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Collective Mobilization and the Struggle for Squatter Citizenship: Rereading "Xenophobic" Violence in a South African Settlement

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Given the association between informal residence and the occurrence of "xenophobic" violence in South Africa, this article examines "xenophobic violence" through a political account of two squatter settlements across the transition to democracy: Jeffsville and Brazzaville on the informal periphery of Atteridgeville, Gauteng. Using the concepts of political identity, living politics and insurgent citizenship, the paper mines past and present to explore identities, collective practices and expertise whose legacy can be traced in contemporary mobilization against foreigners, particularly at times of popular protest. I suggest that the category of the "surplus person", which originated in the apartheid era, lives on in the unfinished transition of squatter citizens to formal urban inclusion in contemporary South Africa. The political salience of this legacy of superfluity is magnified at times of protest, not only through the claims made on the state, but also through the techniques for protest mobilization, which both activate and manufacture identities based on common suffering and civic labour. In the informal settlements of Jeffsville and Brazzaville, these identities polarised insurgent citizens from non-citizen newcomers, particularly those traders whose business-as-usual practices during times of protest appeared as evidence of their indifference and lack of reciprocity precisely at times when shared suffering and commitment were produced as defining qualities of the squatter community.

In May 2008, violent, collective anti-immigrant evictions broke out in localities across South Africa, leading to sixty-two deaths, the displacement of thousands of people, deployment of the army to curb the attacks, and the erection of tented camps to shelter tens of thousands of victims (Igglesden, Monson, and Polzer 2009). Such incidences of collective violence had happened before, and continue to occur on a sporadic basis (Africa Research Bulletin 2011, 38–41; Commey 2013). Many explanations have mapped the violence onto racial identities (Gqola 2008; Matsinhe 2012; Tafira 2011) or broad economic variables such as poverty, relative deprivation, or competition for resources (IDASA 2008; Human Sciences Research Council 2008; Joubert 2008; Amisi et al. 2011, Gelb 2008). Comparative case studies have highlighted instead the importance of local leadership (Misago 2012) and struggles for citizenship (Von Holdt et al. 2011). Other emerging readings, focusing on the detail of specific cases, have highlighted "place-based identities" (Kirshner 2014, 6), and complexities in the moral economy of incidents of collective violence (Monson 2012; Kerr and Durrheim 2013; Kirshner 2012). By probing the local logic of collective violence, as other key studies of violence have done (Kalyvas 2009, 6; 26, Mamdani 2001, 8), these studies counteract arguments attributing attacks to a "xenophobic" false consciousness originating from national elites (Hayem 2013; Mosselson 2010).

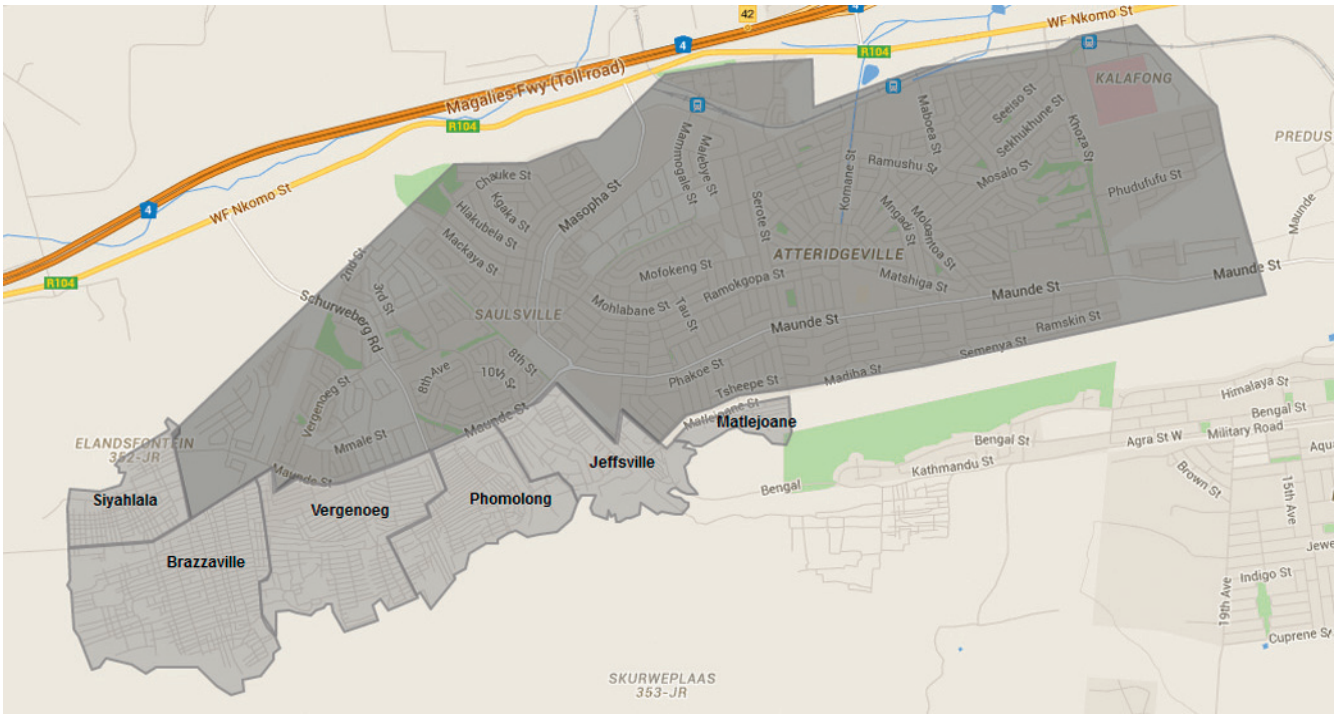
This paper builds on the discovery of a significant association between informal residence – that is, living in a shack or other untitled dwelling – and the incidence of "xenophobic" violence in South Africa (Fauvelle-Aymar and Wa Kabwe-Segatti 2012). In South Africa, informal residence has historically been concentrated in distinct areas composed of untitled, makeshift shacks on irregularly occupied land.[1] These sites,

1 The densities of informal housing in the back-yards of formal townships are also growing.

referred to as "squatter camps" or "informal settlements",[2] are often framed primarily in terms of their synonymity with poverty. However, they have also been associated with defiant collective politics throughout the twentieth century and beyond (Bonner 1990; Stadler 1979; Vawda 1997; Van Tonder 1989; Chance 2011; Makhulu 2010; Selmeczi 2012; Pithouse 2014). Given that history, geography ,and politics come together to create the political identities that animate violence (Mamdani 2001), and that place has the power to shape social relations (Gieryn 2000), this article examines "xenophobic violence" through a political account of two squatter settlements across the transition to democracy in South Africa.

