My Friend, the Stranger:

Somali *Spaza* Shop Operators in the Villages around Cofimvaba, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study of the relationships between Somali *spaza* operators and the villagers living in the villages around Cofimvaba. The Somali spaza operators are operating *spazas* in the villages around Cofimvaba in the Intsika Yethu District Municipality (IYDM) located in the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM). *Spaza* shops are general dealers selling daily consumption items, which usually operate in the informal sector, primarily in poorer black neighbourhoods, both urban and rural. Resentment of the very visible, post-apartheid, expansion of immigrant entrepreneurship – in the informal sector, notably in *spazas*– has been central to South African anti-immigrant sentiment, popularly dubbed "xenophobia," which casts foreigners, mainly black or Asian, as stealing South African resources. Foreign *spaza* operators, many of them Somalis, have been subject to ongoing violence and looting for well over a decade, notably in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces.

Yet in the deeply impoverished villages around Cofimvaba, in the former Transkei black homeland in the Eastern Cape, where Somalis play a central and growing role in *spazas*, such attacks are unknown. The aim of this thesis is to understand why. Careful qualitative research in several villages has indicated key reasons. These include the relative absence of South African, locally-owned *spazas*, and so, the lack of a local group driving xenophobic resentment; the convenience offered by Somali-owned *spazas* in these isolated villages, the affordability of the products offered, and the availability of systems of credit for villagers; the investment of the Somali entrepreneurs into the villages through acts like charity; and their social interaction with villagers. The Somalis have redefined the local *spaza* sector, to the benefit of the villagers, and there is a degree of "xenophilia" as a result.

The research also found that the growing number of Somali *spaza* operators in the villages was a direct result of the xenophobia experienced by this group in the urban townships. The villages around Cofimvaba benefit the Somali operator, not in a financial sense as these are not where the most profits have been made, but as sites where the traders feel safest. But although the villages are a sort of refuge, they are isolated and isolating. The Somalis resident in these areas struggle to maintain the strong ethnic group consciousness based on a strong vision of the Somali homeland, and a sense of being sojourners, hoping to relocate elsewhere.

CHAPTER ONE:

Background, Aims and Methodology

1.1 Introduction and Background: Insiders and Outsiders

Under the apartheid state, the ruling National Party (NP), sought to maintain its rule by institutionalising racial and ethnic differences. Economic, political and social distinctions between black and white South Africans were overlain by divides constructed between urban and rural areas, township and migrant labour, ethnically-defined homelands and institutions, and distinctions between black Africans, Asians and Coloureds. Apartheid state rule was a continuation of the colonial state form, where white South Africans were citizens, and black Africans subjects, effectively "native-born foreigners" (Mamdani, 1996; Neocosmos, 2010). The homeland system, in which unelected African chiefs and "customary" law was central, and the segregated black areas in "white" South Africa, co-existed with the trappings of a liberal democracy for whites.

The law, policy and daily practice of the apartheid state ensured that rights in South Africa were structured by race, with the white minority at the top. Essential to the distinction between the blacks and whites was the system of separation entailed by relegating blacks to homelands, providing ethnic citizenships while revoking a common national citizenship. Instead of being South Africans, blacks were Transkeians, Bophutatswanans and the like, in largely rural homelands, with scarce land and no real economic independence. In this case, a migratory pass was needed to enter the land of the white citizens, "white" South Africa, which comprised the bulk of the South African territory. In a sense, black South Africans and black foreign nationals were both envisaged as becoming outsiders, with "foreign ethnically-based political identities" (Neocosmos, 2010: 25). The state struggled to deal with the fact of a large black population permanently resident in "white" South Africa, both on white-owned farms and in urban townships, veering between treating them as sojourning homeland citizens, redrawing boundaries to move townships into homelands, and conceding limited rights under white rule (e.g. Giliomee, 2012).

Both the "native born foreigners" and the black foreign nationals were, however, seen mainly as a source of labour (Neocosmos, 2010). A labour system based on circular migration, sees workers returning to homelands or neighbouring countries after their temporary contracts ended (e.g. Crush, Jeeves and Yudelman, 1991). Permanent immigration into the country was carefully limited, among whites to ensure the numerical dominance of Afrikaners (Bonner, Hyslop and van der Walt, 2007), and among blacks, to ensure the project of a "white" South Africa. The state also sought to manage the class composition of different groups, uplifting poorer whites, suppressing black commercial activity within white South Africa, and blocking the emergence of black commercial farmers.

In homelands, land was held communally, and could not be sold or used for collateral. A principle function of "traditional authorities" such as chiefs and their representatives, for example headmen, was to administer and allocate the land and the people living on it (Mapokgole, 2014; Ntsebeza, 2006; Southall, 1980). There were two rural zones: the homelands, with communal tenure vested in chiefs, involved tribal authority; in "white" South Africa, there was private property but this was largely restricted to whites (Mapokgole, 2014). The 1913 Land Act formalised and legalised the distinction between the two, legitimising oppression on a spatial basis, as it restricted African ownership to 7% (later raised to 13%) of the South African land surface. From 1948, the system was presented as the basis for creating equal-but-separate development, and eventually, independent black states from the homelands. In reality the system created a pool of cheap migrant labour, and even those homelands that were declared independent – like the Transkei – were deeply reliant on the central apartheid state (Southall, 1980).

In "white" South Africa, various laws excluded black people from skilled jobs, as well as reserved certain unskilled and semi-skilled jobs on a racial basis. The homelands were viewed by ideologues like H.F. Verwoerd as the appropriate place for blacks to do skilled work (Giliomee, 2012), but the main area where this was possible was in the growing homeland bureaucracies, which developed alongside the chieftaincy (Southall, 1980). Homelands were based on black ethnic groups, and also practised ethnic discrimination e.g. land access as well as access to key jobs in the homeland government were only for members of the ethnic group.

By 1991, South Africa had a large state bureaucracy fractured into different racial and ethnic sections, and 349,832 officials in the "white" apartheid state and 638,599 in the homelands (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2011: 5). Southall (1980: 40) adds that the apartheid-era homeland policy was not just intended to entrench racial divisions and separate development, but also "to create a collaborative petty-bourgeoisie within each of the homelands," mainly through employment in the bureaucracy or in state services. In "white" South Africa there was also, from the 1970s, a project of building up a friendly black middle class by loosening restrictions on upward mobility and trading, and by growing employment in administration and services (Giliomee, 2012). The idea was that this class would not really be competitive with white capital accumulation, and instead work with the state in the repression and control of black, especially migrant, labour. The growing number of black traders were still largely dependent on the support of "capital and the state...and associated political segments of the petty bourgeoisie (such as homeland politicians and urban councillors)" (Southall, 1980: 40).

Among the many changes from the 1990s has been the rise of large-scale African immigration to South Africa, as opposed to circular migration. Black South Africans were now citizens, and immigration controls, and the division between locally-born South African citizen and foreigner has been key to forging conceptions of nationality and citizenship (Mamdani, 1996; Neocosmos, 2010). Citizenship has and continues to be an active political identity and affects intellectual and political discourse (Neocosmos, 2010). In an effort to do away with the old divisions amongst South Africans, and to create a common South African identity, over ethnic and racial ones, the current South African state has attempted to create a South African identity based on demarcating its citizens from foreigners (Neocosmos, 2010).

However, this co-exists with processes of migrant integration, both social and economic, into local communities, a development that has been overlooked in the literature, especially as it takes place in rural areas and smaller towns. A study in 2000, for example, showed South Africans held a wide range of attitudes towards immigrants, many quite positive (McDonald, Mashike and Golden, 2000). The same study showed that most African immigrants worked in the informal sector, primarily as traders, hawkers or vendors, serving local customers.

