

XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF DE DOORNS 2009

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Abstract

On 14 and 17 November 2009 approximately 3 000 foreigners (mostly Zimbabweans) were chased from their homes in the town of De Doorns in the Western Cape, South Africa. Their homes were looted and burned. The importance of revisiting this xenophobic attack lies in the unfortunate reality of the persistence of xenophobia in South Africa. This article, guided by the theory of ethnic violence as presented by Donald L Horowitz and Jean Pierre Misago's explanation based on "the micro-politics of violence", seeks to understand the underlying *conducive conditions* and the *triggers* of the xenophobic attacks in De Doorns. Key informant interviews were conducted with a local farmers' organisation, the Hex River Valley Table Grape Association; a provincial farmers' organisation, Agri Western Cape; and a human rights organisation, People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty. The value in conducting these interviews five years after the incident is that it provided for hindsight and an exploration of whether the conditions had changed. Conducive conditions were identified as: a casualised labour system, the perceived threat of the influx of foreigners, a context of impunity, unscrupulous behaviour of labour brokers and government inefficiencies. Two triggers were identified: a turf war between labour brokers, and the political opportunism of a local councillor. The events of De Doorns also provide for reflection on broader pathological conditions in the South African context: a culture of lawlessness, poor labour relations and an easy resort to violence.

1. Introduction

On 14 and 17 November 2009 approximately 3 000 foreigners (mostly Zimbabweans) were chased from their homes in the town of De Doorns in the Western Cape, South Africa. Their homes were looted and burned. Up until the further outbreak of xenophobia in April 2015, those xenophobic attacks of 2009 had been the most extensive of their kind since May 2008, when 62 people were reportedly killed and over 100 000 people displaced throughout South Africa (Monson and Arian 2011: 26). In the light of the April 2015 attacks on foreigners in the cities of Durban and Johannesburg, which left at least seven dead, closer scrutiny of the underlying causes and instigators of the De Doorns case provides some understanding of the persistence of xenophobia in South Africa.

This article looks into the explanations for the xenophobic events in De Doorns. The research includes reviewing reports of the case as well as key informant interviews. Particular focus has been given to the report of Jean Pierre Misago (2009) from the Forced Migration Studies Programme, namely *Violence, labour and the displacement of Zimbabweans in De Doorns*. Interviews were conducted with a local farmers' organisation, namely, the Hex River Valley Table Grape Association (HTA);¹⁾ a provincial farmers' organisation, namely Agri Western Cape;²⁾ and a human rights organisation, People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP).³⁾ The research was guided by the theory of ethnic violence as presented by Donald Horowitz (2001) and Jean Pierre Misago's (2011) explanation based on "the micro-politics of violence", which focuses on the role of local politicians in cases of xenophobia.

2. Explanations for xenophobia

Horowitz (2001: 8), a leading academic in ethnic conflicts, developed a theory of ethnic violence; such violence is termed *ethnic* in that it "is not directed against a regime but against members of other groups". The outbreak of an ethnic riot thus provides clues to the nature of group relations; it is the "acting out of ethnic-group sentiments" (Horowitz 2001: 14). Although such riots are concentrated in time and space, and tend to be episodic, the event is still characterised as being a purposive and organised activity. The aim of the violence is to do physical harm to

members of a specific group and their property. There is therefore a combination of rational-purposive behaviour with irrational brutal behaviour; a "fusion of coherence and frenzy" (Horowitz 2001: 13-14). In the case of De Doorns, the target group was clearly the Zimbabwean migrants who had moved into the area in search of employment on the local farms. Although no Zimbabweans were killed during the events of 14 and 17 November 2009, they were threatened with violence and their homes were looted and destroyed by the local communities.

Horowitz (2001: 71-123) argues that external contextual causes in addition to immediate locality-bound causes need to be considered when looking at such violent outbursts. Locality-bound causes imply that local and short-term issues are involved and therefore also explain the spontaneity and the deep-seated emotions associated with outbreaks of violence. According to this theory, violence against foreigners would emerge under very specific structural conditions. It is likely to flare up where there is little fear that the police will protect the victims; in other words, police ineffectiveness or bias works in favour of the perpetrators of violence. In this context of impunity, the authorities implicitly condone the actions of the perpetrators, the police do not act against them, and the perpetrators do not fear reprisals from the targets of the violence.