The contribution is based on a double-embedded case study of two areas of Mshongo, an informal residential area on the periphery of Atteridgeville, Tshwane, in the province of Gauteng. This is a productive site for a study of the local politics of violence because a large-scale, violent eviction of foreigners resulted in several deaths and major displacement occurred here *before* the nationwide outbreak and snowballing of attacks in 2008, independently of the momentum that a sense of national crisis gave to that period. Mshongo was also an area for which secondary qualitative data was available to bridge the period between the 2008 violence and my fieldwork in 2012. I selected two areas of the settlement as the embedded cases for my study: Jeffsville, founded in 1991 before the advent of democracy, and Brazzaville, founded in 1998, four years into the democratic dispensation (Figure 1). 251658240

Figure 1: The constituent settlements of Mshongo in Atteridgeville, Tshwane



2 My work draws on Mamdani's conception of political identity which emphasises the role played by state institutions and practices in shaping even counterpolitical identities. Where some might favour "informal" or "shack settlement" over the term "squatter camp" – associated as it is with the apartheid government – my study illustrates how the act of "squatting" retains an important political resonance precisely because of its association with defiance of apartheid controls. I therefore favour this term in the present paper, despite the use of synonyms here and there.

Drawing on Mamdani's concept of political identities as contoured by institutions and practices of the state (Mamdani 2001), and Holston's observations on how marginalization can form the foundation for counterpolitics among those subjected to differential citizenship (Holston 2008; Von Holdt et al. 2011), I used primary data collected in 2012 (forty-four field encounters), secondary data collected by the African Centre for Migration and Society in 2008 (twenty-one interview transcripts), and national, provincial, and local government archives to explore top-down and bottom-up forces that have shaped squatter collective identity and practices both before and after the advent of democracy, and to trace their relationship to violence against foreigners. Following Foucault, I treat these written and spoken texts as an incomplete set of "traces left by the past", which do not add up to a final truth, but can nevertheless be reconstituted in relation to each other (O'Farrell 1989, 62), in order to make other cases more comprehensible.

1. Squatter Camps: A Place for the "Surplus" among the Citizens

Mamdani sees political identities as institutionalized through laws, policies, and practices, which can both individualize and collate identities. These group identities "shape our relationship to the state and to one another through the state", becoming the starting point of "our struggles" (Mamdani 2001, 22). In the same way, the political meaning of squatter camps has been shaped by a changing institutional context, moving from deliberate racial and spatial stratification during Apartheid to attempts to address differentiated citizenship with the advent of democracy.

From 1948 to 1994, under the National Party, South Africa was subject to a system of extreme racial and spatial segregation, in which legitimate space in the cities was reserved only for those "black" bodies essential for the servicing of the "white" city; beyond this, all "black" people were deemed "surplus" and barred from cities through a complex regime of "influx control" permit restrictions and limitations on the development and funding of "black" urban residential areas (Maylam 1995, 75–76; Posel 1991). Squatter settlements emerged in defiance of Apartheid's efforts to contain "black" urbanisation, despite the repressive character of legislation and spatial policy, and the forced removal of numerous settlements (Platzky and Walker 1985). Archived Cabinet Committee minutes from the 1980s illustrate, in repeated discussions of the paradigmatic Western Cape case of Crossroads, that squatter territories could exceed the power of the state's coercive forces to discipline them, becoming difficult to police and creating flows of urbanization and heterogeneous communities that proved virtually impossible to reverse (for instance, see Working Group for the Cabinet Committee on Constitutional Development 1984, 175; Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs 1985).

The removal of Crossroads became a focus of political resistance and unwanted international pressure on the Apartheid state (Working Group for the Cabinet Committee on Constitutional Development 1984, 191), which helped prompt the liberalisation of explicitly race-based influx controls to apparently non-racial "orderly urbanization" from 1986. However, this was simply a change in the focus of state repression (Booth and Biyela 1988, Huchzermeyer 2003, Hindson 1985), where exclusion moved from a focus on the "black" body in general to the body of the "illegal squatter" as the "surplus" to be excluded from urban space. Whereas existing squatter camps were to be formalized under the new legislation, harsher measures including summary eviction were set in place for any new squatters (Provincial Secretary for the Transvaal 1988, Annexure B; J. C. Heunis – Minister of Constitutional Development and Planning 1988).

In the process of "depoliticising" influx control, the government devolved authority over squatter control to provincial level. In the case of the Transvaal Provincial Authority (TPA), which presided over Atteridgeville before the birth of the Gauteng province in 1994, the repressive provisions of the Act were seen to clash with the realities of urbanisation. As such, the TPA accepted as policy that it was only "concerned with the so-called positive steps in terms of the Act" (Chief Director – Land Use c 1987, November). It explicitly deemed the Act's powers to provide land for the homeless and ensure its gradual, orderly development to be a more appropriate response to squatter settlements (Executive Director: Community Services – TPA c 1987,

10–11 and 11–13). As such, the TPA turned the exclusionary Act into a mechanism for the transition of both current and future squatters into the formal city. However, this was no easy task given the shortage of viable urban land and ongoing, more subtle restrictions on "black" urbanisation imposed by the national state – such as constraints on housing development, the privatisation of the housing market, and an insistence that already under-resourced townships become self-funding through the imposition of ever higher rentals and service fees.