Spaza shops are a large part of South Africa's informal economy, with perhaps 100,000 *spazas* countrywide (Charman and Piper, 2012; Liedeman, 2013). It should be noted that the actual size and composition of South Africa's *spaza* market is poorly understood. *Spazas* are general dealers that sell daily goods and necessities such as milk, bread, cold-drinks, sugar and the like, and operate more often than not without licenses i.e. they are part of the informal sector (Bear, Bradnum, Tladi and Pedro, 2005; Liedeman, 2013; Ligthelm, 2005). The main customers of *spazas* are blacks in the lower income brackets, in urban townships and rural villages, who are economically and geographically removed from the main commercial centres in the towns.

The term "*spaza*" itself is an isiZulu word, meaning "hidden" (Bear *et al*, 2005), and refers to the period when the apartheid state barred black people from most business activities within the townships. While these regulations were relaxed from the 1970s, the informal character of these shops, often located in people's houses or yards, has remained. The *spaza* is enabled through the spatial exclusion of poor black South Africans, that is, people use *spazas* because they cannot afford to travel to, and shop in, the big shops of main business districts. It is this economic segregation, of many township and homeland areas, that allows the *spazas* to emerge and operate. The *spaza* was, in apartheid, a form of black consumption that always highlighted the tensions around citizenship, and between citizenship and consumption. It is a direct example of how identity, belonging, and access to resources played out in physical terms.

One of the most significant current discussions where blacks in South Africa are concerned is that a shift has been made from legislated racism against them, to legislated and racialised xenophobia against "The Foreigner" (Harris, 2002; Neocosmos, 2010). Many studies (e.g. Hoeflich, 2011; Nyamnjoh, 2008). The attitudes of South Africans, and the experiences of foreign nationals, demonstrate that the ethic of inclusion for South Africans has been translated into emphasising their distinction from foreign nationals. Xenophobia is commonly defined as an intense hatred or fear of those perceived as strangers (Adam and Moodley, 2013). South African political discourse and state institutions have fostered a culture of xenophobia that detracts attention from the economic and social ills of the country as a legitimating mechanism (Neocosmos, 2010). The making of xenophobic culture and an exclusionary conception of the nation and citizenship was not an inevitable outcome, but rather one that was actively constructed. Xenophobia is not a natural state of any society, but is rather a socio-economic and political phenomenon influenced by popular discourses and pressure groups (Tsheola, Ramoroka and Muzondi, 2015).

As such, there has been an addition from the regulation of people based only on their race to a regulation of people based on their nationality. But the conception of the foreigner is itself usually racialised. The image of the foreigner, and the main target of nationalist regulation, has been the black African foreign national, and the scapegoating of non-nationals centres on black African foreigners in South Africa (Crush, 2006 cited in Tafir, 2011). Tafir (2011: 115) writes that "black

African immigrants and black South Africans, are and have over the years been transformed into racialised subjects and…they have come to perceive each other in the light of their racial subjectivities." Tafir adds (2011: 114) that what is understood as xenophobia is, in fact, culturally- or nationally-based racism, and example of a "New Racism" that is "heavily entrenched in cultural differences enunciated by dissimilarities in nationality, ethnicity, language, dress, customs, social and territorial origins, speech patterns and accents."

The stranger in this case is perceived as a foreigner who originates outside of the nation-state. Politics in the apartheid and post-apartheid states set out rights to physical, social and economic space, but the ethic of the new government – the inclusion of all, in all the said spaces, through human rights and freedom – has become a hierarchical and inegalitarian one. This is based on autochthony, where the nation is the basis of citizenship, and indigeneity, where membership arises from birth (see Gausset, Kenrick and Gibb, 2011).

The term "autochthonous" is often presented as being synonymous with "indigeneity." "Indigeneity" refers to indigenous people, and the etymology of this term refers to a people that are the original inhabitants of a given space (Gausset *et al*, 2011). "Autochthony" as a concept deals with the issues of entitlement of these indigenous people i.e. the question of who is eligible or ineligible in a particular territory. According to Ceuppens and Geschiere (2005) the notion of autochthony is a call to exclude those who are considered to be "strangers," often achieved through violent means. Autochthony is said to be designed as a means "to safeguard 'ancestral lands' against 'strangers' who 'soil this patrimony,' as well as on the right of first comers to special protection against later immigrants" (Ceuppens and Geschiere, 2005: 386).

For South Africa, this means the essence of being a South African is derived specifically from nativism and "leads to privileging the twin ideas of birth and phenotype ('race') as the essence of the indigenous" (Neocosmos, 2008). South African political discourse links this to the idea that South Africa is an exceptional African country, more closely linked to the United States and Western Europe, being "industrialised, democratic, advanced in relation to other countries of the continent and also a paragon of reconciliation and political liberalism" (Neocosmos, 2008). However, the conflicts over identity, belonging, and access to resources in South Africa are not all that different to those exhibited in the rest of the continent (Neocosmos, 2010; Whitehouse, 2009a).

The soil in which South Africa's xenophobic culture flourishes is the country's widespread inequality. It is widely held that the poor, who have not received the economic fruits of democracy, retaliate against black foreign nationals (Neocosmos, 2010). Authors like Comaroff and Comaroff (2001), Gausset *et al* (2011) and Mbembe (2001; 2002) argue that this involves a struggle to exclude "others" from accessing state benefits, like welfare. Other Africans who inhabit South African spaces are viewed as outsiders, pillaging the resources of the country at the expense of true South Africans.

In this way, the conflicts over belonging between locals and foreigners also express conflicts over belonging amongst locals. Besides race, place is key to these conflicts. The post-apartheid South African citizen and the post-apartheid nation-state are fundamentally identified with urbanisation (Cooper, 2009; Neocosmos, 2010). The urban/ rural split is compounded by a split in the rural: the South African rural landscape still retains the basic divide between largely white commercial farming areas and former homelands. Alongside South Africa's inclusive liberal democracy, the chieftaincy and customary law remain entrenched in former homeland areas (Mapokgole, 2014; Ntsebeza, 2006). Over a third of South Africans live in former homeland areas, which continue to have more deprivation and poverty than the rest of the country, with the former Transkei in the Eastern Cape the worst of all (Noble, Zembe and Wright, 2014). Commoners in the former homelands, especially in the smaller villages, remain at the very bottom of the hierarchy of South African citizens.

Hierarchical distinctions among people are very dangerous when the dominant feature of this political discourse is the use of the language of rights embodied in the state as a way of making social demands and measuring social justice (Amisi and Ballard, 2005). If some feel that their rights have been infringed upon or their demands unmet, political discourse can create suitable scapegoats, according to a citizenship hierarchy, targeting those with fewer or no rights. For example, black foreigners are blamed for the government being unable to meet people's demands, as a way to resolve frustrations by those who have demands that have not been met.

Given unequal distribution and unfulfilled social demands, distinctions between autochthonous South Africans and non-South Africans (more specifically, black foreigners) play out in the social and built environments in the contestation over resources and space – in extreme cases through violence. With the foreigners seen as a malicious presence and threat in an autochthonous politics, the protection of “true” members of the nation is seen by many South Africans as making xenophobic sentiments and actions “legitimate, rational and above all, necessary” (Landau, 2010, quoted in Hoeflich, 2011: 8).

But the very foundations of autochthonous politics and indigeneity are flawed: migration is common throughout history, and the notion that any group has lived in a given space since time immemorial is false. The truth is, autochthony and indigeneity are continuously defined and redefined by those in power.

1.2 Somali Traders: Violence and the Ethnic Economy

Given a nation-building project based on exclusion, a hierarchical ordering of citizenship and rights, and media and state that often criminalises foreign nationals (the term “illegal” often linked to the word “immigrant”), and routine official and police harassment, conflict has grown. The most dramatic outbreak were the xenophobic attacks of 2008 when 63 people were killed, 342 shops were looted and 213 shops were raised to the ground; 1384 individuals were arrested (Cooper, 2009; SAPS, 2008). These attacks have been described as characteristic of pogroms (Neocosmos, 2010; Tafir, 2011). Given the politics of South Africa, with xenophobia endemic, the attacks of 2008 were unsurprising (Neocosmos, 2008). Misago, Landau and Monson (2009: 2) found that the 2008 attacks were “organised and led by local groups and individuals in an effort to claim or consolidate the authority and power needed to further their political and economic interests.”