Horowitz (2001: 17-23; 72-73) also explains who is likely to conduct a riot and how this will develop. A lethal ethnic riot, which is how some have described the similar May 2008 xenophobic attacks (Bekker 2010), entails assaults by one ethnic group on another. The riot is thus one-sided, the attackers believe such violence is warranted, and the targets are unlikely to resist or counterattack. Frequently the riots are conducted by a group that is motivated by the fear of being pushed into a vulnerable position and having their social status reduced. This fear can then lead to inflicting extreme physical harm on the people whom they believe to be the cause of their (potential) decline in status. The targets are selected on the basis of the group they belong to, their proximity, the (perceived) level of threat and the inability to retaliate. The aim of these attacks is to injure and/or kill. Unlike genocidal violence, however, these attacks are not aimed at eliminating a particular group, but at rectifying the perceived grievances regarding social status. Violence becomes an end in itself and a way of sending a message to the victims.

These types of events usually follow a particular sequence (du

Toit and Hennie Kotzé 2011: 160-161; Horowitz 2001: 74-123). The role of rumour is critical in the stage before the riot, during which time hearsay and innuendos about perceived grievances are generated and spread. Such rumours are not necessarily based on reality; they insinuate that the target group is a threat and in this way justify violence against this group. "Rumour is likely to prevail over accurate information" and it becomes the justification for the subsequent violence (Horowitz 2001: 74). Although it is likely that instigators of the violence will deliberately disseminate these rumours, such rumours would not take hold unless there was an environment conducive to the fomenting and believing of such rumours. A specific trigger initiates the first violent outburst. This may be a perceived immediate threat from the target group. Often such threats involve perceived or real status-reducing implications for the perpetrators. This then leads to the more extreme manifestations of violence, which often takes the form of riots and it targets male victims in particular, who may be murdered, mutilated or tortured, and whose property may be destroyed. The final 'stage' of the riot occurs when the violence spreads to other locations and similar events, often in a copycat fashion.

Like Horowitz's theory, Misago's (2011) explanation for xenophobic violence speaks to context. Misago, however, puts forward a micro-political explanation, emphasising the role of local government and its officials. His research on the May 2008 xenophobic violence points to it being organised and led by local political players. He said they did this "as an attempt to claim or consolidate the power and the authority needed to further their political and economic interests" (Misago 2011: 105). He adds that the way local politicians and leaders influence their followers could either foster and trigger, or pacify and prevent, violence. Thus his research points to triggers that are rooted in the micro-politics of township and informal settlement life. Misago (2011: 100) argues that despite the violence being illegal and destructive, organising the attacks on foreigners or other unwanted 'outsider' groups is considered an effective strategy for local politicians; it is a way for "earning people's trust, gaining legitimacy and expanding a client base and the revenue associated with it". In other words, he suggests that local political players, whether formally elected or not, have actively been the trigger for some of the xenophobic violence and other types of violence seen in South Africa. Again, in agreement with the theory of ethnic riots, Misago also notes the context of weak socio-

legal controls allowing for an environment conducive to the violence. We will show how, as in the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, micro-politics also played a significant role in the case of De Doorns.

3. The xenophobic attacks in De Doorns

In November 2009 approximately 3 000 foreigners, mostly Zimbabweans, were chased from their homes (PASSOP 2010). Basothos from Lesotho were also present in the township, but they were not chased out. In an interview with the Agri Western Cape representative, the respondent stated that this was because the Basothos threatened to retaliate (Interview: Respondent 1 2014).

The violence occurred in the informal settlements of Stofland, Ekuphumleni and Hassie Square, which are located in the eastern ward (Ward 2). The first attacks happened at night from about 2.00 am on Saturday 14 November in Ekuphumleni; they resulted in the displacement of 68 persons (Misago 2009: 3). The violence intensified and on Tuesday 17 November it spread to the two other informal settlements. The local community forced the Zimbabweans out of the informal settlement and, fearing further violence and for their own safety, the Zimbabweans fled. Their houses were destroyed and their belongings looted (Solidarity Peace Trust 2010: 37). The local farmers, who employed many of these Zimbabweans, moved some of the migrants to their farms, while others sought refuge at the police station or fled to other areas. A safe site was set up by the Disaster Management within 48 hours at a local sports field (Robb and Davis 2009: 16).