The contradictions of the time also included gradual political liberalisation and the unbanning of revolutionary organisations while covert military operations were still taking place, leaving activists and returning exiles still at risk from the state (Liebenberg 1994). In Atteridgeville, these socio-historical circumstances would shape squatting as a citizenship-claiming practice in contradictory ways. On the one hand, it shaped a mode of active, "insurgent citizenship" (Holston 2009, 2008) drawing on communitarian forms of social organisation and resources of violence from the national liberation struggle to defend the space squatters made in the city. On the other, it shaped the anticipation of a transition to fuller citizenship and a more passive practice of compliant, institutionalised waiting, particularly after the advent of non-racial democracy in 1994. In the following, I show how the legacy of these social forms, violent resources, and anticipation of a more equal citizenship to come can be traced through the transition to democracy, to post-democracy resistance to evictions in the late 1990s and on to evictions of foreigners in the late 2000s.

2. "Living Politics" before Democracy

As state institutions and practices shape counter-political identities (Mamdani 2001, 22), I start by examining the squatter politics that developed in Atteridgeville in response to the definition of "black" urbanites, and later squatters in particular, as an unwanted and forbidden "surplus". In recent studies of the shackdwellers' movement in post-apartheid South Africa, scholars have explored the concept of "living politics", which considers the political meaning of squatters' everyday living conditions, and views the same as the foundation for a form of subaltern political agency (Chance 2011; Selmeczi 2012). The same construct can be traced in the way in which superfluity or non-belonging was inscribed on "black" subjects through structured distortions of everyday life in Atteridgeville, creating an indivisible unity of the personal and the political.

By the mid 1980s, an average of nine people were dwelling in each of the modest township houses of the Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging (PWV) region of the Transvaal, while housing supply was increasing at one third of the speed of population growth (Platzky and Walker 1985, 163). In Atteridgeville, all housing development and expansion of the township had been "frozen" since 1964 (National Archives Repository (NAR) BAO 8/71 A6/5/2/P54/1G-2G 20/2/2/3 1987a). For adequate living space, those with rights to family accommodation would have to return to a state-manufactured ethnic "homeland", or apply for housing in Soshanguve (National Archives Repository (NAR) CDB1768 PB3–2–3–8 c.1987), a township earmarked for inclusion into the "independent" Republic of Bophuthatswana – a process that would require such "surplus" families to surrender their South African (infra-)citizenship. Holding onto their place on the margins of the city of Pretoria meant enduring the mundane consequences of the overcrowding of formal houses, and a proliferation of informal "backyard" accommodation that eventually led to the declaration of Atteridgeville as a housing "crisis area" in 1987 (National Archives Repository (NAR) BAO 8/71 A6/5/2/P54/1G-2G 20/2/2/3 1987b).

Overcrowding and the consequent deterioration of living conditions became a mundane and ever-present inscription on township dwellers of their designation as "surplus" people. A typical expression of the mundane – but deeply political – motivations for squatting in Atteridgeville was conveyed by an early squatter at Jeffsville, who explained that she chose to squat as she was living with ten or more family members in a house with only four rooms:

> I lived in Atteridgeville with my parents. You know, our houses have four rooms, with the whole family living there. There were six children in my family, and two of my siblings had their own kids. (female interviewee, Jeffsville, 4 August 2012)

Jeffsville founder Jeff Ramohlale highlighted similar problems – such as two brothers and their wives sharing a single room – as the primary force behind his mobilisation of the squatter movement in Atteridgeville (Jeff Ramohlale, Jeffsville, 12 July 2012). Backyard lodgers struggling to pay rent to their better-established "black" landlords, and, enduring the mundane tensions of landlord-tenant relations, became another group of early squatters (male respondent, Jeffsville, 1 August 2012). This personal politics of everyday hardships – the inscription of national politics on life through suffering – prompted the 1991 land invasion that founded Jeffsville, illustrating the way in which marginalised citizens are able, by virtue of their very marginalisation, to constitute an insurgent counterpolitics (Roy 2009, 8, Holston 2008).

The entanglement of personal and political that is evident in squatters' motivations to illegally occupy land is a first signal of a politics both local and national, in that the squatter mobilisation was a response to the deeply parochial, local manifestations of structural exclusion on the national political stage. It claimed not simply living space but the prospect of formal inclusion, in the context of a notion of squatting-as-transition that had emerged in the Transvaal, as well as to the softening of government policy around the expansion of Atteridgeville (National Archives Repository (NAR) BAO 8/71 6/5/2/P54/2 1986). Even as they opposed the state, enacting an insurgent demand for space through land invasions, and facing a series of evictions and Ramohlale's arrest and detention without trial, squatters were seeking not the overthrow of the state but to secure a rightful place within it. In line with the TPA's tolerance, they held fast to a hope that squatting would facilitate official recognition and a transition into formal housing:

> Some of us we were paying rent, and some were not working and didn't have that money to pay the rent, so we said "No, let's go and start our own houses, shack houses, and maybe the government will provide houses for us" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 17 July 2012)

Through the mobilisation of would-be squatters in response to "living politics" in the township, personal politics also created space for the public (though at the time still largely underground) politics of the anti-apartheid resistance movement. From the point of view of struggle activists, the establishment of the squatter camp was to create an "impenetrable" space for the safe return of exiles and the security of "comrades" from revolutionary militias such as Mkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) in the township (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012). At the time, the South African government was still engaged in counter-revolutionary activities (Liebenberg 1994), and many anti-apartheid activists and militia members could not risk returning from exile. In this way, the occupation of marginal township space joined the mundane, personal politics of superfluous life with the revolutionary politics of the anti-apartheid struggle, embodying an insurgent claim for the material and political rights of citizenship, articulated at both the local and national levels.

3. Repertoires and Resources of Collective Mobilisation and Violence

Squatting, as a practice of insurgent citizenship linked to common personal and public political goals, produced mobilisation infrastructures that served both to defend and reproduce the political subjectivity of an insurgent "surplus" population. This infrastructure helps explain how exclusionary sentiments within squatter camps are able to transform into collective acts of coercion that are less commonly seen elsewhere in the formal parts of South Africa's cities. In this section, I draw on examples from both Jeffsville and Brazzaville to illustrate the repertoires, resources and expertise of collective mobilisation and violence that emerged prior to democracy and have persisted in certain forms up until today.