Although there have been no “pogroms” since 2008, there continue to be robbery, assault, killings and violent expulsion of foreigners in urban townships. Somalis, particularly those operating as *spaza* operators, have been victims of xenophobia, exhibited through prejudice and stereotypes and, in some cases, violent exclusion (Gastrow and Amit, 2013; Hoeflich, 2011). From 2001 to 2014, a total of 19,287 asylum applications were accepted from Somali national applicants (Gastrow and Amit cited in Crush, Chikanda and Sinner, 2015:164). As asylum seekers and refugees, Somalis are entitled to work in South Africa, and the majority has engaged in informal trade, commonly running *spaza*s in the townships of South Africa (Gastrow and Amit in Crush *et al*, 2015).

Some have argued that extreme acts of violence have been disproportionally meted out against Somali *spaza* operators across the country. In 2013, 200 Somalis marched in Cape Town to deliver a memorandum that urged government to protect them against ongoing xenophobic attacks (Adam and Moodley, 2013; Patel, 2013). This protest came hot on the heels of xenophobic attacks where, in one example, a Somali national was stoned to death in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. An estimated 40 Somali-operated *spaza* shops had been looted, and a number of Somalis injured in the process, by June of the same year. These attacks occurred in four provinces of the country, including the Eastern Cape and the Port Elizabeth area.

Somali *spaza* operators have often been accused of pushing out South African traders (Thompson, 2012; Whitehouse, 2011). It seems that competition between the locals and foreigners has been a major driver of xenophobic violence against foreign nationals. Given the ideas of a hierarchy of rights and rights-bearers, and of dire threat by outsiders, Somali *spaza* operators, being non-citizens but successful traders, have been attacked; and these attacks have been seen as a legitimate way of dealing with their perceived theft of local resources (Hoeflich, 2011; Thompson, 2012). There is evidence that, compared to many locally-owned *spaza* shops, which tend to be quite survivalist in nature and unable to accumulate more wealth, Somalis are very successful (Charman, Petersen and Piper, 2012).

Although there is no comprehensive data on the overall size of Somali-operated *spazas*, the information that is available indicates that Somalis play a large, and growing, role. The Sustainable Livelihood Foundation (SLF) conducted a survey of eight townships across the country between 2010 and 2013 (cited in Gastrow and Amit, 2013). The results were that 48.5% of *spazas* were run by locals, with the remaining 51.5% run by foreign nationals, most them Somalis, who occupied 22.5% of the market. Research by Liedeman (2013) in the Cape Town township of Delft, indicates that ownership of *spazas* changed from being equally divided between foreign nationals (mostly Somalis) and locals in 2010, to 70% of *spazas* previously owned by locals closing permanently by 2013 (cited in Paton, 2014).

The typical Somali *spaza* shop in South Africa is a walk-in-self-service operation. Products are well arranged and the *spaza* shop looks like a miniature supermarket. Extended customer services are highlighted as a key component of their overall business strategy (Basardien, Parker, Bayat, Friedrich and Appoles, 2014; also, Ismail, 2013). Besides providing a wider range of products at lower prices than South African *spaza* operators, Somalis extend credit which does not accrue interest because of Islamic financial principles (Liedeman, 2013; Thompson, 2012). This fills an important gap for poor South African customers, and is not readily available in locally-operated *spazas*.

The business of the middleman minority is often mediated from an ethnic enclave. Thompson (2012:31) defines an ethnic enclave as "a spatial concentration of firms entailing economic diversification and the development of a differentiated class of entrepreneurs, which generally leads to an economic advantage for the self-employed." The ethnic enclave is one expression of the "ethnic economy," which refers to businesses owned by a certain minority ethnic group, including "businesses owned by middleman minorities, businesses owned by co-ethnics in ethnic enclaves, as well as all ethnic-owned or ethnic-controlled enterprises in the general economy" (Zhou, 2004:1043).

I argue that the Somalis can be seen as having developed an "ethnic economy" in South Africa, facilitated by social networks composed of relatives, co-ethnics and others. They seem able to outperform locals because they work in groups, based on ethnic networks, and are thus able to pool resources, like transport, and buy in bulk, dropping prices by securing discounts from suppliers and maximising economies of scale in procurement (Liedeman, 2013 and Charman *et al*, 2012).

Somali *spaza* operators are also, I argue, a "middleman minority," in the sense of an ethnic minority, self-employed or working for co-ethnics, in easy to start up and liquidate businesses, which play an intermediary economic role between elites and masses, and consumers and producers, within a larger nation (Blalock, 1967; Bonacich, 1973; Kitano, 1974; Sowell, 2005). In the United States of America, for example, many middleman minorities established their businesses in poor minority neighbourhoods or immigrant ghettos in urban areas deserted by mainstream retail and service industries and business owners of the society's dominant group (Zhou, 2007:279), or in small rural towns (Zenner, 1991).

There is a long history of middleman minorities in both urban and rural areas in South Africa, dating back into the 1800s, when Jews and Indians played a key role (e.g. Dugmore, 1994; Shain and Mendelsohn, 2008). The middleman minority provides a substitute for neglect by businesses and for effective service provision by the governing structures. In the township or village economy, this can mean the local black population finds itself in a position where the foreign national is providing affordable goods, and has thrived in areas where local alternatives did not exist, yet is also resented as non-national (by locals) and as rival (by local traders) (Thompson, 2012).

The success of the middleman minority depends heavily on the "social capital" of an ethnic network. For Bourdieu (1986: 249), social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." The ethnic network facilitates activities such as bulk-buying, lending, migration, savings, and start-up capital, lowering transaction costs – all providing a competitive advantage for those who benefit from such networks (Whitehouse, 2011).

The literature on such minorities suggests that their location as intermediaries, their prominence and their relative success make them ready targets for antagonism: the main cause for this conflict is the competition from members of the local population (e.g. Bonacich, 1973); Charman *et al*, 2012; Thompson, 2012; Zenner, 1991). Local wholesalers and consumers may benefit from their presence, but rival local traders may lose out.

Middleman minority theory suggests that it is where the group is most needed that it is susceptible to the most persecution (Bonacich, 1973). In some cases, economic and political frustration can spill over into attacks on immigrants. In 2014, for example, a third of violent attacks on foreign-owned *spazas* in South Africa were linked directly to frustrations with municipal governments. There is a reported perception that the failure of the state to meet locals' needs is partly due to the pressure on resources caused by foreign nationals.

I argue that, while explanations of xenophobia stress state construction of citizenship, emphasised by writers like Neocosmos (2010) and Tafir (2011) are valuable, because it notes the centrality of state-conceived citizenship and of ideas, in the construction of xenophobia, it is inadequate. It downplays the importance of economic factors, like competition, and does not adequately explain variations in attitudes to foreign nationals. It looks at differences in the treatment of foreigners, mainly by looking at how different groups are racialised. It also does not pay much attention to space.

Zenner (1991: 258) suggested that a specific distinction should be drawn between the situation of middleman minority groups in urban and rural areas, in examining the relationship between middleman minority groups and locals. Zenner argued that in rural areas prejudice might be lower, as "an equilibrium based on complementarity and toleration may have been established" between locals and the middleman minority. In other words, conflict may be lower in these rural areas. There is some evidence for this claim in South Africa, where xenophobic violence has been concentrated in large urban areas. A study for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Queenstown in the Eastern Cape found that, in a nearby village, many considered foreign traders to be an integral part of the community (Ntshobane, 2013). Their *spaza* shops and other entrepreneurial businesses were seen as beneficial to the villagers, and local leaders reportedly stated that "foreigners are not merely tolerated in Didimana; they are actively welcomed and absorbed into community life" (Ntshobane, 2013). In other villages in the area, there was evidence that groups like Somali *spaza* operators were not only tolerated, but welcomed (Eppel, 2014; Fisher, 2008).

