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SURVIVING HOSTILITIES IN ALIEN CITYSCAPES: EXPERIENCES OF ZIMBABWEAN IRREGULAR MIGRANTS AT PLASTIC VIEW INFORMAL SETTLEMENT, PRETORIA EAST, SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

At a time when more and more migrants from the region and beyond are trekking to South Africa, demand for residential and livelihood spaces is high. This leads to vulnerable and desperate migrants setting up informal settlements in contested and controversial cityscapes-the range of mapped and unmapped places in the city. Such desperate moves have ignited the ire of the state, local authorities, real estate as well as host communities as in the case of Plastic View, an informal settlement situated on a piece of prime land bounded by the residential and commercial estates of Garsfontein in Pretoria East. Data was collected ethnographically with interviews, participant observation and secondary data sources being core instruments of enquiry. Drawing from African actor-oriented-approaches, the paper explores hostilities that migrants encounter - from criminalization to open marginalization - in the cityscapes they reside and pursue livelihoods. The paper further observes that in response to the hostilities they encounter, migrants undertake self-interested, transactionalist considerations in their effort to survive and ameliorate the said hostilities. Finally, the paper recommends that the state extends the formal protection of migrants by regarding them as legitimate as opposed to regarding them as dangerous strangers who don't deserve protection.

KEY TERMS: hostilities, South Africa, cityscapes, Zimbabwe, irregular migrants, Plastic View, transactionalism.

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INTRODUCTION

Whatever else it may be, Africa is now a continent of mobility. Hordes of people-what Hardt and Negri's Empire (2000) refers to as 'multitude', continues to rove and land in various cityscapes, including open spaces awaiting multimillion dollar housing projects and other commercial ventures. As Betts, (2013) has aptly shown, this mobility is driven by the migrants' desire and pursuit of elusive livelihoods, no longer possible in their usually failed and fragile states smashed by structural reforms. This mobility observed in Africa is no longer an outcome of civil unrest that culminated in the collapse of states and boundaries, but 'survival migration' (Betts, 2013: p04).

No sooner have these migrants settled and started to earn and remit cash and goods back home, than are they faced and required to grapple with a raft of day to day challenges and insecurities that threaten their whole endeavour and aspirations. As Crush et al (2017a) have noted, the continued harassment and persecution experienced by these determined migrants seems to originate from the host community. But they also appear to originate from the police, department of immigration, secret services and various other apparatus of state control operating within migrant locations (Abdi, 2011; Landau and Jacobsen, 2004).

All these forms of victimisation and harassment do not seem to inflict a dent on mobility and a penchant for migration to dangerous places (Crush et al, 2017b); thousands continue to pass through porous borders. When they are settled, it appears they also determinedly make recourse to a variety of strategies to ensure their continued stay. As Abdi, (2011) and Misago et al, (2009) have shown, the desires to protect own patrimony from aliens will continue to find a match in the migrants' desire for inclusion.

In this paper, we look at the range of challenges that are faced by anxious migrants in the way of security in their location. To do this we use the case of Plastic View or Woodlane Village which is a controversial settlement in South Africa's Pretoria East, settled by desperate migrants from Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries whose economies are not doing well (Polser, 2004; Kalitanyi & Visser, 2010). The finding from our paper is that people do engage in personal strategies to ensure their protection in a rough neighbourhood. These personal strategies include what has commonly come to be regarded as tactical cosmopolitanism. They also include self-organisation that is meant to individually and collectively insulate the people against outsiders. The final ameliorative strategy is the selective mobilisation of the various available state institutions for protection against those that seek to harm them.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The first section presents background information of Plastic View and how people came to be in this settlement. The second section provides a brief methodological note on choice of data collection instruments used in the paper. The third section is a detailed description of the challenges that the people of Plastic View meet. The fourth section deals with what might be called ameliorative responses by the migrants to the challenges which are of a security nature. In the last section, the paper summarises the material from the study and asks, with an eye on social protection, questions on the extent to which the observed processes in this dynamic community are consistent with what the Actor-oriented approaches and Transactional anthropology have long observed in relation to groups under some form of socio-economic risk and physical threats.