In the early 1990s, the interface between a more parochial "living politics" and the explicit national political strategies of the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies in South Africa's liberation struggle provided the combination of coercive force and popular consent required to establish Jeffsville as a territory in the political sense of the word: land occupied by violence (Vaughan-Williams 2009, 66). Gathering to build shacks without explicit authority is an oppositional practice through which squatters "collectively mobilize and identify with each other as political communities" (Chance 2011). Repeated eviction, demolition, and confiscation of building materials became a pro-

ductive form of collective suffering that solidified a sense of micro-political community in Atteridgeville among squatters who, organized by Jeff Ramohlale, set up makeshift shelters overnight numerous times on the east, north, and western peripheries of the township. On 16 September 1991, they "forcefully entered where Jeffsville is now and started squatting" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 4 August 2012) – voting to name the settlement after their leader.

Claiming and defending Jeffsville against the coercive force of the state required a range of repertoires of popular force, which benefitted greatly from resources and repertoires drawn from the infrastructure of the broader liberation struggle. Squatter mobiliser Ramohlale was an ANC activist identified as a "commander" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 4 August 2012) and familiar with the township repertoires of the ANC's campaign of "ungovernability" – designed to frustrate and disable the state's military-security complex (Stemmet and Barnard 2003, 101). Riots and revolutionary activity in Atteridgeville included "threats, intimidation, petrol bombings of officers' homes and assaults leaving police officers in intensive care " (National Archives Repository (NAR) BAO 3/671 A2/17/6/5/A99 Vol 1 1986), depicting a context already replete with violent expertise. The involvement of struggle militias, who provided safehouses for comrades within the squatter settlement, provided extensive resources for violence. "Comrades" held a stock of illegal weapons, and were familiar with techniques for the elimination of enemies of the struggle:

> It's either petrol bomb – you know, they let you drink petrol, nee, they let you drink petrol, they give you a cigarette and then that cigarette is light. PUMM!!! He go. Or they stone you. There were illegal guns here; a lot of illegal guns. A lot of illegal guns. We were in possession of not only guns, even rifles. We had rifles here. A lot of them. And automatics. (male respondent, Jeffsville, 9 July 2012).

Militaristic strategies were applied to make Jeffsville a virtually autonomous territory. A deep trench was dug around the entire settlement to prevent police vehicles from entering (male respondent, Jeffsville, 12 July 2012). Plots were laid out in narrow alleys to constrain the use of armoured vehicles, and no-one was permitted to erect a fence that might obstruct a "comrade's" escape from police during a chase (male respondent, Brazzaville, 7 August 2012). The narrow lanes and paths through the settlement were left nameless to obstruct attempts by the security services to navigate the settlement (male respondent, Jeffsville, 30 July 2012).

Collective systems of passive and active surveillance and defence were also instituted. With the arrival of "comrades from MK and APLA" to reside among the people, and subsequent attempts by government intelligence operatives to infiltrate the squatter camp, surveillance and counter-intelligence regimens were established (male respondent, Jeffsville, 9 July 2012). These were reliant on the entanglement of the personal and political which provided for the establishment of collective repertoires of security and surveillance. All men were conscripted into night-time patrols, and residents were obliged to report any "new face next door" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 9 July 2012) to the leaders' office so that every resident's identity could be verified through the resources of political organisations. Popular participation did not rely on simple coercion but on solidarity and consent issuing from a sense of shared destiny: "It was a case of EVERYONE must participate because we've got enemies amongst ourselves" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 2 August 2012).

In the virtual absence of the state, patrols functioned to apprehend criminal suspects, and an autonomous people's court in the form of the squatter disciplinary committee produced a localised version of justice in consultation with members of the community. The committee, which comprised ten people who would question an apprehended criminal "like in court" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 12 July 2012), would warn first-timers, or for repeat-offenders decide on the nature of any punishment, usually a number of lashes. If the crime involved theft, the proceedings would also involve reclaiming the stolen items. The system was far from faultless, but arguably kept transgressors in a dialogue with their accusers in a manner that emphasised social bonds and a sense of community. Later, in Brazzaville, a similar disciplinary system and judicial structure were established under a separate leadership. The original structure of Brazzaville's disciplinary system – "the first time, I give you notice; second time, I give you warning; third time, *siyashaya* [we will hit you]" (male respondent, Brazza-

ville, 9 July 2012) – continues to be evident in today's less organised forms of mob justice, where residents, still using whistles distributed to the community by informal leaders, will tend to give leeway to first-time offenders, while mercilessly attacking offenders who have been arrested on multiple occasions.

At times of protest in Jeffsville's early years, the coercive force of popular politics was evident throughout the social field, from the actions of leaders to the behaviour of local thugs. The indivisibility of the personal and the political was particularly evident at these times, where the labour of each member of the community expressed a communitarian ethos of solidarity and reciprocity, and the collective experience of individual suffering. The decision to march meant staying home from work, with no exceptions. Leaders would issue letters for workers to take to their employers explaining their absence. Transgressors attempting to go to work would be beaten or stripped and forced to walk home naked (female respondent, Jeffsville, 19 July 2012), displaying the shame of their betrayal of the collective project for all to see. Roads were barricaded with burning tyres and buses attempting to transport people to work were "stoned", "burned", or "smashed" (police officer, Atteridgeville, 7 July 2012). Informal shops closed; they were expected to join the protest action "no matter what" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 17 July 2012). "Tsotsis" would target any shop that remained open, and could justify their actions as denunciation for lack of solidarity (male shopkeeper, Jeffsville, 1 August 2012). Importantly, most memories of this kind of enforced solidarity elicited no sign of disapproval from longstanding squatters but were seen as legitimate obligations upon the squatter political community. While this is clearly not a pure form of consensus, this should not disqualify it as a form of popular democracy, if we use the analogy of the democratic state, which also preserves itself through a majoritarian definition of the legitimate use of force (Weber 2002).

A number of the founding actors from Jeffsville's insurgent history remained in positions of informal authority throughout Mshongo in 2008, populating the informal "offices" of Concern, Jeffsville, Mdlalose, Phomolong, and later Brazzaville. Beyond the offices, members of block and street committees that helped organise informal surveillance and policing formed a less visible, latent organising infrastructure through which resources, repertoires, and expertise of mobilisation and coercion remain available for utilisation to this day. This was evident, for instance, when in 2012 a member of one of the settlements' community policing forums met me prior to their community meeting carrying a *sjambok* (leather whip). Thus, although the virtually autonomous exercise of coercive force seen in Jeffsville diminished in the course of the transition to democracy, many of the resources and repertoires of popular action persisted and remain available for utilisation in the service of popular crime control, protest action, and – as I will show later – popular evictions of unwanted outsiders in 2008.