The explanation of xenophobia stressing state construction of citizenship stresses the actions of citizens and the state in determining the status of the foreign nationals in the spaces they inhabit, and does not look at the role of different types of interactions locals have with foreign nationals, even with the same immigrant group in different parts of the country (Thompson, 2012 and Park, 2010). For example, Dugmore (1994) found that campaigns by white shopkeepers against their Indian rivals in Krugersdorp in the early 1900s tended to fail, because many whites preferred the Indian traders.

The peace and tolerance in some rural areas must be weighed against the more negative situation in others: in other smaller towns, like Mqanduli, Elliotdale and Ngqeleni, *spaza* operators from Somalia, Ethiopia and Pakistan were subject to threats of extortion and smaller *spazas* were ordered to close (Ntshobane, 2013). However, the intervention of chiefs ensured that "the whole thing does not spill over to violence" (Ntshobane, 2013). This gives credence to the argument made by Misago *et al* (2009) that prompt intervention and conflict resolution by key local leaders is essential in preventing xenophobic violence.

Another line of argument is also useful here, which is the notion of relative deprivation. A study conducted by Adam Cooper from the Centre for Social Science Research (2009) examined the attitudes of black African youth who had migrated from the Eastern Cape to the Du noon informal settlement in Cape, and the role that this might have played in the 2008 anti-immigrant riots. It was interested in the "'youths' perceptions of different groups who live in Du noon, descriptions of how these groups interact in daily community life and accounts of what transpired in May 2008" (2009:3). The now-urbanised youths had higher expectations than their rural counterparts, which were frustrated by the slow pace of change; and a more pronounced sense of relative deprivation because of the more obvious contrasts between affluent and non-affluent populations living in urban areas (Cooper,2009). This contributed to resentment of immigrants. There is some evidence for this at Mthatha, the capital city of the Eastern Cape – a mere 144km away from Cofimvaba. African immigrants came to this urban centre in search of opportunities, and to escape persecution and violence elsewhere (Petkou, 2014). They included Cameroonians, Ghanaians and Nigerians. Petkou (2014) found that these groups faced discrimination, harassment and violent xenophobia in Mthatha, indicating how urban inequalities could lead to the scapegoating of immigrants.

Therefore, to understand the relationship between Somali *spaza* operators and local community members, it is not enough to take note of the impact of state policies and local citizenship claims, or to understand the group simply as a middleman minority. The actual spaces of encounter need to be noted, not just the fact that Somalis now live in urban townships and small villages or have ethnic enclaves in the cities (for more background, see Thompson, 2012). Failure to spatially locate Somalis has resulted in not looking at the details and forms of the relationships between Somali *spaza* operators and the members of local communities in a holistic manner.

1.3 Aims, Objectives and Research Question

This thesis is interested in exploring this issue, with particular reference to rural areas in former homelands in South Africa. The expansion of Somali *spaza* operations into rural South Africa is a new strategy that warrants more analysis. According to the Provincial Safety and Security Department of the Eastern Cape, there was an increase in the number of foreign nationals seeking asylum in Eastern Cape following the May 2008 riots (IOL, 2008). The province had been relatively peaceful during those riots, and attracted people looking for safety. A large portion of these foreign nationals were Somalis, and while some went to major urban areas like Port Elizabeth, there was also a dispersal into smaller towns and into the rural parts of the province (Hikam, 2011). The primary reason for the increase was owed to the fact that the Eastern Cape was seen as being safer than the other provinces, with far fewer xenophobic attacks.

This is no longer the case, as there has been an increase in xenophobic attacks, especially in the Port Elizabeth area (Adam and Moodley, 2013; Hikam, 2011; Thompson, 2012). There were several murders of Somali traders in late 2008 in Port Elizabeth and the countryside (OHCHR, 2008). There was a major outbreak in Port Elizabeth in May 2011, by which time there were an estimated 9,000 Somalis in the Eastern Cape (van Rooyen, 2011), out of a possible 100,000 in South Africa as a whole (Fuzile, 2011). More violence has since followed in the Eastern Cape, but it has been (as noted earlier), quite rare in rural areas, including the two former homelands that are part of the Eastern Cape, Ciskei in the west and the much larger Transkei in the east.

The theme of migrant integration and community relations and mobilisation in rural areas since 1994 has been seriously overlooked in the literature and this thesis contributes to addressing this gap. Foreign *spaza* operators in rural South Africa are growing in importance, yet suffering far less violence than their counterparts in urban areas. This shows the limitations of explaining xenophobic attacks off from national-level developments, like the changing nature of citizenship and extensive inequality, while ignoring regional and local variations. Why should there be less violence in areas where foreign *spaza* operators like Somalis are relatively far *more* important in the local economy, and where poverty and deprivation is generally far *worse* than in big urban areas?

This highlights the need to not only look at the macro-level or at the urban centres, to develop an understanding of the relation between locals and foreign nationals, but to develop more localised understandings of the relationship between the two groups, and to look closely at rural dynamics as well. While there is a growing literature on micro-level relationships between locals and foreign nationals, this is largely focused on the cities and their urban townships (Thompson, 2012). There are few studies on foreign nationals involved in trading in rural areas, and these say very little about Somalis (e.g. Eppel, 2014; Fisher, 2008; Ntshobane, 2013). How valid for South Africa, is Zenner's (1991) claim that middleman minorities may face less hostility in rural, than in urban, areas? This thesis helps address this gap too.

The coverage is also far from comprehensive. For example, in the villages around Cofimvaba in the Intsika Yethu District Municipality (IYDM) of the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM) in the Transkei, Somalis seem to be the main group of foreign nationals involved in trading, a very visible middleman minority central to *spaza* activity. However, I was only able to find one mention of their role, and this was an aside in a newspaper article by Eppel (2014) that was dealing with another issue.

The region that is covered by the Chris Hani municipality suffered a century of war, from 1779 to 1879, that ended with Xhosa peoples' defeat, and the region's transformation into a source of cheap migrant labour (Eppel, 2014). The Chris Hani municipality is home to almost 800,000 people in 2011 (Local Government, 2014a), with the Intsika Yethu area, in its east, having around 145,000 people (and 46% unemployment, using a narrow definition) that same year (Local Government, 2014b). By 2012, unemployment in the Chris Hani municipality was around 57%, with most people reliant on social grants or on wages remitted from migrants.

Across the Chris Hani region, villagers' lives remain shaped by the apartheid past through the ongoing centrality of migrant labour and the chieftaincy (Webster, Metcalfe, van Niekerk, Noble, Reynolds, Agget, Du Plessis, Dilata, Makanjee, Grinker and Peires 2014). At any given time, the absence of many people of working age, away on migrant labour or to find jobs, is very evident (Eppel, 2014).

