Sites creates global communities and brings people together. However, this is not the case for more proximity of black and white people in South Africa.

Looking at the local landscape of Alice, the respondents do not necessarily have a strong connection with the small town. It seems that the local isiXhosa culture, together with the history, is the driver that keeps the community together. History in this perspective is thus the traditional aspect which connections people more and causes a thick local resistance identity. However, the respondents do not all have the same view of the local landscape of Alice, this does not only depend on their age, gender, or years living in Alice, but also on the location they live in. They perceive the centre of Alice as safe and other suburbs and townships mostly as unsafe. Anyway, the centre of Alice is also most Westernized and developed, which creates a safe area. All the other areas are underdeveloped and have a high rate of unemployment which result in criminal behaviour. However, despite the dangerous places in Alice and the othering within the community, all the respondents said that they feel at home in Alice.

Concluding, the use of mobile phones and (social) media have the power to change the focus of the local landscape into a regional, national, or even international focus, and the connection with the local landscape will probably fade out after a while. Thus, it might be better to speak about different local landscapes, than only one demarcated landscape.

8. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Reflections

"Somehow through the interchange of cultures and sharing of cultural influences in the age of globalisation, there defiantly remains a tapestry of phenomena which can identifiably and unambiguously to termed 'South Africa."

(SAHO, 2011)

I would like to start this last chapter with the citation above, also the last sentence of the citation I started this thesis with. Not only does South Africa have different cultures, languages and heritages. Also intersectional issues of gender, ethnicity and race complicate the matter of identity in South Africa. As a result, South Africa is one of a kind.

Chapter two provided a theoretical framework, as follows these theories were summarized in the conceptual model in chapter three. Next, in chapter four, there was some attention to the methodologies in this research. The chapters five, six and seven provided an analysis about the gathered data during this research. Combining all this information, this chapter provides a systematic interpretation of the results and a well underpinned conclusion in relation to the research questions. The main research question in this research was: *"How does the use of mobile phones and accessibility to (social) media influence the born frees in the way they value their local landscape and shape their identity?"*. Thus, this thesis gave more insight in the use of mobile phones and (social) media, identities and the local landscape of Alice. The next paragraph will provide an overview of the results and will finally provide an answer on the main research question. Following this, some recommendations are made for future research. And finally, the last paragraph provides a critical reflection on this research.

8.1 Conclusions

Globalisation causes cultural changes, in which time and space are compressed, speed is accelerated, identities are multiple, and people are more mobile. As a result, global cultures become individualized, which calls into question the very authenticity of identities, relationships and practices. Moreover, internet and (social) media become increasingly

embedded in everyday life. This results in the sharing of unfamiliar information and viewpoints and provides a space for dissent voices. But, on the other side, (social) media also reinforces stereotypes and misinformation, and thus, closes people's mind to complexity. Thus, the rise in the use of mobile phones and social media has different meanings to interpersonal communication. On the one hand, communication becomes shallower. On the other hand, new media offers the opportunity for more connections. Anyway, both perspectives show that media are changing the nature of social connections and identities. In the end, people get used to new media, and see them in more nuanced ways, take them for granted, and use it to shape their identities and evaluate their local landscape.

Media, including the internet and other high-tech information flows, are one of the economic and political forces which promote globalisation. Assimilation of the Global South to these new technologies, led by the Western countries, constitutes a twenty-first century form of (digital) colonisation which is based on the purpose of profit and plunder. It shows that, once again, South Africa is at a collective risk of being a victim of economic processes beyond their control. On the other hand, the rise of new technologies in the Global South cause more development and media diffuses cultures of countries not only within, but often beyond their borders. For example, millions of Africans used to be cut off, by geography isolation or illiteracy, from urban, national, and international events and information. But right now, they can participate in a larger mediascape through media and internet. Within this mediascape individuals have social interactions and share/receive information. Thus, the social and political development of South Africa depends on the role of media and communication in a new multicultural democracy. Yet, in underdeveloped areas, like Alice, the use of mobile phones and the access to the internet do not necessarily facility the creation of a society free from the confines of local geography and community. There are possibilities for some people, but at the same time there are also impossibilities. Summarizing this, people participate in a larger mediascape and have access to more information than ever before. But, in underdeveloped areas such as Alice, it seems like people do not have the resources to do actually something with this information. This results in frustration for some people, but on the other hand it can also create empowerment. This empowerment movement is visible under the *born frees* currently residing in Alice.