4. Insider/Outsider Identities and the Contestation of Space

If the micro-territory of the squatter camp with its collective institutions and practices both expressed and produced a sense of squatter political community backed by violent resources, how was the inside and outside of this micro-political community defined? This is the next step in seeking to understand the link between squatter politics and "xenophobic" mobilization.

In one sense, the early collective struggles and practices discussed above have impacted on squatter identity through a distinction made between those "who fought for that squatter camp to be what it is today" and newcomers who "came as tenants" and "never thought of squatting" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012). Here, we find echoes of autochthony as a measure of "the contribution of a group to the prosperity of a collectivity that resides in a given space" (Hilgers 2011, 38) through the political act of squatting. Rather than being about a primordial connection, it is about political identity: about who "fought for" the settlement, about whose struggle, both political and personal, it embodies. This is not a particularly exclusive identity discourse, for it provides room for new arrivals to build up their own "autochthony as capital" (Hilgers 2011, 38) through involvement in the life of the settlement over time. Yet in the context of historical waiting lists for housing, anteriority was to become a faultline in squatter political identity, founding claims to a hierarchy of priority within the squatter community.

Brazzaville's establishment eight years after the founding of Jeffsville, and four years into democracy, appears as a key moment in the delineation of insider and outsider identities based on anteriority in the settlement. West of Jeffsville, the settlements of Phomolong and Vergenoeg (see Figure 1) had been established under the leadership of businessman Montgomery Matenji, and in the late 1990s Ramohlale and Matenji were cooperating within a micro-local structure called the Committee of 12, which represented each of the distinct civic structures in the expanding settlement. This was a bottom-up structure unaffiliated with any political party; a form of local "political society" (to borrow a term from Chatterjee 2004). Yet in 1998, contention over a new opportunity for inclusion in the city brought tensions between Jeffsville's more established squatters and Brazzaville's more recent arrivals, as each group sought priority in advancing their claims to space, both seeking relief in the personal realm of daily living conditions.

Until controversy erupted around the shacks west of Vergenoeg that eventually came to be Brazzaville, a sense prevailed of Mshongo as an unbounded site where victims of apartheid's racial and spatial stratification of citizenship could claim a place in the once exclusively "white" cities. Against pressure from the local authorities to strictly delimit the settlement, Ramohlale admitted the scores of people who came to Jeffsville on a daily basis: "There's no way I can chase you away, because you are also struggling the same as I," he said (Jeff Ramohlale, Jeffsville, 12 July 2012). Similarly, a retired member of Matenji's committee told me that Brazzaville was formed to create a place for those with nowhere else to go in a country where "black people [were] suffering for a living place" (Morithi Phasha, Brazzaville, 05072012). However, contention emerged between the claims of an ongoing stream of new claimants for informal space in the city, and the aspirations of established squatters for their long-awaited transition to formal inclusion. The problem was that the area where Matenji was allowing new squatters to settle at the western edge of Vergenoeg had been earmarked by the municipality for development and for the rehousing of squatters living in the most geologically unstable part of the settlement in Jeffsville, which was dolomitic and prone to dangerous subsidence and sinkholes.

The dolomitic area in Jeffsville was, of course, a more established area of the settlement with a longer history, where by 1998 many had already waited years for inclusion into the formal city. As we see so often in the literature on autochthony and nativism (Muzondidya 2007; Geschiere 2009), on competing claims to land (Lund 2013), or opportunities for formalisation (Roy 2005), identity politics tends to become salient at times when the distribution of resources or entitlements is at stake. As a consequence, a rift emerged, roughly corresponding to established and outsider/newcomer identities (Elias and Scotson 1965), despite the prior cooperation of the respective leaders. As such, informal leaders in Jeffsville did not support their counterparts in Vergenoeg when the latter – defiantly naming the new territory Brazzaville after the civil war ongoing there at the time – resisted an attempted eviction by the city (male respondent, Brazzaville, 4 August 2012).

The case went to court, and affidavits of the City reveal the discursive construction of two groups of squatters – the "legitimate" squatters waiting for housing allocation under the modern bureaucratic mechanism of the housing waiting list, and the "illegitimate" recent squatters accused of "jumping the queue" for housing by occupying land set apart to transition others into formality (Naude 1988). In an illustration of how state institutions produce legitimate political identities that structure the distribution of the goods of citizenship, the waiting list as an instrument for the validation of claims emerges as a key motif in the state's attempts to render squatters at Brazzaville an illegitimate surplus, disqualified from claims to urban space. The land for development was intended "for residents of Atteridgeville" (Naude 1988), defined as those on the existing waiting list for houses. In this way, the local is emphasised – not as a primordial origin, but as a place in which existing political claims are embedded. The point is made that barring a few "who claim to originate from Atteridgeville and Saulsville" (Naude 1988, 7) the Brazzaville squatters' "specific origins cannot be traced" (Dubazana 1998, 3); therefore, they should return to where they came from. But squatters at Brazzaville, many of whom had moved there from the township's hostels and neighbouring farms, claimed their national entitlement as citizens against this expression of localised entitlements, refusing this as an

unreasonable imperative to return "to our mothers' wombs!" (male respondent, Brazzaville, 9 July 2012).

The judge ruled that eviction could only be carried out if alternative accommodation was provided. In this way, the court reaffirmed the legitimacy of Brazzaville's squatters as claimants for inclusion, effectively adding them to the lengthening "queue for citizenship". Matenji described the judgement as a victory of democratic process – read as synonymous with freedom of movement and settlement:

> I won that fight. Because I was reasoning: those people vote for ANC, and then when they get the government, the government wants those people to be chased away from Brazzaville. They must go back to where they come from. Why? (Montgomery Matenji, Brazzaville, 5 July 2012)

Brazzaville's victory, of course, was not shared by the Jeffsville residents who, for a short period, stood poised on the threshold of the more complete citizenship represented by formal urban inclusion. In the next section, I will examine the context in which popular evictions of foreign nationals broke out a decade later, and point to legacies of collective identity and practice in this ostensibly "new" phenomenon.

