Paper for ECAS 2019

Author: Wolfgang Zeller, Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh

Title: Drivers of Regional Integration: Blood and Solidarity on the Road and Online with the SADC Truck Drivers Association

Short abstract:
This exploratory paper offers glimpses into frontline trenches of supply chain capitalism in Southern Africa. Life in cross-border transport corridors reeks of diesel, dust and body fluids. The boss is tracking you on satellite. Death, a roadblock, and the end of your airtime bundle are always near.

Full text:
This paper is about the lives of long-distance truck drivers on social media and on the road in southern Africa, driving along cross-border transport corridors that connect the interior of the continent with coastal sea ports. It presents research I have conducted since late 2015 is part of an ERC funded project titled African Governance and Space. AFRIGOS is a five-year project examining transport corridors, border towns and port cities in four regions of Africa.

Any road is a technology with construction techniques and -materials designed and applied to carry certain types and amounts of expected traffic. The designation of a road as a "corridor" signifies it is supposed to serve as a priority long-distance transport route. The terminology itself does not have an immediate effect on the ground. But over time, significant amounts of planning, infrastructural investments, public institutional management, and positioning of assets by trucking and logistics companies go into making these priority routes work. The language of all these actors is largely technocratic and depoliticized, and the proposition that corridors serve as conduits for the universal benefits of frictionless cross-border trade, enhancing private enterprise, the achievement of developmental state objectives, and the project of regional integration - these are almost unquestionable and unquestioned truths. But the day-to-day reality of what happens on the transport corridors I am writing about in this paper is full of friction and contestation between individual, corporate and public actors. Transport & logistics are a deeply politicized arena and this paper provides a preliminary closer examination of this arena through evidence from the daily lives and discussions among truck drivers as well as frontline managers of public and private enterprise involved in cross-border transport across Southern Africa.

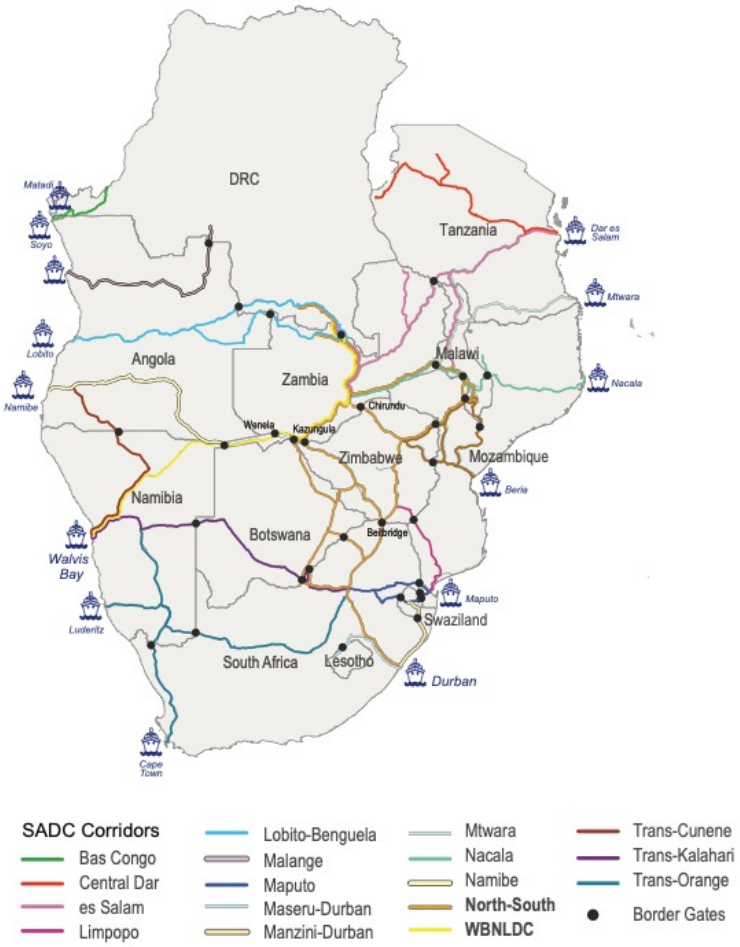
Conceived of originally in the mid-1990s, and rooted in the priorities of frontline states during the apartheid period, officially designated transport corridors in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region all serve the official purpose to provide land locked countries access to regional sea ports via their neighbours' roads, and vice versa as conduits for the ports to attract business. Accordingly, all kinds of techniques and institutions of public and private management have come into existence to cater for these corridors. To give 2 examples, the Cross Border Regional Transport Regulators Forum (CBRT-RF) is coordinated by the SADC Secretariat and made up of representatives from multiple agencies from all SADC member countries. They meet regularly every 3-4 months in changing locations and their official main agenda is to integrate