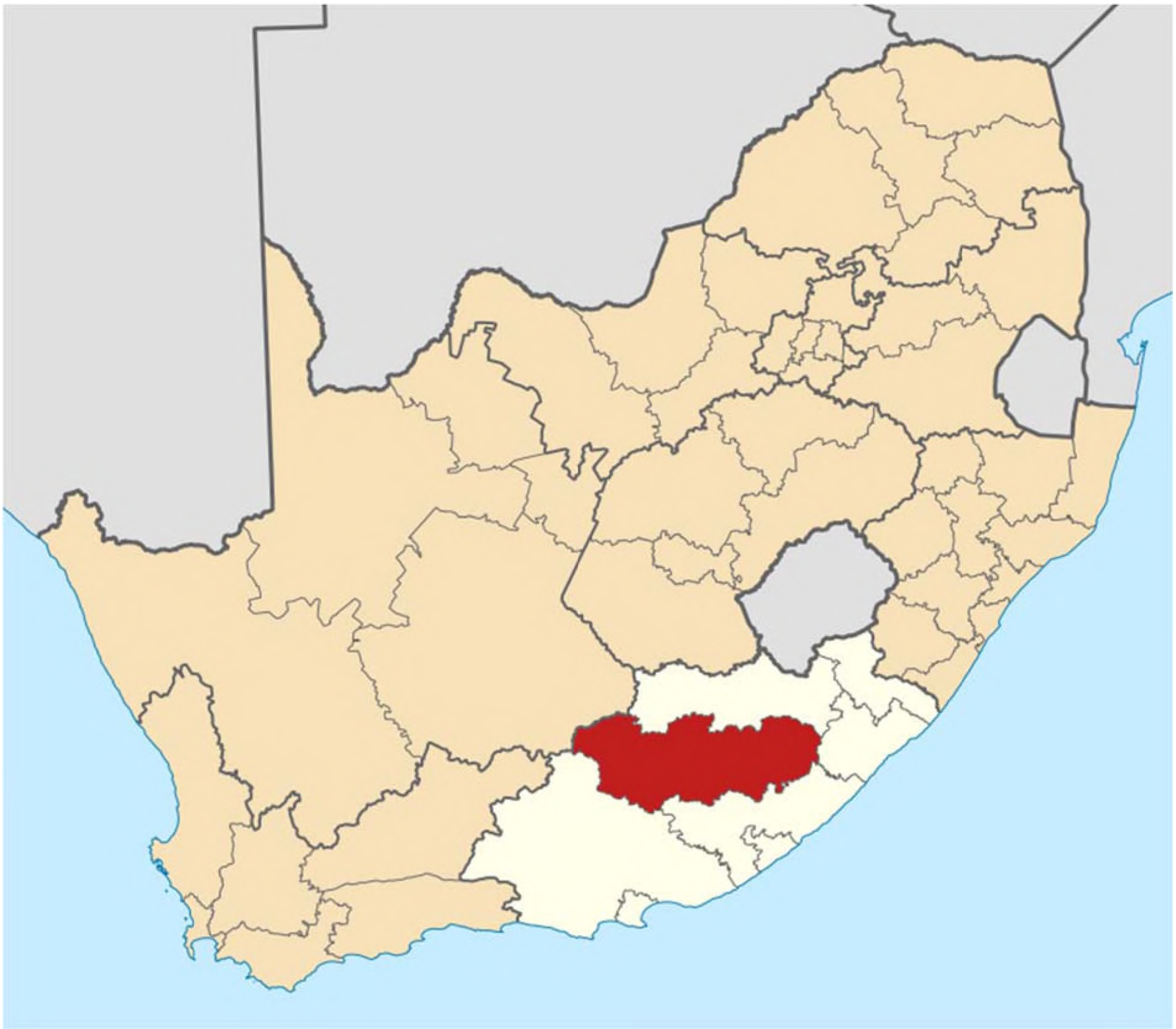

Figure 1: Chris Hani District Municipality in Relation to South Africa[1]

This effectively means that there has been a minimal break from the past for these South Africans. The Intsika Yethu area is classed as a "Category B4" municipality, which means it is predominantly rural with subsistence farming. Cofimvaba is a town in the Intsika Yethu area, surrounded by a number of villages, mostly at a very considerable distance from the town. These villages are the villages around Cofimvaba.

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[1] Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Hani_District_Municipality#/media/File:Map_of_South_Africa_with_Chris_Hani_highlighted_(2011).svg

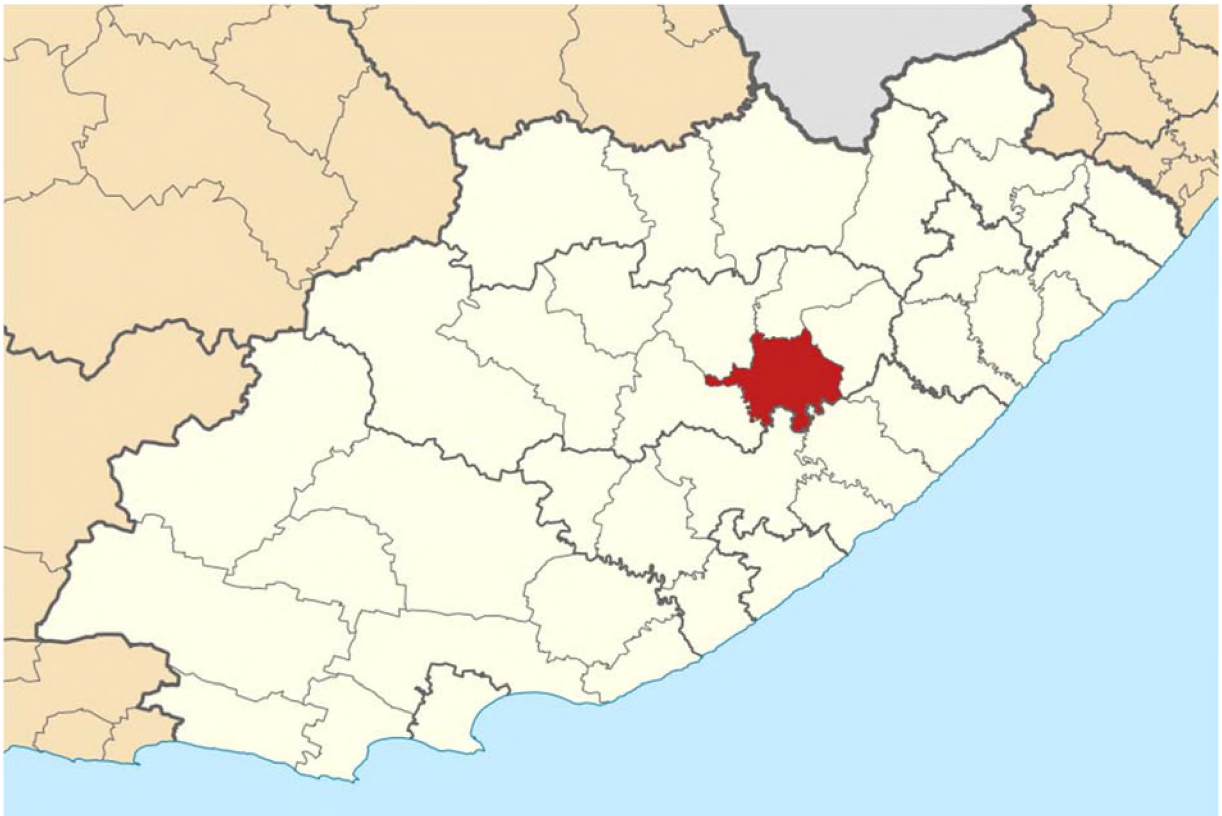

Figure 2: Map of the Eastern Cape with Intsika Yethu Municipal Area Highlighted[2]

The major goal of this thesis is to examine the relationship between Somali *spaza* operators and locals, in the villages around Cofimvaba. The study is valuable in a number of ways. There is relatively little research on local/ foreign national dynamics in rural areas, including homelands, and nothing on Cofimvaba. This is despite the growing presence of foreign nationals like Somalis in the rural areas, including homelands. As argued earlier, local level studies also provide an essential way to understand why these relations break out into xenophobic attacks, including violence in extreme cases, in some contexts, and not in others.

As noted, there is also very little xenophobic violence in the rural areas, including homelands, despite relatively high levels of poverty and deprivation – but very little research that tries to explain why. In this thesis, I will examine the relationship using qualitative methods, primarily non-participant observation of relations between Somali *spaza* operators and local villagers, and in-depth interviews with people from each group. It is important to locate the relationship in a specific space, as the Somali middleman minority is a space-based entrepreneurial group, and this affects not only how it does business, but also the types of relationships that will be formed with locals in that space.