5. "Xenophobic" Violence in Mshongo

> It was bad. It was really bad. Xenophobic time. [clears throat] I was there. I was inside the squatter camp. I was watching everything. [pause] You know, a group of people will just enter into a shack, break that shack in twenty minutes. Everything will be taken away in twenty minutes time. […] Spaza shops, ai… they take the whole grocery, they even take the roof. They tell that foreigner "Go!". If he talks they will attack him. The other one died there. They burn him with a [inaudible]. They burn him alive. (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012)

I found little evidence of "xenophobic" tendencies against longstanding "foreigners" in Mshongo before 2008. However, on 18 March 2008, evictions of foreigners and looting of foreign-owned businesses began during a protest march in the settlement (Chauke 2008) and continued for about a week, displacing large numbers of people who were subsequently housed in the local community hall and at the Malas shelter, an old municipal tyre warehouse. Numerous informal shops were looted and destroyed, and up to seven people were reported killed. Here, and with all aggregate fatality rates cited in press coverage, it is worth distinguishing between murders for apparently "xenophobic" motives and deaths by endogenous violence (Kalyvas 2009) and misadventure. In Atteridgeville, the fatality total included two South Africans who suffered fatal accidents while looting, and one who was killed in counter-violence by a foreign national. Nevertheless, the visceral quality of violence is an obstacle to analysis (Kalyvas 2009, Žižek 2008); the intellect balks at the yawning abyss of what could justify burning someone alive. Killing was the most extreme, but also the least prominent form of violence, and hence my primary interest was in the process of forceful eviction, looting, and destruction that predominated.

The 2008 eviction was planned in advance; local residents were aware of it and foreign residents were warned to leave. The precise mechanisms of mobilization were difficult to disentangle, and involved a spillover of the politics of evictions that occurred in the neighbouring settlement of Itireleng, perhaps five hundred metres south of Mshongo. Some of the foreigners displaced in Itireleng had fled to Mshongo, and representatives from Itireleng lobbied Mshongo's leaders and residents to expel them. Despite being refused by more than one settlement leader, the anti-foreigner platform was quickly taken up by residents and spread, apparently by the surveillance networks of block and street committee members, and within social networks. The idea gained widespread popularity (male respondent, Vergenoeg, 3 August 2012; two female respondents, Brazzaville, 1 August 2012; male respondent, Jeffsville, 22 October 2008), such that during the attacks both police and informal leaders felt unable to stand against the community:

> You won't stop them. You must support them. If you stop them, they attack you. How can you stop them? … Because, hey, it was a majority of people, the whole squatter camp. It wasn't like one person, or three, four people there, it was the majority. (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012)

As Mamdani reminds us, popular participation in mass violence cannot be reduced to an effect of top-down manipulation (Mamdani 2001, 7). Thus, I am interested in making comprehensible the widespread support expulsions enjoyed in 2008. A closer examination of post-millennial developments in the settlements will provide a context in

which popular agency in anti-foreigner mobilisation becomes more comprehensible.

First, there has been the emptying out of the idea of a transition. One respondent captured the sense of suspended transition as follows:

> For twenty-two years in this squatter camp. There's no changes. Instead, the squatter camp is growing. It's developing further. And there are people, their lives in the squatter camp … [pauses to search for words]. People there, they live … [searches again, then gives up]. Basic human needs, you understand, they are not catered for. The government is not catering for these people. (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012)

If Mshongo was formed as a temporary, local solution to national forces of urban exclusion, and in anticipation of a transition to the equal citizenship of formal inclusion, the long periods involved – in 2012, twenty-one years in Jeffsville, fourteen in Brazzaville – suggest that rather than being an escape route, the squatter camps have become places of permanent temporariness; a new modality for the inscription of superfluity on the bodies of marginalised citizens.

This sense of suspended transition has arisen concurrently with demographic change, as in-migration has continued apace. Population growth has placed untenable demands on the physical and social infrastructure of the settlements, increasing residents' vulnerability even as they attempt to improvise a life in this urban periphery. With time and a growing population, pit toilets have proliferated in the dolomitic soil, posing potentially fatal geological risks: subsidences have seen at least one toilet collapse beneath an occupant. Limited electricity infrastructure necessitates ubiquitous pirating, overloading the transformers and causing regular power outages. These blackouts see multiple homes burn down – either through mishaps with candles while the power is out, or, when it returns, through fires caused by heating appliances that were left switched on at the time of the power failure. Witnessing the smouldering remains of two shacks set alight by a forgotten candle during a walk with the researcher, Jeff Ramohlale echoed findings elsewhere (Chance 2011) when he insisted on the political meaning of the destruction and suffering, calling it "part and parcel of the struggle" (Jeff Ramohlale, Jeffsville, 30 July 2012).

The settlement – forged through the physical and political collective labour of longstanding residents as an instrument to serve coherent personal and political ends – has grown, and the diversity generated by growth has seen the squatter camp instrumentalised in new ways, giving rise to new social groups with little political attachment to the territory, and a class of tenants whose interests are perceived as being in tension with those of their squatter landlords (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012). Foreign nationals have been a substantial, or at least very visible, contributor to the population increase in Mshongo, and are often tenants. Whereas migrants with a long legacy in Mshongo appeared to be seen as locals, residents more clearly identify post-1994 arrivals as "foreigners". These "foreign" newcomers began arriving after 1994, becoming more noticeable from the late nineties and particularly since 2005.[3] These dates correspond roughly to the advent of democracy in 1994, the passing of South Africa's Refugees Act in 1998, and, from 2006 to 2011, the country's transformation into the world's number one host of new asylum seekers (UNHCR 2012).[4] Broadly, this and the corresponding rise in the density of businesses and increased competition for informal trade livelihoods (Abdi 2011), leading to increased precarity for established local traders, were seen by respondents as a very recent phenomenon.