BACKGROUND: BECOMING PLASTIC VIEW

There is a relatively long and intriguing history of how present-day Plastic View came into being. Bar the dearth of scholarly accounts of its rise, the narratives of long term inhabitants of the settlement bear testimony to the complex dynamics leading to the partial formalization and ordering of the settlement. Long term residents of the settlement claim to have started staying at the open space around the late 1990s to early 2000s. This open space measuring several thousand square metres and valued at approximately three hundred and forty million Rand (R340 000 000) (Tswelopelo Step by Step, N.D) belongs to the Tshwane Municipality and awaits development into residential or commercial properties.

Originally, people stayed as small itinerant groups scattered across the open veld with no ablution, water or sanitary services. There were no permanent structures save for small makeshift structures made from plastic, plywood and other disused materials. Known colloquially as *MaBharaka* (Barracks) among settlers, these structures were essentially for the purposes of shielding the occupants from the elements. Owing to such rough circumstances, women and children were not found there because the itinerant migrants "...were living like animals..." (Kurai, July 2018)

Over the years more and more people, probably spurred by availability of open spaces, came to set up base. A community of convenience was being birthed. However, the more people settled on this piece of land, the more friction was generated with residents of the surrounding plush neighbourhoods like Moreleta Park, Meadow Glen, Woodhill among others. Inter-ethnic tensions among members of the rapidly expanding community also escalated as people from different countries across Southern Africa negotiated co-existence. Ostensibly with pressure from the residents of the neighbouring high-end communities and their respective representative associations, Tshwane Municipality tried, with no success, to evict these itinerant groups. Most notable were attempts in March 2006 by

the local authority (with assistance of immigration control officials and South African Police Services) to forcibly relocate the residents of Plastic View. Structures were razed down and property and livelihoods were lost in the process. A court interdict saved the day for the stranded residents when Tshwane Municipality was ordered to restore the destroyed structures (See *Tswelopele Non-Profit Organization vs City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality 2007 6 SA 511 [CSA]*)

A relatively reorganised settlement, measuring approximately nine hectares (Peres & du Plessis, 2013), was established around the year 2008, in response to a court judgement passed by the Supreme Court of Appeal. The local authority with assistance from Tswelopele Step by Step, a local non-profit organization, spearheaded and coordinated the setting up of this new settlement (See, Tswelopele Step by Step, N.D; de Vos, 2014). The said court judgement instructed the local authority to manage the expansion of the settlement by setting up a perimeter fence around the new settlement site. It also directed that security personnel be posted at the gates as well as to give passes to residents and visitors. Furthermore, the local authority was mandated to regularly inspect and promptly mend the perimeter fence whenever breaches were discovered (See, *Meadow Glen Home Owners Association vs City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality 767/2013*).

Today, the settlement has not expanded beyond the perimeter fence but more and more people continue to seek shelter there, especially given that security personnel are no longer manning the gates. Both men and women continue to pursue a variety of livelihood strategies, which include casual labour among affluent communities, petty commodity trading, and a host of illicit deals and practices within and across the broken fence of this troubled settlement. Below, is a brief methodological note detailing methods used in data collection.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

Data for this paper comes from multi sited ethnographic engagement in Plastic View informal settlement. Although initially suspected and untrusted, as always happens in such sensitive socio-political contexts (Morosanu, 2015; 2017), the researchers spent detailed time in Plastic View, doing small talk, - engagements designed to interest people in research (Driessen & Jansen, 2013). We relied significantly on the help of real and fictive kin resident in the settlement to build rapport with the other inhabitants of Plastic View. Furthermore, we deployed what Moore (2005) regards as 'anthropological labour' to entrench rapport and get informants to speak.