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[2] Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/24/Map_of_the_Eastern_Cape_with_Intsika_Yethu_highlighted_%282011%29.svg

The assumption here is that homeland villages, like those around Cofimvaba in the old Transkei, are very different settings to those of the big cities, with different social dynamics, and that these help explain the general absence of xenophobic violence against foreign nationals, *despite* the villages also being subject to the same political discourses and socio-economic problems that affect the whole country. It should be noted that, while there is quite a lot of research on xenophobia and the relationships that locals form with immigrant groups, it is a bit thin on how the immigrants conceptualise their belonging in a local community.

So, this thesis will try and look at the relationship between locals/ foreign nationals from both sides, including examining how Somalis' create spaces of belonging and nodes of interaction with the local South Africans.

1.4 Research Methodology

The research involved in-depth field research among a sample of Somali *spaza* operators and locals in villages around Cofimvaba. The study is qualitative in nature, as its main aim is to understand perceptions and relationships.

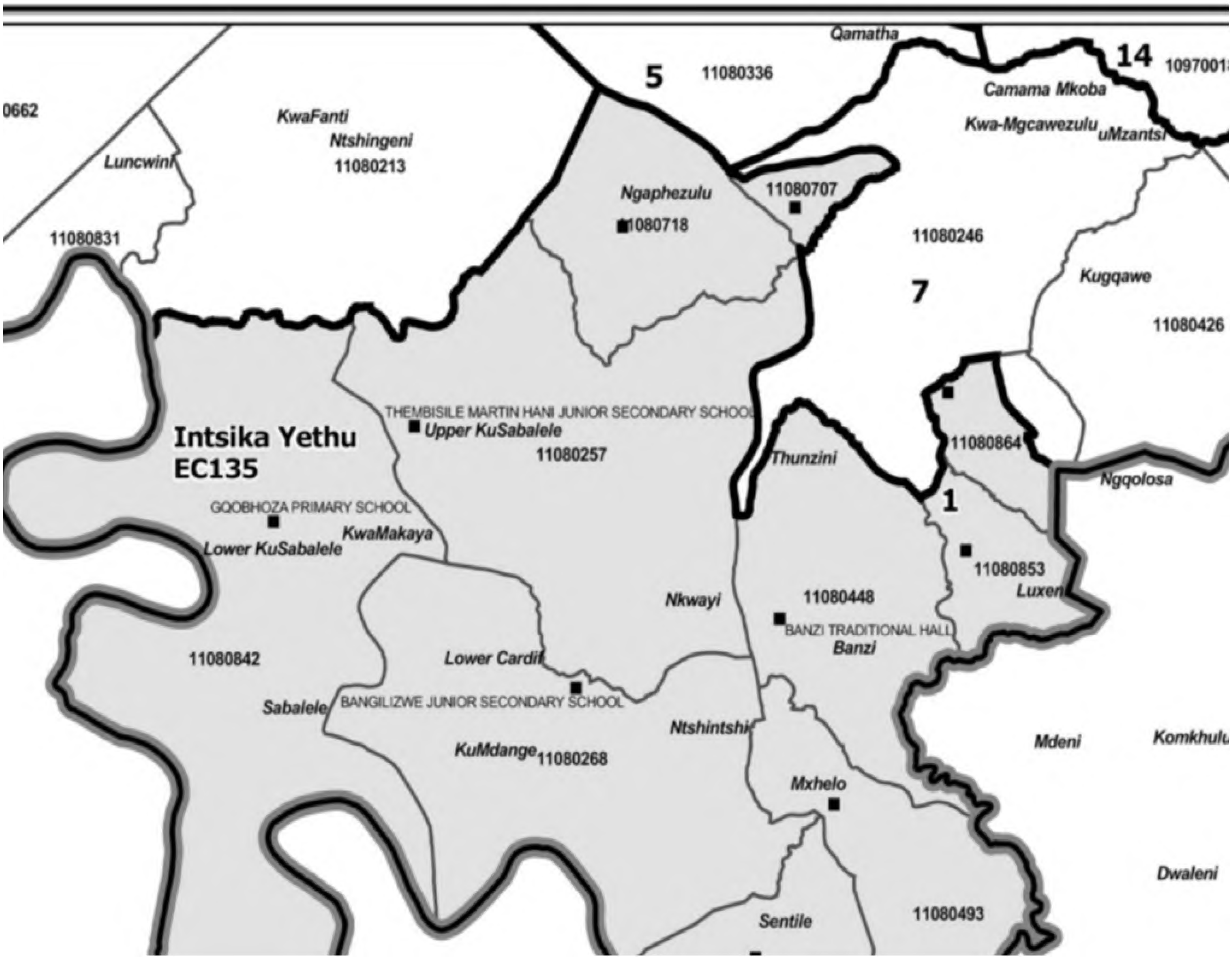
According to Pope and Mays (1995: 42) "the goal of qualitative research is the development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants."

There were two main qualitative methods used: non-participant observation and in-depth interviews. This study adopted non-participant observation in order to observe the interactions, in daily life, between the Somali *spaza* operators and the villagers. This was done by looking at, and listening to, the interactions between the two during the three months I spent in the field.

I took note of, for example, how the *spaza* operator and the *spaza* customer interacted when the customer was buying, the customers outside of the *spazas*, and so on. The observations were usually made from the perspective of an "outsider" or "stranger," and the technique involves little or no conversation (Ostrower, 1998). A major challenge of this method is to confirm and clarify, at a later stage, what was seen and heard. The information gathered by observation was checked by in-depth interviews, and much of the information collected during in-depth interviewing was checked again by observation.

The population in this study consists of Somali *spaza* operators and villagers in the Cofimvaba area. According to Marshall (1996), selecting an appropriate study sample is the most important step in any research study. It is seldom practical to study a whole population. The research was qualitative, which is also more time-consuming, which limited the amount of people who could be sampled. The research was focused on examining perceptions and interactions, in specific local contexts, and did not entail a survey based on a large representative sample. In any case, there was no possibility of creating a representative sample, because a sampling frame –for instance, a list of the number of the people in the area – was unavailable. All that was available is a map of the geographical area. The map showed the villages around Cofimvaba, but did not indicate where the map did not specify the location of *spazas* or, more specifically, of Somali operated *spazas* in the area.

I used purposive sampling. This technique relies on the discretion of the researcher, and is used when the researcher wishes to select unique cases that are especially relevant to the study (Neuman, 2000). I had to specifically look for villages where Somali *spazas* were operating, but since Somali *spazas* were common enough, a method was also needed to choose between villages. As researcher, I selected villages that were closest to the business centre around Cofimvaba town, and villages that there were furthest from it. The reasoning was that distance from the town's businesses could be expected to affect the success of *spazas*, in terms of the number of customers they could attract and their profit margin, as consumers would make choices based on convenience of access to goods, distance to travel, and choices available. The distance from the town's businesses would greatly influence the locals' reliance on *spazas*, and this would shape the types of relationships that are formed between the foreign national traders and local consumers (Ismail, 2013 and Thompson, 2012).


Qamatha
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uMzantsi
Ngaphezulu
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11080707
11080246
7
Kugqawe
11080426
Intsika Yethu
EC135
THEMBISILE MARTIN HANI JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
Upper KuSabalele
11080257
Thunzini
11080864
Ngqolosa
1
GQOBHOZA PRIMARY SCHOOL
KwaMakaya
Lower KuSabalele
11080853
Luxen
Nkwayi
11080448
BANZI TRADITIONAL HALL
Banzi
11080842
Lower Cardi
Sabalele
BANGILIZWE JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
Ntshintshi
KuMdange
11080268
Mdeni
Komkhulu
Mxhelo
Dwaleni
Sentile
11080493

Figure 3: Map of the Research Site: Villages around Cofimvaba[3]

Eight villages were chosen on these grounds and visited as possible research sites, namely Chamama, Sabalele,[4] Hoita (also known as Lalini), Banzi, Ntshingeni, St. Marks, Qamata and Luncwini. Only six villages from this eight had Somalis operating *spazas*. The other two were villages where villagers mistakenly believed the foreign nationals operating *spazas* operators to be

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[3] Source:
Webster *et al*, 2014

[4] This village is best known as the birth place of martyred South African Communist Party leader, Martin Thembisile "Chris" Hani (1942-1993): see Eppel (2014).