The *born frees* in this research are entering their adolescence. This is a period of self-discovering and awareness, where they battle with decisions and create an identity for themselves (Ephraim, 2013, 277). Moreover, this is the time they need to make a decision what

they want to do with their lives. The mobile phone and the use of (social) media helps the *born frees* in this process. According to Rodney & Wakeham (2016, 24) the use of mobile phones might even make the lives of the *born frees* easier. Mobile phones can provide financial support, social support, economic support, and thus give the *born frees* a feeling of power. Furthermore, the use of a mobile phone changes the mobility landscape of the *born frees.* On the one hand, it becomes easier to travel to different places. On the other hand, there is no need to go to other places, because the mobile phone connects them locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally. Thus, mobile phones have an effect on the social and spatial structures of the *born frees* currently residing in Alice.

However, access to the media, especially internet is not yet a common thing based on this research in Alice. Voice telephony on a mobile network is costly and even access to internet is expensive. Nevertheless, the *born frees* in Alice rather use Social Networking Sites to communicate with other people and receive information. Particularly WhatsApp and Facebook (Free Basics) are popular amongst the *born frees,* what results in the idea of Facebook becoming the internet. Moreover, the *born frees* have the feeling that they are better able to convey their identities online than offline, what relates to the study of Appel et al. (2016). Nevertheless, we should not forget that Facebook's motivation might be to dominate the global internet landscape. Facebook can control how the connectivity structure is built and to what applications and services users have access to. This has especially an effect on the *born frees* in Alice, where youth identities (especially black) are determined by the politics of aspiration, propagated by the media (Nutall, 2004).

Thus, the media are not only a source of public information and channels of communication. They also serve as important channels of the identities and interests of the various social groups in South Africa. Taking this into account, the media determine the relative power, status and influence of these group. Thus, the identity of the *born frees* is determined by the politics of aspiration, propagated by the media. The *born frees* taking up their tasks as citizens, constructing a civic identity, participating in politics, and enlarging their agency thus all indicate the potential of a vibrant democracy in South Africa. The *born frees* are actively and creatively creating their own meanings and culture, rather than passively absorb pre-given meanings imposed upon them. This relates to the study of King (2009, 36) who argues that *"adolescents manipulate their online personification to fit the stereotypes around them and they are changing profiles to match what they want to be."* This requires new forms of cultural

expression and political mobilization, which are emerging from the interplay of local, regional, regional, and international cultural forces. Thus, media gives the *born frees* the opportunity to express themselves, find new relations and survive.

The *born frees* actively select, evaluate, and interpret media in ways that make sense to them, which creates their identity. However, the media and the internet do not only give space for shaping an online identity, but it also manifests itself as a medium to make new connections between people, ideas and things. Moreover, it helps them to create and maintain personal and relational identities through the use of them. Online connections with others confirm relationships and give value to it. Thus, using a mobile phone and being constantly available, influences how relationships develop, are maintained, and dissolved. Thus, it seems that technologies are inherently relational in their understands and use; communication fosters community. This shows that, a relational context is the most valuable way to understand technology and media in everyday life. This relates to the study of Bosch (2013, 127), which defines the internet as a potential space for the creation of a networked public sphere, because it is facilitating social interactions and information sharing. Thus, the rapid global transmission of money, resources, and information make distance less important. These new technologies link people across the world, which blurs the line of the distinction between international, national, regional, and even the local.

The question here is, next to all the virtual identities and relationships, what is the meaning of the local landscape? The landscape in this sense, is thus not only physical, but there is also a virtual landscape. This research shows that for some of the *born frees* only connections have more importance than real life connections. The media, especially social media, gives local people the chance to think into a web of connections that can provide information, contact, entertainment, and potential social validation, which is not available in their local network. As a result, this gives the *born frees* the opportunity to increase productivity, widen markets, simplify transactions, prevent crime, improve governance, and create new socio-economic opportunities, among many other benefits (Butner, 2003). However, this research does not give any results that indicates this. Instead, the *born frees* rather move to other places, with already existing socio-economic opportunities, to start a new life. Harrison and Todes (2015, 153) argue that individuals and households in South Africa are *voting with their feet* by moving into places which are better able to provide livelihoods. In sum, the mobile phone is not a substitute for a

better livelihood, but a tool to show opportunities in other areas, get easily in contact with other people, and thus makes the way to get out easier.