To guarantee their security and anonymity, we assured respondents that the research was purely for academic purposes with no intention of disclosing their identities. Through continued acquaintance with members of the community and participation in their day to day activities, we gradually dispelled the lingering mistrust initially exhibited by the respondents. Such a strategy sufficiently addressed the delicate issue of positionality (Chereni, 2014; Ghanem-Yazbeck, 2017) as we gradually came to be viewed as part of the community, to the extent of being invited to church, social soccer matches among other day to day activities in the settlement.

To collect data, we informally interviewed migrants as well as participating in their day to day activities designed to support precarious livelihoods. We also talked to the often busy civic organisations that were critical in the formation of this community. Finally, we reviewed secondary materials - from court judgements on Plastic View to stories on this settlement churned by South African popular media. In the ensuing section we explore the variety of hostilities and threats that Plastic View residents encounter as they go about their precarious existence. Of significance to the current discussion are criminalization, exploitation and denial of service.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section we present the range of hostilities and threats that migrants encounter and grapple with in alien cityscapes. We also discuss the range of response strategies they deploy in their quest to ameliorate the said hostilities and threats.

Hostilities and threats encountered in alien cityscapes

There is a variety of hostilities and threats encountered by migrants resident in and pursuing livelihoods in the cityscapes neighbouring Plastic View. The hostilities and threats visiting the settlers are individual and collective in nature, the former impacting individuals and eliciting different response strategies while the latter affect the settler community at large. These individual and collective threats are discussed in detail below.

Criminalization of settlers is the first and relatively prevalent form of hostility perpetrated against them. In this instance, people are thought of as petty thieves, muggers and smugglers among other criminal practices. Prime targets of such criminalization are individuals who lack sufficient identification documents. Fuelled by suspicion, the criminalization of immigrants occurs through stop-and-search operations, sporadic raids and arbitrary detentions.

Stop-and-search is mostly carried out by personnel from private security companies who habitually stop anyone they suspect to be an illegal migrant and subjecting them to an often violent and dehumanising search process. Jimmy who works as a gardener in Mooikloof recounted his stop-and-search ordeal at the hands of private security company officers:

It was a Friday afternoon; my employer had given me an early break that day. On my way home I was pushing my brand new bicycle which I had bought about three weeks before. Suddenly a private security van stopped right in front of me as if to block my passage. Two guys jumped out of the van and instructed me to lie down. They were holding these small gadgets that looked like guns but they were not guns. I was told later by my employer that they are called taser guns, they release electricity into one's body to weaken them. Out of fear I obliged to their instructions and lay down. They started asking me where I had gotten the bicycle. I told them I had saved money and my employer had helped me acquire the bike. They would have none of it and insisted I had stolen the bicycle. They alleged I had robbed a local young man of the bicycle at the shops. They only relented and let me go when I asked them to accompany me to my employer's residence where I kept the receipts for the purchase. It's painful to be accused of a crime you did not commit, worse still to be humiliated like that in broad day light!

The raids on the settlement, which are unannounced, sporadic and wanton in nature, are an anticipated but loathed occurrence for the Plastic View community. Joe aptly captured the severity of the raids on the community when he said:

You know, these people raid us just to intimidate and harass us. It's sad that they suspect us to be the perpetrators of all sort and manner of crime that occurs in this area. Surprisingly, they have never recovered anything meaningful from their raids, not even the beautiful cars that we hear are stolen daily on the roads! One then wonders the purpose and intent of these painful raids on us.

Arbitrary detention is a practice of criminalization perpetrated against the immigrants. The police casually detain those they suspect to be criminal elements. Private security companies also apprehend and handover to the police any individual they suspect. The police often detain them for days without any charge laid against them. Joe recounted how he at some point spent a weekend in police cells only to be released without a charge:

At some point I was standing there minding my own business then a police detail came, grabbed me by the shirt collar and violently bundled me into the van. On asking why I was being harassed like that, the police officer retorted that I looked like a crook. We were taken to Garsfontein police station on a Friday and we got released on Monday morning with no charge levelled against us!