national regulations of road transport. In reality, they also frequently discuss, and sometimes convene urgent "consultative meetings" when events like natural disasters, human or animal disease outbreaks, sudden changes in national regulations like import and export bans on certain products or migration legislation, or civil and political unrest get in the way of cross-border corridor transport. Another example is the Walvis Bay Corridor Group (WBCG), which is essentially a lobbying and marketing agency for the Namibian port of Walvis Bay. It is membership-based and made up of the Namibian port management parastatal NamPort, various Namibian governmental departments and municipalities, and private sector transport operators. Governmental agencies from neighbouring countries, which have corridor links with Walvis Bay (in particular Zambia and DRC but also Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa) will also send representatives to attend the regular meetings of the WBCG. Although these fora always take a technocratic approach to transport problem-solving, regional and national politics as well as intra-agency differences play themselves out there. One venue in which discussions about the day-to-day operational tasks of the CBRT-RF and among those in the WBCG who manage transport along the route from Walvis Bay to Lubumbashi become evident is via their dedicated Whatsapp groups. I have been added to these groups by members who hold administrator rights and whom I have met in person and interviewed repeatedly in recent years.

The so-called Walvis Bay-Ndola-Lubumbashi Development Corridor (WBNLDC) has de facto only existed since 13th May 2004 when a new bridge across the Zambezi at Katima Mulilo closed the final gap in the route. The Northern Corridor branch via Zimbabwe has been in existence for longer but the current construction of another Zambezi bridge between Zambia and Botswana will allow a significant share of transport to take the alternative route to Durban via Botswana instead of Zimbabwe. Many operators are keen to avoid the extreme corruption and long delays that have become routine on the borders with, and roads through Zimbabwe. That does not mean they will be able to avoid the same problems in Zambia, the ever-volatile and dangerous roads in DRC, and the recent rise in organised arson attacks against trucks in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal Province.

I am still kicking ideas around about what exactly I want to do with the rich ethnographic material I have gathered from the time I have spent, on the road, in offices and online, with cross-border transport corridor truckers and those who manage and regulate their work in Southern Africa. Although the managers and regulators play a role in this paper, it is the truckers I would like to focus on. Beck et al. write: "the African road emerges as a co-production of different communities of practice (…) constituted by the specific interactions of travel and roadside communities" (Beck, Klaeger and Stasik 2017). Because being on the road is a constant back and forth between phases of movement and stoppage, cross-border truckers are both a closely integrated travel community as well as (at least part-time) members of multiple roadside communities. Cross-border truckers, through their regular interaction on the road an online, are also a transnational community of practice. Within this larger community, there is a very strong sense of shared purpose, experience, identity and solidarity that is routinely expressed and reaffirmed in conversations by the roadside and online. But although it is often verbally invoked by the drivers, there is not one happy "trucking fraternity" across Southern Africa.

Of the large and well-resourced companies, many are based in South Africa and across the entire region the owners and higher to middle management level in the industry are dominated by white Afrikaans-speakers. Some have strategically based some or all of their operations in other countries where their fleet regularly drives. Ongoing policy reforms coordinated by the SADC secretariat and other regional and continental protocols have in recent years reduced some of the wilder regulatory diversity in areas like customs, road safety and axle load limits. But across the SADC region significant differences remain at national level in labour laws, income levels and unionisation, the capacity to actually implement high-level policy decisions, and of course in "political stability". Mirroring other employment sectors, company managers in the cross-border trucking business are open to employing qualified drivers of any nationality, but especially the Afrikaans-speaking South African and Namibian managers will state clear preferences based on (their) long-term experience: Among these managers Zambian and Zimbabwean drivers have a good reputation for being reasonably well-educated, more reliable and less assertive/combative when it comes to demands about salary and working conditions than the average South African or Namibian-born driver. The managers think this is a matter of "national culture" and "mentality" but they also cite their drivers' Christian belief and the lack of employment opportunities in their home countries as important factors.