6. Precarity, Protest, and the Mechanics of Mobilization

The sense of accelerating precarity and crisis in the settlement appears to have led, around the mid 2000s, to a renewed impetus for collective protest about conditions in the squatter camps, and renewed cooperation between the different parts of the settlement. Leaders of the various informal civic offices – some of them the same experts who participated in the original occupation of Jeffsville and its

3 According to 2011 census data, 45 percent of foreign-born squatters arrived after 2005.

4 Misago et al. report that 2008 did not see an increased influx of immigrants compared to other years, but viewed against this backdrop it is clear that the increased level of newcomer arrivals would have been sustained over several years in advance of the attacks.

violent defence – resurrected the old mobilizing techniques to manufacture a faded solidarity and manifest through practice the old squatter-as-insurgent-citizen identity. The old techniques of mobilization, which produced collective identity through collective practice, were used to mobilise the whole settlement to protest rumours of removal and call for basic services, from around 2006:

> We wake up as early in the morning – two-o-clock in the morning and then we begin to barricade all the entrances, you know, because that is where you are going to make sure that you have full participation in your protected action.[…] it stops people from going to work, you know […] we just went there and burnt tyres – the main entrance and all over there, with our sjamboks in our hands. And then when we see you as if you're going to work, you are going to get that punishment. "Where are you going?" […] We sjambok them and they'll go back. And the one who gets sjambokked he is going to make sure that he's also going to sjambok somebody who's also going to work.[…] You know, so that it becomes some sort of a chain. That is how we brought that strong unity about. (male respondent, Jeffsville, 9 July 2012)

This suggests that, leading up to 2008, a renewed importance was placed on political commitment among the squatters, drawing on existing scripts that emphasize communitarianism, and using violence to extort solidarity where necessary. Such practices reanimate communitarian political identities that have faded, emphasizing the necessity of (coerced) consensus and mass participation for the survival of the community, and once again drawing the personal and political together in a way that links political commitment to the prospect of relieving daily hardships and indignities that are the hallmark of squatters' unequal citizenship. As it happened, this resurgence of legacy repertoires of mobilisation, using violence to manufacture solidarity, also began in a year in which humanitarian migration into South Africa spiked dramatically and asylum applications from Zimbabwe grew substantially (UNHCR 2012, 26).

Since 2008, collective violence against foreigners has occurred three more times in Mshongo: in 2010, 2011, and 2015. In the 2010 and 2011 cases that my research covered, there was less widespread participation than in 2008, no evidence of a planned eviction, and only shops were targeted. A key commonality was the proximity of all four incidences to a protest, given that protest been linked elsewhere to xenophobic violence through the motif of insurgent citizenship (Von Holdt et al. 2011). In the words of a respondent in Brazzaville: "The march is the problem in this area … if you march to Pretoria they will come back and they start that attack, xenophobia … We don't arrange a march anymore because we don't know what's going to start" (male respondent, Brazzaville, 11 July 2012).

It seems that squatter political identity and repertoires of collective practice converge at times of protest, both in their substance and in their performance, in ways that polarise politically committed locals and apparently indifferent newcomers. A useful starting point can be drawn from the literature on mobilisations around autochthony elsewhere in Africa. Geschiere suggests that the power of autochthony appeals might depend on "a concentrating force" that generates "a shared sensorial experience of the world" (2009, 35), and unites diverse individuals in a feeling of "authentic belonging" (2009, 34). Arguably, a demonstration or protest march can serve as such a concentrating force through its dynamic embodiment of the local political community. Marches both articulate and inscribe shared suffering, and often give rise to confrontations with the state that magnify suffering while shutting down avenues for the expression of grievances. First, a protest march explicitly politicises mundane hardships by articulating them publically, initiating a dialogue between the local and the national. It magnifies the stakes of collective action through the linkage to personal suffering, and reproduces the salience of collective action by producing a time-delimited and clearly bounded opportunity for negotiation with the state over issues of great importance to the quality of residents lives. The march that preceded the 2008 attacks in Mshongo was a response to rumours that the land they were living on had been purchased and that the squatters would be forcibly removed to a distant location. The political heritage of this threat of removal to a distant area could also be seen as having a special mobilizing power.

Second, the march stages the shared experience of suffering, demanding that participants, who may be precariously employed, forego work and the money they need to survive. Given the coercive methods used, the "unity" at work

here is clearly not a natural outgrowth of the now diverse squatter community but to some extent a choreographed performance of solidarity. The march mans the boundary between those caught in the camp – at risk; without protection; lacking agency; unable to escape – and those outside who have the freedom to pursue their individual goals. It thus produces a concentrated embodiment of the experience of surplus personhood and locates the solution in collective action.

7. "Living for Free"? Political Commitment and Belonging

Against this backdrop, how do foreigners become the targets of exclusionary mobilization? After all, foreign-run shops often make groceries more affordable and, as tenants, non-nationals pay rent that supports the livelihoods of more established squatters. One of the most prevalent complaints about foreigners focused on their failure to contribute to the collective struggle for better living conditions – a failure considered exploitative since they reap the benefits of social mobilisation along with everyone else:

> Let me explain to you; you see you asked about the meetings but the issue is in terms of attendance. Some of these foreigners would ignore the call for the meetings and continue with their business […] And when things are fixed they would be first felt by those same people yet we are the ones who attend meetings. (male respondent, Mshongo, 27 October 2008)

This emphasis on forms of political commitment and civic labour as the basis of authentic membership was reiterated over and over again by different respondents:

> Speaker 1: [Locals] say these people, when we go to march, they don't go there. They say [foreigners] are not belonging to this [place] … they are here for business.
>
> Speaker 2: Ja.
>
> Speaker 1: They say OK, because [foreigners] are here for business, we are working for them [by mobilising for improvements]. Now we're going to punish them.
>
> (two male respondents, Brazzaville, 28 June 2012)

Indeed, a number of recently arrived foreigners in Mshongo (as well as some South African newcomers) confirmed that they did not attend meetings. Of course, this is to be expected as the local and transnational populations do not share a single political destiny. Not least because of elements of immigration policy that polarise citizens and non-citizens, recent immigrants have no voting rights at all, nor any claim on the goods of citizenship that local citizens are struggling to secure. Their indifference to related mobilization is thus hardly surprising, but in the eyes of many longstanding squatters it represents an exploitative intention to "live for free" (male respondent, Brazzaville, 20 July 2012) in a context where urban life has for others been achieved at a high price in suffering and collective labour, and continues to exact a price as squatters struggle to secure a more equal citizenship. Complaints that foreigners work for low pay and are willing to accept unfair labour conditions can also be understood as, at their heart, concerns that these newcomers "don't care" about collective goals and values, including the need to engage in mass action to claim the right to housing (female respondent, Jeffsville, 4 August 2012). Unlike more established foreign residents, newcomers are not interested in the political meaning of the squatter camps:

> He didn't want to know why we stay here. It's "*net so lank ek het space*" [just as long as I have space] he stays. And then if you going to him and you tell him what is happening here he don't want to listen [chuckles]. (male respondent, Jeffsville, 1 August 2012)

Returning to the concentrating force of the march, the sense of community produced by a protest has the effect of polarizing the committed and the uncommitted. As we have seen, there are established historical scripts in Mshongo legitimising theft and harassment of "sellouts". As a result, South African-owned shops tend to close during marches, even if the shopkeeper does not actively participate. Foreign-owned shops remain open, and thus open themselves to violent denunciation, which several respondents argued is facilitated by the fact that settlement leaders are otherwise occupied in their capacity as march organisers. There is of course a pattern of instrumentality to such acts: *nyaupe* (narcotic) addicts loot goods to exchange for their next fix, while locals are quick to salvage groceries from evacuated shops before they are destroyed in the melee (male respondent, Jeffsville, 5 August 2012). Business owners were also said to have played a role for the sake of their own business interests.

However, there is something to the observations of "foreigners" visible disregard for collective priorities that cannot be reduced to these themes of individual interest, and must be read as a political claim that goes beyond the mere jealousy or frustration often used to characterise violence among the poor in South Africa. The claim is magnified against the most successful newcomer entrepreneurs, who are thriving even as their once more established counterparts sink into greater precarity. As Abdi (2011) has pointed out, some foreigners occupy positions of privilege in informal settlements – one shopkeeper who was evicted in 2008 owned one shop in Jeffsville, two in Phomolong, and four in Brazzaville (male respondent, Jeffsville, 5 August 2012). When mobilizing for collective benefits, anger turns on those who gain personal profit from shirking participation:

> If you say people let's go, let's march, let's fight, he going to get cross with foreigners – they are keeping, they're benefiting themselves in shops. (male respondent, Brazzaville, 2012)

The idea that foreign newcomers take from the community without giving, that they benefit without contributing, that they are indifferent to the unfinished struggle of the squatters for citizenship, shows that it cannot simply be ethno-racial hatred that motivates collective attacks on shops, nor simply lack of provenance in the area.

The spark that turns such sentiments into violence appeared from my fieldwork to be the kind of response mass action elicited from the authorities. For instance, leaders found that the authorities seldom respond in the statutory time to applications to march, which can mean marches go ahead without permission, lack adequate regulation, and are subject to all sorts of obstruction and interference, which magnifies frustration and anger in the volatile context of a mass mobilization. State officials commonly obstruct or ignore the proceedings, silencing and disabling the community at the very time it has been mobilized for voice and agency, and rendering the investment of collective sacrifice of time, labour, and income futile:

> We say why did those people stop our buses when we supposed to demonstrate? […] That's where the confusion started, people starting to fight.
>
> (male respondent, Brazzaville, 28 June 2012, speaking of 2010 violence)
>
> That time people wanted the light, to go to city council, though city council chased the people away. Then the people burned the foreign shops.
>
> (male respondent, Brazzaville, 28 June 2012, speaking of 2011 violence)

Consequently, one leader told me, they no longer call marches because "it ends up harming other people" (male respondent, Jeffsville, 19 August 2012).

As a performative process in which heterogeneous groups are united in their commitment to political action, the march stages the practice of squatter identity-making and simultaneously provides a volatile stage upon which indifferent foreign newcomers unwittingly perform their lack of reciprocity and disregard for the local struggle for equal citizenship. As we have seen, "living for free" is anathema to the squatter identity in which land was occupied at the cost of violent repression; the making of a livable life requires the sacrifice of collective labour; and participation in mass actions is consensually enforced on pain of a flogging. Against this backdrop, lack of commitment appears as a betrayal of the political community, and in the case of shopkeepers or traders, the financial gain that accrues to the uncommitted as a result of their indifference heightens the sense of injustice. This has an interesting resonance with studies suggesting that foreign support for local struggles may prevent "xenophobic" mobilization (Kirshner 2012), and that one of the ways Somali shopkeepers work to avert future attacks is through investments in the life of the local community (Abdi 2011).

8. Conclusion

Drawing on the association between informal residence and the occurrence of "xenophobic" violence (Fauvelle-Aymar and Wa Kabwe-Segatti 2012), this paper has considered the historico-political context of the informal settlements of Mshongo, identifying resources for mobilization, including identities, collective practices, and expertise whose legacy can be traced in contemporary mobilization against foreigners, particularly at times of popular protest. I show that the explicit category of surplus person which

originated in the apartheid era, and has animated collective mobilizations over the last two decades, lives on in squatters' unfinished transition to formal urban inclusion. Its salience is magnified at times of protest not only through the claims made on the state at these times but also through the techniques for protest mobilization, which both activate and manufacture identities based on common suffering and civic labour. In Jeffsville and Brazzaville, it is these identities that polarise insurgent citizens from foreign newcomers, particularly those traders whose exemption from the collective struggle is rendered all the more visible by their business-as-usual practices during times of protest, communicating indifference and a lack of reciprocity at times when shared suffering and commitment are produced as defining qualities of the squatter community.

Nowadays, "informal settlements" are often depoliticised as a problem of development, as containers of social and economic problems in need of "eradication". Yet historically, many settlements like Mshongo have deeply political origins, and in some cases represent fundamentally violent manifestations of the agency of marginalised citizens. This is an important legacy to grasp when considering the emergence of new forms and targets of violence in recent years, both in assessing the extent to which anti-foreigner mobilisation might manifest a subaltern political voice (as suggested by Glaser 2008, Monson 2012, Von Holdt et al. 2011), and in understanding the violent repertoires and expertise that facilitate its expression as violence. It is equally important to consider collective mobilisation against outsiders in the light not just of national identities or the aggregated concept of a broad South African citizenship, but also of the stratification of political identities and citizenship, which has produced particular localised historical struggles that in turn provide a logical structure to what is too easily labelled as the "senseless" pathology of "xenophobia".

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