The various forms of criminalization discussed above have had far-reaching effects on the residents of Plastic View. Such criminalization has inflicted a dent on already precarious livelihoods, led to destruction of property as in the case of Mama Cee who has been in the Spaza (small groceries shop) business for close to a decade. She said she had lost count of the raids on her shop and she could not account for the losses incurred due to these raids:

My brother at times I feel like I work for the police because they raid me, take away my stock and I have to replenish the stocks. Tell me, where do I get the money to restock? I do not sell alcohol or any illicit products but I am always targeted. At times I feel like, more than paying for the crime of being a foreigner I am also persecuted for being a woman.

Another informant, Pelasi confirmed the same, saying:

I used to employ an assistant at some point but I dismissed her after we got raided and lost a huge amount of stock. I could not restock and cater for her wages at the same time. I have thought of quitting on many occasions but if I quit I have no other source of income, this Spaza business is all I know.

Sometimes it leads to heightening general insecurity for the migrants. Owing to the frequent raids, stop-and-search and detention visited upon them; there is a palpable sense of insecurity among residents of Plastic View. The migrants live in uncertainty not knowing when next they will be stopped and searched or when and whether they will be detained without charge. This comes out clearly in the interview with Tee who condemned the practice for its psychological effect, adding that:

It's really stressful; you don't know when next a raid will be carried out. Every day I worry and wonder whether myself or my relatives will safely come back from work. Such insecurity is the reason we resolved to leave our young families back home in Zimbabwe. Honestly you can't stay with children in such unsecure environs.

Secondly, exploitation is another hostility that residents of Plastic View encounter at the hands of the host society. The exploitation is two-pronged in nature, with migrants being underpaid for services rendered or non-payment in extreme circumstances. A majority of migrants residing at Plastic View offer handyman services to residential communities and commercial properties in and around the Garsfontein area. Services provided include painting, gardening, building repairs, waste management and plumbing among others. Those with handyman skills market their expertise along highways and at intersections by displaying their tools of trade and contact numbers on roadsides. Because their livelihoods are precarious, their capacity to negotiate fair prices and conditions of service with prospective employers and contractors is significantly limited.

The fact that most of the handyman service providers are not properly documented and lack requisite permits to work results in them earning less than what those with proper documentation would ideally earn for a similar job. Over the years Zimbabweans and other immigrants from the region and beyond have been accused of 'stealing opportunities' from deserving South Africans (Alfaro-Velcamp & Shaw, 2016). They also, allegedly, undercharge for services provided in the process outcompeting locals. To that end, those that provide their services are often underpaid. These handyman and menial labourers are essentially at the mercy of those who buy the services to pay fairly or not. Testimonies abound of how some have been made to work without a commensurate payment coming their way. Others have been physically or verbally abused by their prospective employers.

Most notorious for the violations are local middlemen and subcontractors colloquially known as *Mahlangus*. Because they have all the required documentation, they easily get job offers especially in high security estates like Woodhill where access is granted on condition of possession of a valid passport, national identification card or work permit. After getting these jobs the *Mahlangus* subcontract to irregular immigrants for half the price or even less. Out of desperation, the irregular migrants accept the knocked-down offer. As narrated by King, an experienced handyman:

The Mahlangus exploit us and we lack the capacity to take them head on because they are connected to the Police. They can have you arrested and deported if you want to act clever! For example my uncle was punished for asking for the initial payment he had been promised prior to starting the job. He got deported at the instigation of the contractor who had connections in high places.

Another form of exploitation involves non-payment for services rendered. These middlemen facilitate access to high security estates for the irregular migrants to work. After one has finished the job the middlemen start to give all sorts of excuses for non-payment. Again, they engage unscrupulous law enforcement agents to silence the migrants from demanding their dues. While at the 'market', the researchers witnessed a bitter argument between a contractor and a migrant handyman he had duped a long time back. According to the handyman he had done a painting job on behalf of the middleman but when it came to payment the middleman suddenly disappeared with his phone suddenly unreachable. After almost a year they met again and the handyman immediately mobilised his colleagues. They mobbed the middleman demanding that he pay them or they would impound his equipment. The middleman then went to the bank and withdrew the money and paid the men. Such occurrences are common-place but in most situations they fail to get fair arbitration because of their foreign and irregular status.