The police reportedly did little to protect the migrants or their belongings; they simply transported the Zimbabweans away from the violence and did not arrest the looters. The police claimed they were overwhelmed, but they had not called for backup after 14 November when the initial 68 Zimbabweans had been displaced (Solidarity Peace Trust 2010: 38). Furthermore, these were not the first events of this kind in De Doorns. Seven Zimbabweans had been burnt to death in their dwellings in the same area in February of the same year (Misago 2009: 7). However, from the interviews conducted it was ascertained that these deaths were the result of a conflict between a Basotho and a Zimbabwean over the Basotho's girlfriend (Interview: Respondent 2 2014; Interview: Respondent 3 2014).

Disaster Management and the farming community responded

and helped by providing for immediate needs and accommodation. Three large tents were set up, along with portable toilets, washing facilities and a medical tent. The Red Cross arrived within days and provided food and distributed donations. Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in addition to the Department of Social Development, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and faith-based organisations assisted these internally displaced persons (IDPs). In response to this violence a Crisis Committee was convened to coordinate the different relief efforts and to start the reintegration of the displaced. Some 24 people were eventually arrested three days after the major displacement (on 20 November) and were charged with public violence in relation to the attacks. These arrests angered the host community and this set back hopes for a 'quick fix' or a rapid reintegration of the Zimbabweans (Robb and Davis 2009: 15-16).

The IDP safety site, located at the local rugby field that was made available as a result of the violence, was not closed until 17 October 2010, almost a year after the initial events. Most of the IDPs who had lived in the camp were then reintegrated back into the surrounding communities (PASSOP 2010: 4).

4. What caused the xenophobia in De Doorns?

It became clear while looking at the xenophobic events in De Doorns that to be able to understand why the violence occurred, a distinction needs to be made between the 'underlying conditions' that created the environment conducive to violence and the 'triggers' that caused the event to occur at that specific time; this distinction is similar to Horowitz's context-based theory of ethnic violence.

First, we will begin with an account of the 'underlying conditions'. It is important to know something of the history of the farming culture in De Doorns. The local farm discourse entails an element of mutual help and joint responsibility between the farmer and the farm workers. However, this is an asymmetrical relationship characterised by paternalism. To address this, the post-*apartheid* dispensation introduced supposedly pro-worker legislation. Acts such as the Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and Extension of Security of Tenure Act (ESTA) of 1997 sought

to protect the workers from being exploited and to provide them with more long-term security of land tenure. But the unintended consequence of this legislation seems to have been for the farmers to reduce the number of permanent workers and to employ more casual labour (Kerr and Durheim 2013: 591). The years after the ESTA was enacted there was a peak in the number of evictions from farms (Kerr and Durheim 2013: 592). Thus the Act jeopardised job and housing security even more.

With the advent of the more casualised labour system the farmers in De Doorns send bakkies or trucks to collect day labourers in the townships. They also use labour brokers to obtain the numbers of workers needed in the harvesting season (Theron 2012: 5). The farmers are thus no longer responsible for the daily care of their workers since most no longer live on their farms but in the townships. In this way they have transferred the responsibility and risk to the workers, as they no longer have to pay wages during the off-season months. This leaves the worker without benefits, housing or job security (Kerr and Durheim 2013: 593). This has led to the growth of the informal settlements, which in turn has created more pressure on sanitation and on the available living space in the townships. These factors all contributed to a context that fostered a sense of insecurity in terms of employment and the aggravation of this with the presence of migrants vying for the same jobs.

The next underlying condition is well explained by Horowitz's 'perceived threats'; for a number of reasons the local population saw the presence of the migrants as a threat to their livelihood. These 'threats' included: insufficient work for everyone, fear that their jobs were being stolen, being paid different wages to the migrants and the presence of migrants threatening their bargaining position. The reason given by most of the perpetrators of the xenophobic attacks (confirmed in the interviews conducted) was economic competition; it was felt that the Zimbabweans were stealing jobs from South Africans (Interview: Respondent 1 2014). Local people felt they were being displaced from their historical places on the farms and from the jobs they were entitled to; this applied especially to coloured workers who historically supplied most of the labour force. Furthermore, the local workers felt that while farmers may have treated them poorly, now it was worse because "they want to put other people from other countries in our place" (quoted in Kerr and Durheim 2013: 588-589). One local South African worker