Somalis: they were actually from other African nations. These two villages were Banzi and Chamama.

The next issue was to sample the villagers in each village. Individual villages are large and scattered – the houses within the individual villages are far from each other – so it was decided that the best results for the study would be obtained by choosing houses that were closest and furthest from the Somali spaza. Previous research on the interactions between migrants and locals has also found that these interactions were differentiated by gender and age (Polzer, 2010). It was therefore important to choose male and female participants from the youth, middle aged and pensioners in all the villages in the study.

Finally, a mix of people unemployed, employed and living on government grants was chosen, to cover the range of possible customers in alignment with economic statistics of the villages (Webster *et al*, 2014). As argued earlier, there are grounds to think that attitudes, including xenophobic ones, vary across different categories of people in the country, and that some groups – for example, rival businesses, local politicians, and young men – have been the main fomenters of xenophobic attacks in urban areas populated by the poor. Therefore also there was a need for coverage of different categories.

Small, focused samples were used in each village and the total sample size was 50 participants, of which eight are Somali *spaza* operators, with two of them operating a *spaza* in the same village; note that one *spaza* operator was a South African *spaza* operator married to, and co-owning a *spaza* with, a Somali; the other participants were villagers. Six villagers were interviewed in each of the villages of Sabalele, Hoita, Luncwini, Ntshingeni, St Marks and Qamata, and three villagers were interviewed in Banzi and two in Chamama. The choice of six villagers per village was based on the desire to get a mix of the villagers of all the different age groups and the two genders. Two villagers from the youth, middle age and pensioners were interviewed with one of the two in each category being male and the other female. (The intention was to interview six villagers per village, but the number of villagers came up to 41 because in the villages of Banzi and Chamama, the interviews were discontinued after it was discovered that the *spaza* operators operating in these villages were not Somali nationals: see above on the issue of misidentification).

Seven of the eight *spaza* operators in the research sample were men between the ages of 21 and 45. All of these men reported that they were originally from the various villages located in the Southern part of Somalia. The eighth *spaza* operator was a South African-born woman who co-owned the store with her Somali husband.

Interviewees were conducted on both weekdays and weekends in order to access both employed and unemployed villagers. The villagers in the study were both men and women, with the youngest interviewee being 18 and the oldest 83.

All of the interview data presented in this thesis is presented as recorded, verbatim, and thus represents the voices of various individual participants. The research proceeds from the understanding that in-depth interviews with a small number of selected *spaza* owners and local villagers cannot offer up a detailed or comprehensive analysis of an entire region, and all of its overarching social and economic dynamics. Case studies however, can cast light onto some of the key issues – in this case, the relationships between the Somali *spaza* operators and the Cofimvaba villagers – and therefore be of larger relevance and interest.

1.5 Ethical Considerations

The confidentiality of participants in this study had to be ensured. There was only one (in one case, two) Somali *spazas* in each of the villages in the sample, and it was a possibility that the interviewees would be identifiable because of the use of the village names in the data analysis. Interestingly, some villagers were more apprehensive about being identified than the Somali traders themselves. Although it was explained to the villagers that this study was solely for academic purposes, these villagers were worried that their answers would be shared with other members of the community. They feared reprisals if their responses to the questionnaires were controversial, or differed from those given by other respondents. Ultimately all the interviewees in this study remained anonymous.

As noted, traditional authorities (chiefs and headmen) remain central to local government and administer indigenous law within homeland villages (Koyana, 2013; Mabutla, 2001; Ntsebeza, 2006). This remains the case, even though Local Community Development Workers have been established to form a link between the larger state and the village people (Webster *et al*, 2014). It is sometimes considered that these traditional authorities might act as, or wish to act as, gatekeepers to the communities. My assumption was that I might need to follow the guidelines of traditional authority to get access, using a local guide as an interlocutor. This proved unnecessary. Accessing the chiefs in the villages was impossible.

I was instead advised by villagers to approach the headmen, as villagers stated that a person not of the village, could get access with the permission of the headmen. Although this is the case, the villagers stated that this was not an enforced rule, but rather a courtesy. This was welcomed. The process of communicating with headmen of the villages was informal and in cases where a headman was present in the village, an interview was granted.

CHAPTER TWO:

Literature Review and Context

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the literature, outline the core concepts that inform this study, and provide more context for the research site i.e. the villages around Cofimvaba. It is important, when starting, to look at local/ immigrant relations at an institutional level, because policies shape the immigration process in South Africa at the national level, but also the social relationships between nationals and non-nationals at the community level. This study agrees with Nyamnjoh (2007) and Neocosmos (2010) that the primary ethic of the transition to democracy, which was inclusion and equity, has not yet come to fruition for many of those living in South Africa. These include many South Africans, as well as immigrants, among them asylum seekers and refugees: these are excluded in various ways.

Amisi and Ballard (2005) have argued that democracy is predicated on the "language of rights to articulate needs, make social demands and secure legally enforceable commitments from the government," for "rights have become a way of defining fairness and social justice" (cited in Hoeflich, 2011: 16). But although the 1996 Constitution explicitly states that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it," evidence suggests that black foreign nationals, and important swathes of the national population, notably black rural South Africans, including in the homelands, in particular are not part of this "all."

Nyamnjoh (2007: 73) argues that there are degrees of citizenship, and that citizenship is shaped by hierarchies and inequalities "affecting individuals and communities differently as informed by race, ethnicity, class, gender and geography." The villagers around Cofimvaba, as well as the Somali *spaza* operators operating in these villages, are both marginalised, in different ways, in some or all of the above categories. This certainly affects the relationship that exists between the two groups. Since rights do not flow down to the lowest levels of society, or are blunted by various forms of inequality, they can have a very limited impact on the daily lives of many living in South Africa, whether autochthonous or not.

The exclusion of foreign nationals from the body politic, and their denigration in state discourses and policy, plays an important role in their exclusion. However, as argued in the previous chapter, exclusion and inclusion are also shaped at local levels. State actions, and the larger economic and social problems in South Africa, certainly promote certain types of relations and attitudes to "the foreigner," but regional and local variations show this is not the whole story. For example, xenophobic violence is largely a phenomenon of the bigger cities, and then concentrated in certain areas and groups.

2.2 The "Middleman Minority" Theory

It is also important to note, here, that the relationship between South African locals and foreign nationals is not just constructed by South Africans. Some authors (Gastrow and Amit, 2012; Hoeflich, 2011) suggest that migrants are often pushed to the edges of the "host" community, both in the physical and social sense by the state, citizenry, and civil society. These socially tenuous and physically isolated positions are often blamed for immigrants being susceptible to crime and abuse at the hands of different sectors, including sectors of communities, and state actors. Some have argued (e.g. Hoeflich, 2011; Thompson 2012) that local practices of exclusion actually force immigrants to retreat into their isolated, exclusive spaces.

But notions of indigeneity and autochthony are not only used by South Africans, but also by immigrants. There is, for example, as Nyamnjoh (2007: 73) puts it, a growing global fixation with "an authentic place called home" within African immigrant communities. Further, as the literature on middleman minorities suggests, ethnic minority trading groups can derive extensive and essential social capital from close ties to co-ethnics, and therefore often reinforce those ties. This can mean an identity that stresses difference with the larger nation, transnational ethnic network, a focus on the "place called home," and the self-image of being a sojourner in the local communities. The point is that the social isolation of middleman minorities should not be reduced to the discrimination and prejudice by the "host" community (Thompson, 2012). Middleman minority theory suggests that the ethnic spaces created by such groups is not simply the result of exclusion, but often a deliberate choice by such groups.