Most drivers on the SADC corridor routes cross between 1 and 3 international boundaries on a weekly basis. The WBNLDC connects Namibia's main sea port with the mining regions of Zambia's Copperbelt and southern DRC. 3 Countries, 2 borders, ca. 2500km. Another, much busier route links the same area via the so-called Northern Corridor through Zimbabwe or, alternatively, Botswana and onwards through South Africa to the Port of Durban. 4 countries, 3 borders, ca. 2800km. Both routes are essentially asphalt conveyer belts for some of the largest mining operations on the African continent, involving big contracts for companies with hundreds of trucks on the road. High-value cargo like copper anodes and, increasingly, cobalt concentrate travel to port in convoys of 3-6 trucks. The convoy leader is in the last truck. When in transit, no-one is allowed to stop without the leaders' explicit permission (because trucks have disappeared…) and drivers pee into empty bottles when the urge comes during the long days on the road. During overnight stops along the route or at border crossings, truckers park in close proximity to their colleagues. They typically sleep inside their vehicles and they cook and take their meals in small groups in the semi-sheltered space they create between and with their trucks. Windshield wipers become laundry racks for wet socks & underwear.

In a typical month, Dennis Chola (name changed) manages to drive 2 return runs for his employer Buks Haulage Limited. The company, owned by South African-born Buks Van Rensburg, has some 300 flatbed trucks on the corridor road and has recently invested heavily to increase its fleet. On each trip south Dennis hauls 36 tons of copper anodes from the smelter of the Kansanshi mine near Solwezi in Zambia's New Copperbelt to the port of Walvis Bay in Namibia. He returns with machine spare parts, chemicals and other mining supplies. If all goes well, Dennis can make it from the smelter to the Zambia/Namibia border by the end of day 2. On day 3 he makes the crossing at the Wenela border, gets his papers sorted and passes the weighbridge. He heads for the coast before first light on day 4 and reaches the offloading site in Walvis Bay by the end of day 5. A typical working day on the road starts before first light and ends around 17:00 but if loading or border procedures wrap up at sunset time a night-driving shift can also be in order, national legislation (which keeps changing over time and from country to country) permitting. Off- and re-loading take 1-2 days before Dennis is on the road again, back to Solwezi on roughly the same itinerary. Back and forth he goes like a ping-pong ball until, once a month, Dennis gets 2 days off with his wife & daughter in Ndola in Zambia's old Copperbelt. Until recently, he used to get extra time with them whenever his truck was in maintenance. But BHL's main workshop has now moved from Ndola to Solwezi and in 2018 the company started using a different route that no longer passes through Dennis' home town. Dennis' monthly base salary is 1320 Zambian Kwacha (ZMW), ca. €90. This increases incrementally for longer-term employees with a record of consistently good performance/behaviour and those designated as convoy leaders. Dennis and his colleagues also get a trip bonus going up to 2800ZMW for 4 one-way journeys and they receive a 30ZMW/night allowance. At the end of an average good month, Dennis earns ca. 4000ZMW or €270.

All big trucking fleet operators in the region nowadays have satellite tracking devices on all their vehicles. The IT team and operational managers in front of their monitors at the company headquarters in Gauteng or Swakopmund can not only see where the trucks are in real-time. They know if the engine is running. One driver told me: "Once I park for the night, if I put my engine on to power my refrigerator or charge my phone, the boss can call me: 'Hey, why are you burning

my diesel!"'. To enforce driver discipline, companies like BHL use a long (and prominently displayed) catalogue of fines and penalties, from verbal and written warnings about minor offences like an untidy truck cabin, to salary deductions for moderate speed limit violations. Serious offences like driving under the influence result in immediate dismissals. Company managers also keep a close watch on fuel consumption based on rather accurate data they have from hundreds of trips along the same route by a fleet of largely identical trucks carrying roughly the same load. Taking passengers is largely forbidden across the industry and trucks often have signs on the driver cabin doors which declare this up front. One of BHL's competitors has in the recent past experimented with allowing drivers to take their married spouses with them on the road. But this led to various problems at checkpoints and borders, as well arguments and in some cases fist fights among drivers and was quickly abandoned. I should add here that I am so far only aware of one single female truck driver working cross-border in Southern Africa. Her name is Ethel. But there may well be others.