said: "People are jobless here. There's no work for me, for the coloureds, but for the Zimbabweans there is work" (quoted in Kerr and Durheim 2013: 588-589). These were, however, perceptions rather than realities. According to the farmers, farmer associations and other role players, there were sufficient jobs at the time of the attacks for everyone (Interviews: Respondents 1, 2 and 3). The estimated 125 farms could employ over 14 000 workers, and since the locals were unable to fill all these jobs, outsiders were needed. There were more locals employed (6 595) than Zimbabweans (1 558) or Basotho (630) (Misago 2009: 8-9). In addition, this number excludes the 5 337 permanent workers, almost all of whom were South African (Misago 2009: 8). The interview respondent from Agri Western Cape (Interview: Respondent 1 2014) also said that in a meeting with the different parties to the xenophobic conflict it was claimed that Zimbabweans were "stealing" peoples' jobs. This made him very curious to find out who these people were. He suggested at the meeting that the unemployed people whose jobs had supposedly been stolen should meet up at the taxi rank in the mornings rather than at the place where workers were usually picked up; he would tell the farmers to collect workers from there first. The HTA then advised the farmers to go to the taxi rank first, but no workers came. This further weakens the claim that Zimbabweans were taking the locals' jobs away.

An additional perceived threat is evidenced in the locals' claim that the farmers preferred the foreign workers because they were a source of cheap labour and that this would undermine their struggle for better wages (Misago 2009: 3; Interview: Respondent 2 2014). However, both the Zimbabwean respondents and the farmers stated that Zimbabweans got paid the same as all the other workers; at the time the rate was R60 a day. (The minimum wage for farm workers increased to R120 per day for 2015). The report from the Forced Migration Studies Programme (Misago 2009) noted that the local community said that there was suspicion that Zimbabweans might not be paid for overtime, though Agri Western Cape countered this by saying that everyone received payment for the extra hours worked. The interview respondent from Agri Western Cape (Interview: Respondent 1 2014) said that the Zimbabweans were not paid less because the labour legislation specific to the agricultural sector compels employers to pay equal and, at least, minimum wages. The interview respondent from the HTA (Interview: Respondent 3 2014) explained the difficulty of paying workers different rates since the workers are employed and paid on

a daily basis without distinction.

Another allegation was that the Zimbabweans did not participate in the struggle for better wages and working conditions (PASSOP 2010: 4). Protest action was seen as an important aspect of community life and was symbolic of social cohesion. In De Doorns the local people said that if they were conducting a strike, the Zimbabweans would still go to work. This they say was hurting their struggle and their cause: because of the Zimbabweans the employers were not listening to them (Robb and Davis 2009: 22). Some local respondents (Misago 2009: 9) explained that they had attacked the Zimbabweans because the Zimbabweans had said they did not want to participate in a planned strike on November 17, and this would therefore prevent the local workers from gaining what they wanted.

Coupled with these perceived threats is also the differential productivity of the locals compared to the migrants as experienced by the farmers and thus the reality of a preference for Zimbabweans. This is unfortunately a broader South African phenomenon, where the country has an uncompetitive labour force and its labour productivity is comparatively low (Naicker 2014). The insecurity caused by the locals' perceiving that farmers have a preference for the Zimbabweans was also used as an argument to chase them out. The interviews did confirm that farmers experienced a difference in terms of work ethic between local South Africans and Zimbabweans (Interviews: Respondents 1, 2 and 3). They felt that Zimbabweans had a good work ethic. This is confirmed in another study, where some of the farmers described the migrants as 'quick learners', 'more skilled', 'honest', 'reliable' and 'grateful' (Robb and Davis 2013: 21). Local workers were said to lack dedication, especially during the harvest season, when there was a need for overtime work and for working on Saturdays (Misago 2009: 8). The Agri Western Cape respondent (2014) said that when allegations were made against the farmers in the aftermath of the xenophobic attacks that workers had been under-paid, he went to talk to the people who claimed this. An example of a response he obtained was the comment of one man who said: "I only work two out of the five days, but I need five days to live, so you got to give me five days". This is evidence of a lack of dedication to the work and to the employer, and a lack of understanding of basic economics. Furthermore, according to the Agri Western Cape respondent (2014), the paying of social grants is playing a negative role in South Africa: he claims that the grants often do not go

towards their intended purpose. He claimed that if the social grant was paid out on Tuesday, for example, the farmer would be lucky if the workers showed up for work for the next couple of days. Other farmers also raised the problem of alcohol in the local workforce. Local workers have abused alcohol throughout farming history in South Africa, as they used to be paid in wine, bread and tobacco, a system known as the *dop* system.