The net effect of underpayment and non-payment on the migrants and by extension their dependents, is that their already precarious livelihoods are made direr. Considering that these temporary jobs are the ones that sustain them, underpayment and non-payment condemns them to more debt and possibly destitution since they survive on a hand to mouth basis. The other effect is loss of equipment as they are often forcefully displaced from their work stations.

Deprivation of essential social services is the third form of hostility that people encounter. Contrary to criminalization and exploitation which are individual, deprivation of essential services is communal and is experienced collectively. The people are supposed to get water, refuse collection, ablution and other health services. However, there is now less frequent refuse collection. Where people call for support, the health authorities rarely come. Residents lamented the slow rate at which ambulance services are dispatched in times of emergencies like birth or serious injuries that happen regularly in the settlement. Likewise when a crime is reported, service providers and authorities including the police are reluctant to provide services. In fact, the moment they realise the complainant is a Plastic View resident they dismiss the case. In some of the cases, the people are even blamed for the crime, as the testimony from one respondent, Don, clearly shows:

Following the isolated incidences of inter-ethnic skirmishes that have occurred here, service providers are reluctant or even unwilling to provide services to us. The police, for instance, dismiss you the moment they hear you are from Plastic View. They view us to be the root cause of all the problems around this neighbourhood; hence we are undeserving of their services. If you call ambulance services in the event of an emergency they do not come promptly. Thank God a few individuals around here now have cars, we now simply hire local cars to ferry the sick and the injured to hospital.

As regards water provision the people are equally denied. To be sure, there was a time when this service was provided. The residents of Plastic View are denied access to water which makes the health and living conditions in the settlement grimmer. Traditionally, the local authority had contracted a private entity to fetch water and feed it into tanks situated at strategic points around the settlement. However this service has since become erratic to such an extent that sometimes there is no water in the tanks. A resident in the camp, Jabu confirmed this deprivation, adding that:

Water supply is also erratic unlike back in the day when we used to have a steady supply. You wouldn't rule out the possibility of malice and sabotage on the part of the authorities, they simply hate us and want us to leave this place by whatever means. The locals also dislike us, and for instance, there is a water valve close by that we used to fetch water from in the event that the tanks run out of water. We woke up one day to realise that someone had poured a concrete mixture into the valve to block it. We no longer have an alternative source of water after that. We know it was done to spite us for our staying here. Whoever did it has the heart of a witch! How can they deny us water? Mere water!

The impact of this deprivation is enormous and is regularly attested by stories in the local media. For example the media has noted that the chance of water-borne disease outbreaks is high. The people themselves also confirm this, with one resident saying that:

We are living like animals...worse than pigs...we get sick and some even die. There are no functional toilets, this unbearable stench, flies all over. If nothing is done we will die like flies here. It's really painful.

Overall then, and as attested above, the residents from Plastic View are subjected to a wide range of punitive actions by the state, local authorities, capital and ordinary citizens. These forms of actions are designed, to discipline the settlers, in the Foucauldian sense. In the next section we examine the strategies deployed to counteract the hostilities.

Strategies for beating back hostilities

Against an unrelenting barrage of hostilities from the neighbouring communities, the state and its proxies, the residents of Plastic View have conceived and deployed a variety of responses to such hostilities and animosity. There is an enormous variation in the responses in plot, time span and effectiveness. Whereas some of the response strategies like seeking recourse in the courts are enduring and often very effective, other strategies such as immersion into mainstream society are fleeting and less effective. They are discussed in detail below.