Being alone and away from wife & children for extended periods is the grievance that comes up most frequently in conversations with drivers. Although some will openly talk about having other "wives", a "girl-friend" or casual sex partners in places where they regularly stop, this is not something openly bragged about in front of colleagues at truck stops or on social media. Being a good husband, father, and provider for the (often extended) family are more openly advertised and on social media moralizing messages, bible quotes and clips from charismatic preachers are ubiquitous among posts that are arguably more on-topic like updates about the latest roadblocks, accidents and breakdowns, or atrocities against fellow drivers in DRC and, in recent month increasingly, in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province (see below).

Cross-border corridor truckers in Southern Africa have a physically and mentally demanding job that does not pay very well, and they are working under close surveillance/supervision, and in closely confined spaces: The cabin of the "horse" section of their vehicle is the innermost space, and within it they move through the stretched-out corridor route with its various stopping places. Another space which is central to the life of the truckers is that of social media. All drivers I have met have at least one smart phone. Along the corridor routes I have mentioned, some of which I have travelled repeatedly along their entire length with my own vehicle since 2015, there are now very few sections left without coverage for mobile phone & data. Some drivers are on Facebook where they update their connections what they are up to, follow, post and comment on various pages and groups run by more or less organised trucker associations or trucking companies. WhatsApp, however, is the one social media channel which has become almost indispensable for those in the Southern African trucking industry (and those who want to research it). It has replaced CB radio as the default means of direct communication between drivers on the road, and between drivers and their managers. A crucial advantage of Whatsapp is the possibility to keep the same number despite frequent sim card changes as telecom providers' services are still roughly confined to national territorial boundaries. Another is the possibility to instantly send photographs, e.g. to give evidence of poor road conditions, damage to the truck & cargo, or receipts for questionable fees and fines imposed by weighbridges, customs officials and the latest town council road blocks. Drivers frequently use voice messages that can be recorded and listened to while driving.

Direct communication via Whatsapp between mobile drivers and their stationary managers further increases the ability of the latter to control the movements of the former. But these also frequently play an important role in problem-solving e.g. regarding mechanical breakdown assistance or navigating the ever-unpredictable bureaucratic moves by officials and organized thugs, especially in Zambia and DRC.

Apart from person-to-person messaging, Whatsapp groups are essential to communication in the trucking industry in Southern Africa in 2019, and becoming a member of some of these groups has been crucial to my data-gathering both during field work in Africa and remotely from my desk in Edinburgh. I already mentioned that I am a member of Whatsapp groups where SADC regional transport coordinators and Walvis Bay Corridor managers exchange. I was invited to the former group by a consultant working on regional transport regulation for the SADC Secretariat, and to the latter group by a senior manager of a Swakopmund-based trucking company that runs copper convoys along the WBNLDC. I am also a member on 8 different groups run by, and dedicated to drivers. A bit more on those further below.

Until late 2015 I had never used WhatsApp or considered it relevant. I only felt very limited peer pressure and was actually significantly cutting back on my Facebook presence around that time. My wife uses a Nokia which has 1st January 2002 as the default date when you reboot it, so the shopping list and who gets to pick our son from school are discussed via SMS. On preliminary field work for AFRIGOS in Namibia and Zambia, I soon realised that virtually everyone there had meanwhile started using WhatsApp, and so I started feeling that pressure and eventually yielded.

In my younger years I used to hitchhike quite a lot, in Europe and once across Southern and Eastern Africa. I have always found it easy to approach truck drivers for a ride, and now a "chat" as part of research by the road or at a border. A good time to do this is when drivers settle down for the night around 17:00 after a long day of driving. Once the paper work is in the hands of freight forwarders and runners, drivers typically also have time for a chat at border checkpoints. A mechanical failure by the road side is another reliable opportunity to get an interview and make new contacts.