The farmers' response to the effects of these vulnerabilities was to widen the labour pool rather than to tackle the problems with their existing workers. This created further alienation, thereby generating more antagonism towards the preferred Zimbabweans (Robb and Davis 2013: 21). The respondent from the HTA stated in the interview that he would like to use local South Africans on his farm, but if they do not arrive for work, he does not have a choice. He sends his truck to the township and brings back the number of workers needed from those waiting to come and work (Interview: Respondent 3 2014).

The role of the labour brokers in the valley was also seen as an underlying condition creating an environment of grievance. Some labour brokers have also been identified as instigators, as will be discussed below. Labour brokers, or contractors, are critical for the supply of seasonal workers in the agricultural sector. There were between 60 and 80 labour brokers in the area at the time of the xenophobic attack. Labour brokers bring in extra workers for the farmers during peak season, when farmers are unable to find enough people themselves. The farmer would pay the contractor about R5 per worker recruited for every day worked (Misago 2009: 9). The farmer would then also give the money to the contractor, who would then pay the workers on behalf of the farmer. Respondent 3 (2014) reported a situation on his own farm where one day he suddenly found he was short of 40 people after a break. He found out that they had left because they had been paid less than the other workers by the labour broker, who was responsible for paying the workers in this case. The farmer responded by paying them directly in the future. He stopped using labour brokers after this incident. According to the same interview respondent, many of the farmers also stopped using these contractors for the same reason.

Another underlying condition, it was argued in the reports, was government inefficiencies. The Forced Migration Studies Programme (FMSP) states that failure of early warning and prevention mechanisms had contributed to the rise of xenophobia (Misago 2009: 4). The local

authorities confirm that they had been aware of the tension between South Africans and Zimbabwean residents, and that this had become a persistent feature. Although the event in February 2009, when seven Zimbabweans were killed, was a result of an argument between a Zimbabwean and a Basotho, it created added tension (Interview: Respondent 3 2014). Many in government knew about the tensions that were building in the area; they knew of meetings where concrete plans of attack were being discussed, but no local elected or security authorities intervened to prevent these attacks. This was a similar situation to the xenophobic violence in May 2008, when the government failed to respond to early indications that a major xenophobic event was brewing (Solidarity Peace Trust 2010: 37). The government's stated goal was to prevent recurring xenophobia, especially following the 2008 xenophobic violence, but this did not result in the establishment of ground level, reliable and practical prevention mechanisms (Misago 2009: 7). This thus provided a context of impunity, where the perpetrators of violence could expect that they would experience repercussions from the authorities.

The police also played a role by contributing to the creation of a context of impunity. There was an indecisive and inconsistent response from the police, adding to the belief that the local authority was complicit in these events (Interview: Respondent 2 2014). During the events of 14 November, when 68 Zimbabweans were displaced, the police had responded swiftly with rubber bullets and arrests and were able to stop the violence. However, on 17 November, when almost 3 000 Zimbabweans were displaced, the story was different. The police did not act effectively on this occasion. The police only aided Zimbabweans in leaving the township, but did not protect their right to stay there or safeguard their possessions (Solidarity Peace Trust 2010: 38). According to witnesses, police even aided the perpetrators, telling them to destroy the shacks, to loot and to chase the Zimbabweans out — but not to beat anyone (Solidarity Peace Trust 2010: 38). During these events no arrests were made, despite the presence of the police. The following Thursday (19 November) 23 people were arrested. The locals staged protests and collected bail money to secure the release of those arrested. It is uncertain whether this was because they regarded them as innocent or because they felt the violence was justified (Misago 2009: 10).