A key and resilient response that migrants deploy is tactical cosmopolitanism (Landau & Freemantle, 2010), wherein migrants strategically position themselves with a view to immersing or self-excluding themselves from mainstream society as and when it suits their interests. Immersion tactics include mastering the local language and dress code so that they easily blend in and easily pass for a local. It is normal for Zimbabweans to converse in local languages. Laston from Masvingo province spoke Zulu language with an exaggerated intonation that could easily deceive anyone suspecting him of being non South African. His usage of popular Zulu phrases was so frequent, possibly to mislead people into believing he was a hard core Zulu. Similarly, Freddy spoke Afrikaans with a high degree of proficiency. And the Bulawayo born, Simpiwe, went further, speaking Xhosa and dragging words as do local South Africans.

Tactical cosmopolitanism was not just limited to language only. It was clear also in the area of deportment. Nowhere is this clearer than in the case of Zed who, in order to fit in with local people, coated his teeth with gold casings, which is what local people often do. Moreover, tactical cosmopolitanism is seen in the shopping behaviour of Plastic View residents. A good number of migrants circumvented African market stalls, choosing instead to patronise and to shop in upmarket malls like Woodlands and Park View. This was designed, and no doubt succeeded in giving them a sense of belonging to cityscapes deemed to be the preserve of well to do locals.

As is normal among migrants, where belonging is threatened, they often retreat into invisibility, where they escape the gaze of suspicious South Africans. Typically this retreat takes the form of remaining in what they call *Gawa*, which is their settlement area. In here they run their lives according to their norms, and conducting business in ways that require minimal state engagement that might court trouble for them. Thus disputes are locally resolved, and those not content with decisions reached, are expected to vacate the area—a difficult decision to reach for most. Such transformation of the settlement area into what Scott (2009: p04) referred to as a 'nonstate space' (the state is kept at arm's length), is tactical and is designed to minimise official intervention.

Approaching the courts for recourse is another of the most consistently used strategies in confronting and beating back hostilities perpetrated against the immigrants. Over the years, the Plastic View community have, with the assistance of Tswelopele Step by Step, approached the courts to help resolve the tensions with the local

community and the local authority. As earlier noted, the courts have become de facto guarantors of the Plastic View residents continued stay in the contested urban space they call home.

We are grateful to our benefactor Collen and his wife Denise who have found us lawyers to represent us. They have stood with us and have been leading us in approaching the courts in our attempt to resist eviction from here. We have been to the courts several times and the judgements have prolonged our stay here.(Jambo, July 2018)

In response to the arbitrary raids from police and private security companies the migrants at Plastic View use social media to appraise and alert each other of impending raids. Beyond communicating cheaply with folks back home through social media, especially WhatsApp, the migrants also communicate vital information pertaining to their safety in the settlement. Oftentimes settlers raise hue and cry messages on social media platforms to alert others of imminent arrest or to plead for support in the face of threats. So desperate is their use of the platforms that they share information with anyone person that they think is potentially useful for their cause. For, instance we were regularly inundated with WhatsApp messages drawing attention to the indiscriminate arrests and detention of people by police. That this information was sent to us was because the people thought we could be of assistance, which unfortunately was not the case.

Box 1: WhatsApp chat between researcher and respondent on arbitrary arrests of irregular migrants at Plastic View

[02/15, 19:09] **Respondent T:** Things are bad this side, people are being arrested.

[02/15, 19:09] **Researcher:** Why, what is the problem? Are they being arrested inside or outside the settlement?

[02/15, 19:10] **Respondent T:** They are actually following people to their workplaces.

[02/15, 19:10] **Researcher:** What will they want?

[02/15, 19:11] **Respondent T:** They want valid passports and asylum seeker permits.

[02/15, 19:14] **Researcher:** So what do they do after arresting?

[02/15, 19:14] **Researcher:** Where are they taken?

[02/15, 19:18] **Respondent T:** They are taken to Lindela

[02/15, 19:19] **Researcher:** So in your area who has been arrested?

[02/15, 19:20] **Respondent T:** A lot of our neighbours have been arrested

[02/15, 19:21] **Respondent T:** Today I received a notification on my MTN cell phone number instructing that all illegals should go back

[02/15, 19:28] **Researcher:** Have the police been frequenting the settlement

[02/15, 19:28] **Respondent T:** Yes they came, a lot of them!