In the early phase of my field work one single conversation with a group of drivers was an important breakthrough. The drivers were settling down for the night at the Katima Mulilo Shell station, a location routinely used by one of the main copper convoy transport companies. Names and WhatsApp numbers were exchanged and over the following weeks things snowballed from there. There were follow-up messages and, as I was driving up and down the corridor route, introductions and conversations with other drivers working for the same company as well as others. As some point I threw a spontaneous braai (South African style BBQ) for a few truckers on the Zambian side of the border with Namibia and that one definitely helped to expand my contacts. After a while, some drivers would recognize me in my vehicle and flash their lights at me as we passed each other on the corridor road. From drivers I then received the names and sometimes phone numbers of company managers, which led to a number of interviews. I remain in continuous direct contact via WhatsApp with some of the drivers and managers and will e.g. discuss and ask for their reflections on current event.

Apart from these personal exchanges and the two Whatsapp groups of administrators which I already mentioned, the 8 driver groups offer a particularly rich and colourful source of daily updates, often more than I have time for. On any given day, each group account distributes between 1-3 dozen written word messages, photographs as well as voice messages by drivers. The latter are often audibly straight from the road, recorded over the steady rhythm of an idling diesel or some music blaring out of a nearby truck or bar. There is considerable overlap in content especially among 6 of the groups, and this is not surprising: All of these groups are run by the same core team of 3-5 administrators. All administrators are posting on all of them, although one individual is doing so particularly frequently. On his own user account, this administrator refers to himself as "roadsafety preacher man". This is a fairly accurate description - he is employed as a truck driver safety instructor by Dangote at their cement factory & depot outside Ndola in the Zambian Copperbelt, where I have also met and interviewed him in 2018. He also likes to record "morning divination" messages where he calls drivers to partake in bible study & prayer, and he very frequently shares religious messages that almost always have no direct relevance to truck driving.

6 of the Whatsapp groups are simply named "SADC Truck Drivers 1-6". The logic of having 6 groups is simple: WhatsApp impose a limit of 256 members per group, so whenever the latest group has filled its quota the preacher man starts a new group and, apart from a few core members whom he adds to every group (evidently myself included, at least up to group 6) he adds the latest newcomers to the latest group. The seventh group is called "SADC Truckdriver Worship" and, unsurprisingly, this one is almost entirely dedicated to religious content including frequent, forwarded denunciations of Islam as a "false" religion and heated debates about that topic. Group 8 is a more general regional news group.

Group data gives access to some useful general information, e.g. how many members it has and that the first group was started in April 2015. The international dialling codes of individual members do not give a reliable, but I suspect at least approximate breakdown of countries of (predominant) residence of group members. This clearly indicates that members across all SADC groups are predominantly based in/from Zambia (60-80%), followed by South Africa (10-20%), DRC (5-10%) and Zimbabwe (ca. 5%). Members from other SADC region countries like Namibia and Botswana as well as Tanzania a more sporadic occurrence.

Upon my acceptance of invitations to join any of the trucker and administrator WhatsApp groups, I have always posted a brief introductory message declaring who I am and what I am doing. These have, of course, over time become buried under hundreds and thousands of other group messages. I also occasionally post group messages, e.g. news items that are directly relevant or in order to ask for clarification on specific posts and discussions. I do this more frequently on the administrator groups than the driver groups. With a small number of individuals (the SADC secretariat contact, the Swakopmund trucking company manager, 2 other Namibia-based truck company owners, the roadsafety preacher man, and some 3-5 individual drivers) I write direct messages asking follow-up questions or for clarification regarding certain group posts & discussions. For those group members who don't have my contact details my name appears simply as "Wolfgang" and my profile picture (a selfie shot through a kaleidoscope…) reveals my skin colour but does not clearly show my entire face.

There is more to the SADC groups than their WhatsApp activity. The SADC Truck Drivers Association (SADC TDA) is/claims to be officially registered in Zambia. The executive board members (which include the roadsafety preacher man and other group administrators) claim there is a written constitution. I have never been able to gain access to this document and its existence has sometimes been called into question by disgruntled group members that were soon expelled, usually on allegations by the preacher man that they were, in fact, agents of "corrupt" trucker unions. The purpose of SADC TDA, according to pronouncements by its leadership, is to fill the gap in providing an organised lobbying/advocacy group for cross-border truck drivers in the SADC region. Various national and specialist truck driver labour unions exist in the region, but to my understanding none of these are acting on a regional level. Instead, there appears to be a lot of institutional fluctuation, in-fighting and sometimes open conflict among and between unions at least in Zambia and South Africa. While SADC TDA claims to aim at cross-regional representation, according to my observations all their senior members are Zambia-based and they are predominantly concerned with the interests of Zambian drivers working on the main mining conveyor belt routes between DRC and Durban. The association takes membership fees (although to what extent they really manage to collect these is hard to gauge) and the executive members, in particular the one based in DRC, provide on-demand support for individual (paying) members who get into trouble, e.g. with frontline representatives of state authority in DRC or Zambia. An important service they provide is contact details for, and sometimes direct personal intervention with station commanders at border posts and road blocks. Relevant contact details and hands-on advise or support are, however, also frequently provided by regular members of the group via crowd sourcing/hive-mind activity on the SADC TDA groups.