The setting up of a satellite office in De Doorns, subsequent to

the November attack, by the Department of Home Affairs at the request of farmers and refugees, would contribute to the continued fostering of sentiments that migrants were being given preferential treatment. All three of the interviewed organisations were involved in the setting up of this satellite office. The setting up of the office was requested after complaints that Zimbabweans had experienced mistreatment and corruption at the Nyanga Refugee Reception Office (Robb and Davis 2009: 19). The sheer number of IDPs, an estimated 12 000 Zimbabweans and 5 000 Basotho, was cited as the motivation for setting up this office (Robb and Davis 2009: 19). However, the office, which was supposed to deal exclusively with farm workers, also attracted other foreigners looking to apply for refugee papers. There was a sudden influx of such applicants into the town and tensions rose. The office received threats of arson and violence and this led to its eventual closure. The office may have been short-lived, but it contributed towards and strengthened the feeling that farmers preferred Zimbabweans. This further raised the levels of frustration in the community (Robb and Davis 2009: 20; Misago 2009: 3).

As in the xenophobia of 2008, factors such as casualised labour system, job insecurity, the perceived threat of the influx of large numbers of foreigners, a less than ideal labour system and a weak local government are not adequate in themselves to explain the xenophobic violence. These underlying factors create fertile ground for xenophobic attitudes, but will not necessarily trigger a xenophobic attack. Which leads us to the question: What *triggered* the xenophobic events in De Doorns in November 2009? All the interview respondents unanimously agreed that these events were politically triggered. From the reports and the interviews two triggers are identified: firstly, the labour brokers and a turf war; and secondly, the political opportunism of an African National Congress (ANC) ward councillor.

In the reports the role of labour brokers is highlighted. The reports argue that labour brokers pressurised local leaders and incited local residents to attack and chase the Zimbabweans out. This indicates that there was a turf war between rival Zimbabwean and South African labour brokers, since many labour brokers had been laid off by the farmers. It is also interesting to note that some contractors were also local political committee members. FMSP believes — though they stress that they do not have conclusive evidence — that labour brokers were directly involved in fuelling the tensions and triggering the xeno-

phobic events. The dishonesty among local labour brokers had already led farmers to exclude them as middlemen, and this gave the Zimbabwean labour brokers more business. This in turn provided the motivation for the xenophobic-based attacks. Although the FMSP report points to a turf war between the Zimbabwean and South African labour brokers, with the South African labour brokers pressurising a local councillor to instigate the violence, findings from the interviews conducted for this research point to another and perhaps additional motivation.

The two days of displacement were preceded by two public meetings, both held at night, on 13 and 14 November. It was at these meetings that a local ANC ward councillor expressed his intention to get rid of the Zimbabweans (Kerr and Durheim 2013: 583). Local South Africans, local councillors, the then mayor and police from the Breede Valley Municipality attended the meetings, though they did nothing to prevent the planned expulsion of the Zimbabweans (Kerr and Durheim 2013: 586). Displaced Zimbabweans said that local councillor Mpumelelo "Poyi" Lubisi (Ward 2) and the then mayor of the Breede Valley Municipality, Charles Ntsomi, were either directly involved in organising the events, or at least tolerated or indirectly supported the events (Misago 2009: 5-6). So the trigger was an ANC ward councillor encouraging people at a public meeting to attack the Zimbabweans.⁴⁾ This event further strengthens Misago's theory of the effect of micro-politics: local political players acting as triggers for xenophobic violence. It appears that the instigator of the violence took 'advantage of a hostile mood', but what motivated his actions?

In the interviews political contestation within the local ANC emerged as the strongest motivation. Respondent 1 said that he believed there was political contestation within the local ANC: some councillors feared they would not get re-elected in the upcoming 2011 local elections and therefore started the 'rumours' about Zimbabweans stealing jobs and taking less pay (Interview: Respondent 1 2014). Respondent 3 (2014) also stated that the ANC leaders started this 'campaign' against the Zimbabweans. Respondent 2 (2014) gave a more detailed version of this political contestation. He explained that there was a contest for popularity with regard to an upcoming internal election in the local ANC. The politicians nominated in this internal election would be the ones standing for election in the upcoming local government elections in 2011. They were thus looking for an issue, they could rally around and which would boost their political prospects.