Concluding, technology is a post-colonial construct that influences the way people see the world and can result in a deconstructive youth. The *born frees* actively interpret and evaluate media in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons. Moreover, the *born frees* use their mobile phones to activate new worries about rights, citizenship, belonging and autochthony (Appadurai, 2006, 42) and challenge the dominant views. However, the (imaginary) power that the *born frees* have on the internet does not necessarily facilitate a mobile world where individual networks allow an escape from local norms and structures. Instead, it may facilitate communal networks that bind them to the local and so facilitate social immobility and the inability to escape the local landscape of Alice. Thus, the use of mobile phone and the access to the internet give the *born frees* the opportunity to create their own online identity, search for content they want, and get access to information that is missing in their local landscape. This will help them in making plans for the future in develop themselves. However, this does not mean that they are actually 'free'. The virtual mobility of the *born frees* might be big and world-widening, the physical mobility of the *born frees* is still limited. This limitation is not only the result of poverty, and a lack of money, it relates to more processes like identity, culture, social cohesion, etcetera. Moreover, it depends on the dedication of the *born frees* themselves.

8.2 Recommendations

In this paragraph I do not only want to make some recommendations for further academic research, but also to different (governmental) organisations. During this research, many respondents criticized the government South Africa, especially the municipality which is most close to them. As different respondents indicated, they feel left behind, or more specifically, they do not feel heard as black young people from the rural sites. Furthermore, I want to make some recommendations for further academic research. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 the fieldwork ended prematurely. As a result, different methodologies were not used, and some concepts did not receive enough attention.

First, I want to start with some recommendations to the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality. First, the South African government, together with the municipalities, should improve in public infrastructure and allow private development of infrastructure. Most of the roads in- and around Alice are not maintained, and during bad weather it is almost impossible to drive some of these roads. Moreover, this year there already have been two big flowing's because of the bad infrastructure. This does not only make the residents of Alice immobile, also shops experience the negative effects of this. Secondly, the government should improve in Wi-Fi technologies throughout Africa. According to Oyedemi, 2019, 2057) *"access to the internet is a citizen's right, and it is the dominant utility for the 21st-century knowledge economy".* By not investing in an accessible infrastructure to support the internet, South Africa will be continuing to be a hunting ground for digital colonialists. These digital colonialists' benevolent pursuit of digital capital, nevertheless, aims at global domination, instead of giving (young) people the opportunity to use the internet to develop. Equal access to free Wi-Fi will give the *born frees* the opportunity to not only improve communication, but also enhance their social-economic opportunities.

The following recommendations relate to further academic research on certain theories and concepts. First, it would be useful to do more research on the use of Facebook of young people in underdeveloped countries, or more specifically, in rural areas. One can namely question how youth make choices in creating their online identity, choose online friends, share or hide information, etcetera. Furthermore, the use of Facebook services frames the information the *born frees* receive, and thus how they create a view of the world, and their world. On the other hand, I also want to warn Facebook users. Observing different Facebook posts, some users regularly post sensitive data, which can be used to track their movements and activities. Most users are not aware that their posts are public and can easily be accessed. Facebook users should be more aware of their activities on this social platform. Secondly, it is important that future research also focuses on small towns. As mentioned before, small towns have a strategic position. While this research especially focused on the use of mobile phones in relation to identity and the local landscape, the focus on the small town itself sometimes lost the attention. Therefore, it would be interesting to analyse the small town and take not only take social structures into account, but relate this to economic structures, because of the strategic position of the small town. Thirdly, concerning the position of the *born frees* in small towns, further research is relevant to explore the mobility of the *born frees*. More specifically, it would be

interesting to get a better understanding of the local landscape in the context of cross-roads locations and the virtual space.

The last recommendations I want to make relate to the limitations of this research. Although I was able to gather enough data in order to answer my own questions, I was not able to get a full understanding of some of the aspects in this research.