[02/15, 19:29] **Researcher:** When (did they come)?

[02/15, 19:30] **Respondent T:** Today actually

[02/15, 19:31] **Researcher:** Did they make any arrests?

[02/15, 19:28] **Respondent T:** Yes they took away a few guys

Additionally, migrants make recourse to fake identities as a way of covering themselves from local harassment. A huge proportion of the people in the *Gawa*, as they often called the area, had fake identity cards, academic certificates, passports and permits which are produced locally for a nominal fee. From what was said to us in interview with Dee, who is a locally renowned passport and permit agent, there is, again a wide variation in the charges for these essential documents, the fee no doubt depending on the urgency of the application can go as

high as 1500 Rand for those wanting same-day release of the document. Those wanting delayed production of the documents can pay between 800 and 1000 Rand. The sustainability of such a strategy is minimal considering that the state has introduced mechanisms of differentiating originals from counterfeits. Nonetheless, counterfeit documentation still remains popular among the migrants at Plastic View, presumably because for them it is better than not having any form of identification.

In response to the challenge of non-payment or underpayment, the migrants resort to diplomatic strategies of resolving disputes with contractors and prospective employers. They have mastered the art of negotiating for a reasonable payment for jobs done. Such diplomacy pays off for certain individuals like King who out of their meekness get job offers ahead of others who are deemed difficult. King believes that confrontation does not always help, stating that:

The best strategy is to negotiate with them so that they don't underpay you. If they see that you are cooperative you are the first person they get for any jobs they may find. Of course it's not fair but it's still better to be paid a little rather than not being paid at all. At times hunger drives you to accept such exploitation, we really have no way out.

It is for this reason that migrants made recourse to this art of negotiation, whenever they could.

CONCLUSION

In this section, we want to draw from the study and suggest the sense in which data we present is consistent with actor-oriented approaches where this study is located. As shown by the Zimbabwean anthropologist Angela Cheater, people rarely accept things as they come. Even in risky environments, they often develop innovative and sometimes inconsistent strategies to ensure the realisation of individual and social interests. This point has been supported by Dzingirai, (2008) and Muzvidziwa, (2001) who showed how groups turned to various institutions for continued existence when threatened by modern development. In recent years, political sociologists working in this tradition have added the dimension of tactical uses of identity – what they term as tactical cosmopolitanism – as ways by which potentially unwanted social groups hide their visibility in a globalised and fast-changing urban environment. It can be said Plastic View processes echo these long term ideas advanced by actor-oriented, social exchange and transactional theorists. In the first place we see migrants providing gifts to police officers and other people who are constantly fishing for a bribe in the rough neighbourhood. This is meant to win their favour and protection. Secondly, we also see individuals who were threatened with eviction approaching groupings and institutions that have the potential of protecting them against hostile dominant groupings. They also turned to the legal system, in particular the courts, looking for favourable judgement. When all this failed they tactfully redefined their social and ethnic identity in order to suit the environment. This ranged from linguistic to personal department modification to fit in with members from the dominant ethnic groups. Arguably then, data from a persistent and inconsistent Plastic View support the insights from actor-oriented, social exchange theorists and transactionalists.

However, while we agree with this level of theorisation regarding man in risky environment, certain aspects remain ambiguous. For example, it is not at all clear whether these strategic uses of culture and institutions yield eternal security for the threatened individual. It may be that these strategies provide temporary relief and security to migrants existing in risky and violent neighbourhood. It may also be that after a while, the migrants accede to their fate of continued persecution and harassment by those viewing them as illegitimate strangers and threats to their patrimony (Alfaro-Velcamp & Shaw, 2016; Matsinhe, 2011). If this is the case, then it quickly suggests the need to come up with other forms of protection to ensure that marginal groups enjoy their human rights to stay in globalised but rough neighbourhoods. For their part, the state; its proxies and autochthons alike should extend the formal protection of migrants by regarding them as legitimate as opposed to regarding them as dangerous strangers who don't deserve protection. But these are matters requiring additional research in Africa.

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