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Vanya Gastrow, *Problematizing the Foreign Shop: Justifications for Restricting the Migrant Spaza Sector in South Africa*. Ontario: Southern African Migration Programme (SAMP), 2018. Pp. 44. ISBN: 978-1920596439.

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Vanya Gastrow's *Problematizing the Foreign Shop: Justifications for Restricting the Migrant Spaza Sector in South Africa* is written in a report form. It is based on qualitative research with interviews of South African residents, police, prosecutors, legal aid attorneys, local authorities, and migrant owners of spaza businesses—informal shops selling foodstuffs and daily consumable goods in low-income neighborhoods and townships. The research was carried out between 2010 and 2013 in Kraaifontein, Khayelitsha and Philippi in the Greater Cape Town area and other small towns in the Western Cape Province; these are the places where attacks on migrant spaza shops, followed by severe regulations of these shops, have occurred. Overall, the author critiques xenophobic conflict between South African citizens (particularly local spaza shop traders) and migrant spaza owners, followed by punitive policies against the latter group, as a sign of the social, economic, and political watershed in post-apartheid South Africa. The unique contribution of this report is that it critiques South Africans' xenophobic attacks as signifiers of the nation's postcolonial economic and political limbo.

The executive summary invokes Fanon's and Mamdani's concepts of postcolonial political conditions, which attribute oppression of migrant traders in recently independent African countries to "postcolonial vesting of rights and entitlements in notions of indigeneity." This reading suggests that migrant spaza enterprises reflect the archetype of poor native versus prosperous alien with political capital. It amplifies the delusion of South Africans experiencing post-apartheid economic distress despite a political rhetoric of economic inclusion. Consequently, Gastrow's report achieves its greatest value by ably placing this paradigm of the repressed migrant spaza owner in the failed political promise of post-apartheid economic success for black South Africans living in Cape Town's sprawling townships. This argument is developed through four subsections.

The first subsection discusses governance interventions aimed at curtailing migrant small businesses. It decries the involvement of political leaders, municipal officials, the police, and NGOs in curtailing migrant spaza shops in South Africa through prohibitive regulations. It cites the 2006 Masiphumelele township mass riots and attacks on migrant-owned businesses that displaced Somali migrants from their shops and homes as germane to oppressive migrant politics. The resolution to prohibit the opening of any new migrant spaza shops and the restriction of operating migrant-owned shops in Masiphumelele, the author argues, instantiates bias against migrant spaza owners. That the decision was reached through mediation by Africa Unite, a non-governmental organization appointed by the office of the Western Cape Premier and Directorate for Social Dialogue and Human Rights, amounts to politicization of spaza businesses. Additionally, the report cites other xenophobic riots targeting spaza shopkeepers in Strand,

Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Bloekombos, Wallacedene, Kraaifontein, Philippi, and the Saldanha Bay Municipality. In these territories, migrant spaza shops acquired political agency through participation of municipal law enforcement officers, SANCO, the national Department of Economic Development, and the city's Disaster Risk Management Centre.

The June 2012 call by the African National Congress to reduce the number of migrant-owned spaza shops, the report notes, further instantiates a confluence between migrant spaza businesses and post-apartheid political rhetoric. Incidentally, the March 2013 draft Licensing of Businesses Bill, the draft National Informal Business Upliftment Strategy (Nibus) by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the creation of the Department of Small Business Development by the State President in 2014 to implement Nibus, and the December 2017 Refugees Amendment Act prohibiting asylum seekers from opening businesses in the country, all target migrant owned businesses. The author reads such regulation of migrant spaza shops as "anxiety among state officials and political leaders about the economic activities of international migrants and refugees." These regulations and other, often illegal, tactics to impede migrants' businesses and to reduce their share of the spaza market underpin, the author suggests, post-apartheid political tensions between citizens and their government. The author describes how these regulations are used by the government to distract from other issues.