Firstly, due to the unexpected end of the fieldwork, different methods were not used (properly), such as group interviews, and the use of visual data and pictures. Group interviews could have led to interesting and relevant discussions, because it gives respondents the space to share different ideas. Moreover, the use of visual data was not grounded enough to use in the analysis, because I was still improving this method during the fieldwork. Secondly, partly due to the non-implementation of certain methods, more research should be done on the concepts of identity and the local landscape. These concepts need more attention, to gain an in-depth knowledge on how these concepts play a role in the case of the *born frees* in Alice. Thirdly, I recommend others to do a longer research, this will create space to speak an even larger and more varied population, and thus allows to give more generalisable statements. Moreover, by doing research for a long period of time, more activities/events can be visited. For example, is there a difference of the street view of Alice during winter or summer? And do people leave Alice during the holidays? In other words, how does Alice manifest itself throughout the year? Fourthly, this researched focused only on the small-town Alice, but South Africa has more small towns. Thus, the reader should exercise caution in generalising these findings to the entire country. It would be interesting to do the same research in different small towns to compare the findings and find out whether the results can be generalized. Finally, I would recommend to all other academics to do a panel research after a few years. During this research I followed the *born frees* in Alice, between 18-25 years old. It will be fascinating to speak to them again and see where they ended up. Probably, after doing that, it would be possible to give a valid answer to the question: *"Born free?"*.

8.3 Reflections

In the paragraphs above, I gave a final answer to my research question. In my view, this research complements existing literature on the use of mobile phones among the *born frees* (living in

Alice). Moreover, this research provides more insight in how the identity of the *born frees* is formed by the access of mobile phones, and also, how this influences the way they value their local landscape. However, some aspects might have had little or no attention. Sometimes it was difficult to give as much attention as I would to the local landscape of Alice. The use of mobile phones became in this way one of the steer points of this research, which can be considered as a bias. Moreover, together with the unexpected end of the research, some methods were not used as I wanted to, which can question the reliability and validity of this research. Furthermore, since the findings are based on the local landscape of Alice, the generalizability of the results is limited. This paragraph will give some further reflections on this research.

This study is based on six weeks of fieldwork in Alice, Eastern Cape, South Africa. I have only been part of the Alice community for a short time, which is why I probably look different at some aspects of Alice than the people who live there for some time. An important aspect of this research was to describe a certain phenomenon, culture or concept from an outsider's perspective. However, it was a difficult task for me, to get a complete picture of a strange environment in less than six weeks. Research in a culturally different environment with almost no contacts in the beginning was a challenge. It took a lot of discipline from me and was not always easy. Nevertheless, I can say that I succeeded, despite not being able to complete all the methods as planned. Alice's residents were open to me and took their time. This has helped me to actually become part of the society and successfully complete this research.

Because of its subjective nature, my empiricism gives a complete picture of my experiences and findings. This ethnography is mainly my vision from my experience and does not claim any objective truth. I would like to emphasize once again that my interpretation of certain phenomena is not the only or absolutely correct way. Moreover, I have not been able to speak to anyone from every social/economic/political class. Nevertheless, I believe that on the basis of 300 surveys and eight interviews, many short conversations (small talk) and (participant) observation, I have collected enough data to complete the research.

Before I started this research, I had certain expectations based on the theory. For example, I expected Alice to be an economically strong small town with not a lot of crime. Moreover, I expected that the *born frees* were in school or had jobs. In retrospect, it appeared that there is still a lot of inequality among the *born frees* and that a positive future appears to be far away.

Nevertheless, these expectations did not have an influence on the research questions, while all the predefined research questions did connect to the reality.

I also encountered practical problems during the fieldwork. For example, the *born frees* described Alice in different ways. Because of this, it was difficult to define the local landscape of Alice. Furthermore, sometimes the respondents had a lack of knowledge about certain concepts such as rural and urban, which made it difficult for them to describe the surroundings. On the other hand, all respondents had access to a mobile phone. With only a few of them who did not have internet access. In addition, all respondents were able to describe their identities and their aspirations in life.

To conclude, the outbreak of COVID-19 has caused that this thesis turned out different than previously thought. A pandemic, like COVID-19, brought this research to a whole different level, it was more challenging, and keeping focus was quite difficult sometimes. As described before, I chose not to put COVID-19 at the centre of this thesis. However, it should not be forgotten that COVID-19 is the cause for a short period of fieldwork. As a result, various research methods were not used, and the data had little depth. Moreover, research on distance was difficult with the underdeveloped technologies in Alice, and it was therefore difficult to keep in contact with my respondents. Nevertheless, in the end my focus became my method, and thus this research will be precursor to future research.

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