A contention around electricity provision provided the needed impetus. The municipality was installing electricity in the township, but certain areas were beneath the floodplain, so electricity could not be installed there because it was too dangerous. One councillor (though Respondent 2 did not mention any name, it is most likely Lubisi⁵) was up for re-election and was popular in the corner of the township that was beneath the floodplain and could not get electricity. He made a plan to displace the Zimbabweans so that the community he was popular in would be able to move to a higher piece of land where they would access electricity (the area previously housing the Zimbabwean community). By doing this he hoped to gain enough popularity to be re-elected. After figuring this out, he called for a public meeting and declared that the Zimbabweans were undermining the local labour force. Respondent 2 (2014) said that he had come to De Doorns on the morning of 17 November because he had been informed of the meeting the previous night, when the councillor had said the attacks should start from his house.

Despite stakeholders such as FMSP and Agri Western Cape pointing to the local political actors as the instigators of the xenophobia in De Doorns, there was no official response from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, or from any other institution charged with overseeing local government. The councillor's actions led to his initial suspension by the ANC while they investigated his involvement in the xenophobic events (Kerr and Durheim 2013: 587). But he did not lose his position, as he is still listed as a councillor of the Breede Valley Municipality.⁶ This once again perpetuates the culture of impunity.

In the case of De Doorns the violence against foreigners was organised and led by political individuals, who used local frustration to mobilise people to commit the violence. The fertile ground for grievances, in particular the perceived threat posed by foreigners, was disingenuously used by self-interested politicians. This led the interview respondents to claim that it was not xenophobia that was manifested in De Doorns, but violence stirred by political opportunism. However, even though xenophobic sentiments may not have been the motivation for the politician or the labour brokers, it was certainly the xenophobic attitudes of the local community that enabled the instigators to mobilise them to target the Zimbabwean migrants. It was these very xenophobic attitudes that created a receptive environment for the rumours levelled

against the Zimbabweans to fester and grow, and result in violence. The reason for the xenophobic violence was not what the foreigners were in fact doing, but a willingness to believe what it was 'alleged' they were doing.

5. Is De Doorns still susceptible to xenophobia?

More than six years having passed since the attacks in De Doorns, and with local elections due in 2016, it is important to ask whether the underlying causes are still evident in De Doorns? Respondent 2 says that quite a lot of housing has subsequently been provided in the area, which should help alleviate service delivery grievances. Furthermore, Respondent 2 says that his perception is that relations between the Zimbabweans and the locals have improved significantly. For example, PASSOP held a healing ceremony in De Doorns after the xenophobic events for the Zimbabweans killed in the fire prior to the xenophobic events of November. They slaughtered a sheep and organised a party. The supply of electricity is also no longer an issue. Respondent 1 also says it is important to remember that the displacement of the Zimbabweans was in fact a bloodless displacement. The respondent goes on to explain that there has not been any violence in the valley since the events of that November, although there have been isolated incidences of crime against foreign nationals. This could be because the foreigners are more vulnerable, are not supported by the community, and are therefore easier targets of crime.

Respondent 3 says there will always be tension between the Zimbabweans and the locals. However, Respondent 2 does not think that similar xenophobic events will recur because the people who chased the Zimbabweans away did not get what they aimed for. Those people believed that this would permanently remove the Zimbabweans from De Doorns, but the Zimbabweans continue to live and work in the valley. Respondent 1, on the other hand, has a bleaker view. When asked if he thought an event like this could happen in De Doorns again, he said it could happen anywhere in South Africa if it were politically driven. He went on to say that conditions have changed in De Doorns and that there are now more people than De Doorns can provide work for. In other words, the grievances against Zimbabweans when it

comes to job availability has now possibly become a real issue in the valley, whereas before these were largely perceptions.

Although a robust conclusion cannot be drawn on the basis of these three interviews and the FMSP reports, it is feasible to believe that many of the underlying conditions that created an environment conducive to violence may still exist in De Doorns. This makes the town vulnerable to self-serving and unscrupulous politicians or labour-brokers; underlying xenophobic attitudes can still be stirred and used as political tools. This leads to the normative question: what should be done to hinder the expression of xenophobia in the future? Respondent 2 suggested monitoring, stronger policing and early intervention. The monitoring, he said, should be conducted by civil society, by the National Intelligence Agency, by the police, by political parties and by religious organisations. They all have a responsibility to ensure there is no recurrence. However, Respondent 2 said if the local politicians are sympathetic to xenophobic sentiments, then this makes it hard to stop. Furthermore, one needs to get to the heart of the problem: foul play in the realm of political contestation. Respondent 3 suggested that the government should improve measures to control undocumented foreigners. Undocumented workers can give foreigners a bad reputation as illegal immigrants. Respondent 1 called for social dialogue, and specified that this dialogue must include leaders of the community who want to find solutions for the community rather than to create havoc and seek to achieve their own ends.