The second subsection addresses justifications for curbing migrant spazas, examining the local government's reasoning about the harm caused by migrant spaza owners. The author criticizes the main motivations cited by the government and they are: preventing economic harm, curbing of illegal activity, and reducing violence and crime. Calling such portrayals "erroneous or exaggerated," the author depicts complaints that migrant spaza shops are illegal as "disingenuous." Gastrow notes that authorities and governance actors hardly scrutinize the legality of South African shops. Furthermore, the author offers alternative reasoning about migrant spaza shops. For example, the author argues that despite allegations that migrant spaza shops threaten local economy, they offer employment, better consumer prices, and rent payment to landlords. Allegations of illegal activities including avoiding taxes, not adhering to by-laws or health and safety regulations, being illegal immigrants and lacking valid permits and licenses, illegally possessing firearms or importing goods, trading in counterfeit and illicit goods among other "unfair" trading practices, are also seen as debatable and biased. The author attributes robbers' increased targeting of migrant spazas to their relatively higher quantities of cash and their "social and political isolation," and decries the targeting of crime victims instead of perpetrators by police. Generally, Gastrow counteracts the reasoning that migrant spazas presence "provokes South Africans into violence," instead suggesting that governance actors try other strategies to address the cited problems rather than discriminatory actions against migrant spaza owners that undermine the rule of law.

In the third subsection, the author goes "beyond studying official reasoning to examining surrounding social and political contexts." Citing Jacob Zuma's February 9th 2016 political statement at a Cape Town rally and a 2015 department budget speech by the Minister of Small Business Development that promised economic inclusivity and empowerment for black South Africans, the author notes that South African spaza retailers have wrongly applied such rhetoric against migrant spaza shops. The subsection suggests that hostilities against migrant spaza traders are mostly abstract, motivated by broader factors and contributing to political anxiety over migrant spazas. Migrant spaza businesses, Gastrow argues, are targeted as a "means of venting anger at government over poor social conditions, or simply to take advantage of the opportunity of accessing free goods." Accordingly, the report indicates political logic as the motivation behind

targeting migrant spaza shops. This politicization of migrant spazas is discussed in the final subsection.

The fourth subsection concerns local political dynamics behind migrant spaza regulation; the repressive tactics targeting migrant spaza shops deploy “public violence” as a discourse of “local political dynamics,” as vents for political frustrations and as political signals. The author posits migrant spazas as signifiers of the elusive “economic mobility and prosperity.” The author argues that violent outbursts against migrant spaza owners “communicate socio-economic discontent and anger to political leaders” and “demonstrate to political leaders their desperate economic need and the fact that non-citizens are making greater economic advances.” Through such reframing of xenophobia, the report offers great insights about the interconnectedness between citizenship discourses, political history, and urban economic enterprises within the framework of the figure of the alien. This is the payoff of the entire report, which articulates the contiguity of historical imaginaries of the self and other in contemporary interpretations of urban practices and urban spaces. Migrant spaza shops offer textuality of the political crossroads where colonial and the postcolonial imaginaries coexist with unease.

In conclusion, this report has juxtaposed frustrations and political shortcomings with xenophobic activities, specifically those targeting migrant spaza shops in Cape Town. There are two key deductions offered by the author. On one hand, that attacks of migrant spaza shops are not “necessarily motivated by direct animosity towards foreigners” and the “urgency for government, police and others to act is ... not directly fed by local populations, but rather by a particular group with a vested stake in the spaza market.” This group, the author argues, is the political elite who oppress migrant spaza shops to reassure South African spaza shopkeepers and coerce them to not “incite violence among local populations and destabilize the political status quo.” Regulations of migrant spaza shops illustrate the threat to tenuous political authority, and it is a desperate populist measure aimed to control “an increasingly disillusioned populace.” This perspective is important in post-apartheid theorization of South African cities as it enables a reframing of xenophobia through its political power. On the other hand, the skewed framing of native versus foreigner through economic politics posits disenfranchisement as a useful concept in exploring the configuration of African cities and the multi-faceted imaginaries of political and economic freedoms. Singling out migrant shopkeepers as the reason for township economic stagnation, the author argues, posits the presence and economic enterprises of foreign nationals, and not the government, as the main cause for locals’ economic failures.

Within the framework of postcolonial Cape Town, this report makes a remarkable contribution to postcolonial urban discourses touching on the practices of urban conviviality and the political substance of migrant businesses. Within the framework of soaring economic inequalities and poverty levels, and a public that has become edgy and impulsive towards its political leadership, this report offers invaluable insights on political machinations. It also offers novel approaches to theorizing contemporary political quandaries in cities of the so-called Global South by exploring the interconnectedness of the migrant spaza owner and the discourses of disastrous post-apartheid economic appropriation. For its highly incisive and bold approach to xenophobia, politics, and the symbolism of regulating migrant spaza shops, this report stands out as an invaluable resource. It is thus highly recommended for scholars of political dynamics in contemporary South Africa.

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