Messages from other truck driver groups across the region are also often forwarded. The dominant language is English and if drivers record messages in other languages there will often be requests to revert to English. Content on the SADC TDA is not often censored and can consequently get a bit wild. This includes often extremely gory photographs or videos of road accident victims, taken moments after a major accident and showing people lying dead or dying while they thrash around in their own blood or strive to collect their own severed limbs from the road surface. I will spare you further details. Members do take issue with excessive and data-intensive postings such as long videos without obvious relevance to the group, fake or old news items. Messages with graphic nudity will typically be criticized, deleted and followed by threats or action of dismissal to group members. On the regional administrator groups, group members adhere to a more disciplined behaviour and administrators will in general enforce much tighter and clearer guidance on what is (not) appropriate and on/off topic.

The roadsafety preacher man, until early 2019, was himself a member of the WBCG administrator group, posting there quite frequently, and not always on-topic or in entirely diplomatic style. He was eventually excluded from the group by the main administrator who is employed by the WBCG. I am not currently aware of postings by drivers on the WBCG group, although administrators are themselves members of various driver groups and certainly have a good understanding what drivers are posting about.

Two closely related functions performed by the WBCG and all SADC groups, at least #1-6, are:
1. Crowd sourcing & accessing the collective hive mind to solve operational problems as they occur, and
2. (semi-) public shaming of individuals and institutions - especially governmental ones but sometimes corporate employers - for alleged failures to perform their duties correctly or adhere to contractual or perceived moral obligations. This means openly stating the names and contact details of administrators that are verifiably in charge and, if they fail to respond, the details of their superiors.

Various "operational problems" that tend to repeat themselves will eventually lead to - sometimes short bursts, sometimes more sustained - attempts to get to the bottom of persistent problems, often involving public shaming on the groups. I will very briefly cite three ongoing or recent sets of events which I have followed closely through both field work interviews/observation, various news media channel, and the WhatsApp groups.

1. Roadblock economic activity in Zambia and DRC

The WBNLDC runs through 3 countries, each with significant differences in day-to-day operational realities for long-distance transport. In Namibia, both the infrastructural conditions and activities of state authorities are overall quite predictable. Although there are numerous roadblocks and checkpoints operated by traffic police and other governmental agencies, there are very few reports of rent extraction by (or successful attempts to offer bribes to) these frontline state actors. In Zambia, the situation is quite different. Apart from the ubiquitous checks on speed and vehicle compliance with real or imagined road worthy regulations by traffic police (which DO accept bribes!), there are the road blocks set up by municipalities and sometimes provincial authorities (or whoever claims to represent them). These will produce dated, signed and stamped "decrees" based on which they demand payments for "carbon taxes", "road damage" or "parking fees" from transit vehicles and goods. This is all in direct violation of national and SADC-level regulations and those higher-level authorities will regularly issue counter-decrees and sometimes take more robust action. These are, however typically short-lived and, like mushrooms in Finland, a new crop of roadblocks will soon appear as if from a rhizomatic sub-surface web. These actors will substantiate their actions with (not entirely unsubstantiated claims) that corridor transport is damaging their municipal infrastructure, causing congestion as well as pollution (as in: trucks smell and leak fluids and chemicals, truckers defecate and litter) and social problems (as in: prostitution). What becomes obvious in the tit-for-tat between central and regional/local government authorities is that the Zambian state is in a prolonged and acute fiscal and political crisis. Corridor fees are one arena where political differences and the central states' inability/unwillingness to distribute revenue to regional and local authorities (especially those in opposition strongholds) play themselves out.