6. Reflections on the broader South African context

Some important questions, which reflect on the broader South African context, remain. These include: Why are immigrants, regardless of their legal status, easy targets for such violence? Key areas for attention include the documentation that immigrants need to enable them to fit into society and feel secure. If the Department of Home Affairs is inefficient and corrupt, this creates insecurity and uncertainty for migrants. This is exacerbated by a nationally pervasive culture of impunity; instigators and perpetrators of violence, largely, do not experience justice for unlawful actions. Unfortunately this lawless culture is evident in the highest echelons of political leadership, since disregard for the public

good has filtered into all spheres of government and politics in general.

Why are labour relations so poor? Mutually beneficial relationships, based on trust, are sorely missing in the broader labour market. Workers need more job security, but employers, such as the De Doorns' farmers, also need productive and reliable workers. South Africa's labour force is uncompetitive and has low productivity. Basic work ethics need to be restored. In addition, legislation such as the Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and ESTA of 1997 must be revisited and tailored to suit a sector such as agriculture. The unintended consequences of such labour legislation — far from helping workers — have been less and more insecure employment.

The use of violence, considered a viable and even acceptable option for the expression of grievance, is also visible in the significant increase in service delivery protests between the period 2004 and 2014; Municipal IQ's *Municipal Hotspots Monitor* shows that 70 per cent of these protests have been violent and destructive in nature.⁷⁾ There appears to be a norm that resorting to violence to 'solve' issues is acceptable. This is probably a throw-back to the oppressive mechanisms of *apartheid*, the armed struggle (see Jeffery 2009) and the strategy of making the country ungovernable. Violence has become a way of attaining one's ends and engaging the government's attention. This fosters a lack of mutual respect and cooperation; human rights are not observed and professional ethics are not adhered to. Under such conditions a community will be tempted to act outside the law and ignore human rights. Unfortunately, this is also becoming more evident in the day-to-day politics, where the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema espouses "radical" and "militant" methods to achieve its goals (EFF 2014). They are leading the move from a culture of dialogue to one of intimidation and intolerance. Violence has been, is and will continue to be an acceptable tool if something fundamental is not done to discredit it and to engender a non-violent, democratic political culture, which upholds norms of civic engagement and moderation. If future xenophobic attacks are to be prevented, violence must be taken off the table as an accepted tool for expressing grievances.

Endnotes

1. The HTA is a body that represents farmers on a local level; it represents the

- grape farmers in and around De Doorns. They have a strong interest in De Doorns and in the workers there, both permanent and seasonal.
2. Agri Western Cape is an organisation for the agricultural sector in the Western Cape, which acts as a mouthpiece for the farmers and promotes their interests. It played an active role prior to and in the aftermath of the xenophobic events in De Doorns in support of those affected by the xenophobic attacks.
 3. PASSOP is a not-for-profit human rights organisation that promotes the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in South Africa. It was the first organisation on site after the mass displacement of 17 November 2009, and continued to play a major role in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camp and for the displaced people.
 4. In an interview with FMSP the councillor denied that he had incited the violence. Source: Kerr and Durheim, "The dilemma of anti-xenophobia discourse on the aftermath of violence in De Doorns", p 586.
 5. Based on: Jean Pierre Misago, Violence, labour and the displacement of Zimbabweans in De Doorns, Western Cape. (Forced Migration Studies Programme, Johannesburg, 2009).
 6. See: Breede Valley Municipality, "Breede Valley Municipality: 3rd Generation Integrated Development Plan 2012 – 2017", 31 May 2012. (Available at: <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/text/2012/11/breede-valley-idp-2012-2017.pdf>, last accessed 30 November 2015).
 7. See: http://www.municipaliq.co.za/index.php?site_page=press.php

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