In DRC, the situation is somewhat similar but still much more unpredictable. On the 80km stretch from the Zambia-DRC border to the mines around Lubumbashi several permanent border-like internal checkpoints but also numerous sporadic checkpoints and seemingly random schemes where rents are extracted from truck drivers at gunpoint are the normality. Some of these are manned by people claiming to represent various state agencies but just as often these simply appear to be uninformed thugs that are ready to attack and kill drivers if they don't comply with demands for payments. A standard procedure consistently reported by drivers is, when payments are

demanded, to slow down to slightly above walking speed, throw money (in USD cash) out from the window, and quickly speed up again. There is a steady stream of messages on the driver groups about these incidents, with graphic evidence of the damage done to trucks and cargo. This leads over to the second topic:

2. Attacks on drivers in DRC and South Africa

While violent attacks on drivers by those who try to extort payments in DRC are somewhat commonplace (although deaths and severe injuries will certainly not go unnoticed and unchallenged, see next section), attacks on drivers in South Africa have also become a regular occurrence since ca. mid-2018. The background motivations of the incidents in SA appears to be different, though. Against a wider pattern of xenophobic violence, non-South African drivers working for South Africa-registered trucking companies have become a target for violent and highly organised groups, demanding that South African jobs must be given to South Africans. This has resulted in the looting, torching and burning-out of dozens, perhaps hundreds of trucks on long-distance transport routes in South Africa, in particular the N3 highway between Johannesburg and Durban (which is part of the Northern Corridor route from DRC). The occurrence of such events increased in the run-up to the recent national elections but has since continued. On an almost daily basis, voice message recordings and written threats openly inciting violence against "foreign drivers" circulate on social media and are extensively shared and debated on the SADC TDA and administrator groups. On the SADC TDA groups, many drivers will appeal to the "trucking fraternity" in South Africa to act in solidarity with their "brothers" in neighbouring countries and point at the historical support for the anti-Apartheid struggle which Zambia has offered. But as the incidents in South Africa continue and messages become more overtly threatening and abusive, some drivers suggest retaliatory action against South African drivers coming to neighbouring countries. Threats and plans for organized action including blockades of South Africa's borders are under discussion as well (see next section). There have already been various "urgent" meetings and appeals issued by the CBRT-RF and a South African "task force" involving various ministries and agencies have been constituted in early June 2019. For now, the largely anonymous but highly coordinated calls for violence, and attacks on trucks in South Africa are continuing. For drivers, especially non- South Africans on the routes between DRC and Durban, the current reality is that they fear for their lives at both the beginning and end of their journeys.

3. Driver blockades and work stoppages

Whenever more extreme cases of violence against truckers or institutional extortion occur, a matter of last resort which the drivers will discuss and not rarely implement are blockades. Designed to move, if their drivers refuse to use them for their intended purpose the trucks just as easily serve as a tool to slow down or block the corridors and global supply chains they are part of. These stoppages are typically staged at infrastructural bottlenecks, such as border posts and other key sections of corridor routes. The typical demand is for senior government officials appear on-site, listen to and directly respond to the collective grievances of drivers. While these have been answered in various instances in recent years e.g. at the Kasumbalesa border between Zambia and DRC, the negotiated solutions in this manner typically appear to be short-lived. Before too long, the roadblocks and thugs are back and the extortion starts anew. One of the main topics currently under discussion is when and how to successfully impose an all-out traffic blockade against South

Africa by shutting down all its vital corridor border checkpoints, in order to force South African authorities to take seriously the demands for action against the ongoing wave of xenophobic violence. But at least on the SADC TDA groups such talk appears to be less coordinated planning than expressions of frustration and empty threats.

As a final word for this exploratory paper, I think it is worth noting that truck drivers on the road and online in Southern Africa clearly are both a community of practice as well as a moral community that will at least debate and often act upon what values they think should guide their work and lives. Acts of solidarity occur frequently and collective action is definitely taken when grievances become unbearable. Cross-border trucking in Southern Africa is a highly competitive and volatile business, and drivers on cross-border corridors are not part of a well-organised work force able to take meaningful action that could significantly improve their predicament as footsoldiers serving on the frontlines of global supply chain capitalism. Arguably, their experience is part of the realities of regional integration in Southern Africa, and the role that region and a large share of its inhabitants get to play in a globally integrated economy.