European thinkers like Simmel, Sombart and Weber have been seen as the pioneers of middleman minority theories as they grappled with the links between the Jews and their economic roles, religion, and ethnic identity in medieval and modern Europe (Bonacich, 1973; Sowell, 2005; Zenner, 1991). The theory was further developed and given its core expression by Bonacich (1973), whose work has since been elaborated and debated. For Bonacich (1973), middleman minority groups were ethnic minorities that tended to be self-employed, or to work for co-ethnics, in easy to start up and easy to liquidate businesses such as small trading.

The success of a middleman minority group is heavily owed to the social capital of the ethnic network, which may be sustained through an ethnic enclave and which is essential to the ethnic economy. Social capital is conceptualised here, in instrumental terms as something that can be generated and exploited by individuals within a social network (Bourdieu, 1986). Whitehouse (2011) argues social capital has a communitarian ethic, which is most vital to ethnic entrepreneurial success, because it speeds up the process of accumulating savings and start-up capital. Furthermore, working in social networks lowers transaction costs which enable those who benefit from such networks to outcompete those who do not in business. Social capital also facilitates cross-border migration and the forming of ties and in effect an ethnic economy in the destination countries.

In operating their businesses, middleman minority groups play an intermediary economic role between different and divided social classes and national, ethnic or racial groups, consumers and producers in the larger "host" society. The middleman minority fills a gap, interacting between social groups that rarely interact directly (Bonacich, 1973; Kitano 1974; Sowell 2005). Middleman minority theory deals with the "specific territories in which immigrant livelihoods are played out, the strategies utilised within these specific spaces, and the relationship that these spaces both embody and engender between foreigners and locals" (Thompson, 2012: 75).

Looking at the United States, Zhou (2007:279) argued that middleman minority entrepreneurs often established their businesses in poor racial minority neighbourhoods, or in immigrant ghettos in urban areas. These had been deserted by mainstream retail and service industries and the business owners of a society's dominant national, ethnic or racial group. While much of the literature on the United States stressed urban areas, Zenner (1991) pioneered work on middlemen minorities in rural areas. Zenner examined how Jews, who relocated from Nazi Germany, built up an ethnic economy in the rural towns of Broome County and Chenango, Delaware and Cortland Counties, near New York. The nearby city of Binghampton served as an important ethnic enclave, allowing the Jews in smaller rural towns a place where they could congregate in order to strengthen group solidarity. However, there is not a great deal of literature on middleman minorities in rural areas, and while there is material on such groups in South Africa (e.g. in Shain and Mendelsohn, 2008), this rarely used the middleman minority concept. Also, systematic comparative literature on middleman minorities operating in urban and rural spaces is non-existent.

Ethnic, national and racial minorities can be locally born (like the Jews of medieval Europe) or immigrants (like the early twentieth century Jews in the United States) (Zenner, 1991). Not all ethnic or national minorities face discrimination and prejudice from members of the larger society, but most do. A notable feature of middleman minorities is that, unlike most ethnic minorities, they are renowned for an ability to rise from poverty, *despite* discrimination and prejudice. For Bonacich (1973), this means the key issue is that middleman minorities are able to turn "hatred" into "success." Blalock (1967) notes that middleman minorities often enter a marginalised local community in a position that is even lower than that of the marginalised community, but rise upwards, to the middle, primarily because of their competitive advantage due to the ethnic economy and solidarity, and their high adaptive capacity (cited in Kitano, 1974). The high adaptive capacity of the group is partly as a result of the group's own abilities, but also comes from its interactions with locals (Thompson 2012).

Some have argued that as the period of time during which a group has resided in a territory lengthens, that group's claim to and commitment to the territory becomes stronger (see Thompson, 2012: 22-23). However, middleman minorities seem to contradict this expectation: a core behavioural pattern, inherent in middleman minority groups, is a "sojourning" outlook (Bonacich, 1973). Instead of spending profits on consumption, middleman minorities generally save, specifically with the intention of returning to their homeland. This means a strong orientation towards the future and, consequently, being willing to make sacrifices in terms of social status and individual well-being in the present.

This contributes to business success, and is also expressed in a pattern of "migrant transnationalism": such immigrants remain connected to more than one country. Thompson (2012: 25-26) states that "remittances are but one manifestation of the nexus between social capital and financial capital flows," and that "remittances are a central process in migrant transnationalism." (cited in Thompson, 2012: 25-26). The transnational community is held together across spatial boundaries primarily by remittances and the information networks. Many Somalis, including in South Africa, are transit migrants, "aliens who stay in the country for some period while seeking to migrate permanently to another country'' (Hoeflich, 2011: 22). In these ways, many in the Somali diaspora "largely operate past or above nations" (Horst, 2006 cited in Hoeflich, 2011: 23).

This way of living is more than just a fixation with "an authentic place called home" (Nyamnjoh, 2007: 73), it is a life strategy aimed at returning "home" and meanwhile helping the homeland. Some have seen a sojourning outlook as reinforcing the division between foreign nationals and local communities: it heightens the middleman minority group's sense of identity and transience, and need to keep themselves separate from rather than merge into local communities (see Bonacich, 1973; Sowell, 2005; Whitehouse, 2009b; Zennner, 1991). Whitehouse (2009b), for example, has examined how Muslim West African middleman minority groups (mainly from Mali) in in Brazzaville in the Republic of the Congo took great care to ensure that the socialisation, local influences did not affect enculturation, language acquisition, and identification of their children. These middleman minorities in fact preferred to have their children raised by relatives in the homeland, than locally, as local values were seen as not just different, but as "inimical" to their own (Whitehouse, 2009b: 87).

The belief that all members of the group would return to the homeland one day required preparation for this future, including teaching the children how to be true members of the homeland. The notion that the "host" community was inimical and alien was sometimes expressed by the middleman minority applying different ethics to their own people and members of the local population (Zenner, 1991). For example, the groups in Brazzaville could be seen facilitating practices that they personally rejected, in order to make profits, like selling alcohol and cigarettes, even though they viewed personal use of these as illicit (Whitehouse, 2009).

It is certainly the case that a great deal of interaction with locals can lead a middleman minority to absorb the values and behaviour of members of the communities in which they operate, which would be economic suicide (Sowell, 2005; Zenner, 1991). Characteristics like group solidarity, austere living, postponement of gratification and willingness to work for longer hours while earning lower socio-economic returns, are some of qualities that middleman minorities need to maintain in order to retain their economic success (Sowell, 2005).

However, economic success does not mean high social status, and while the middleman minority moves to the middle economically, it often holds a political and social *status* that is below that of local marginalised ethnic or national group (Thompson 2012). Its success is resented, and where the group is made up of foreign nationals, or people seen as foreign, this hostility can take the form of nativism, racism (including culturally- and nationally-based "New Racism": Tafir, 2011: 114), and xenophobia. Hostility towards middleman minorities comes from both the elite and marginalised local groups, with their success being resented, their non-national character stressed, and their visible success making them an easy scapegoat.

It is because the middleman minorities are beneficial to the locals that they are successful, providing services which disadvantaged locals need, but ironically the very success of the middleman group causes resentment. This is especially strong amongst local business owners in poorer areas, who are occupying the same business sector (Thompson, 2012). The perception by a range of groups in the "host" society, is that these middleman minorities are involved in spatial and economic theft (which affects all locals) that warrants decisive rectification from all locals.

Ruling classes and dominant ethnic and national groups can use the middleman minority as a scapegoat for their own failure to meet the demands of ethnic, national, and racial minorities, while the latter can drain off some of their frustration onto the middleman minorities (Kitano, 1974; Min, 2008; Olzak, 1992). Some notable examples include tensions between Korean and Jewish shopkeepers and African-Americans, between Indian shopkeepers and black Africans in East Africa, and between Chinese shopkeepers and locals in Indonesia and Malaysia (e.g. Min, 1996).

Notions of autochthonous belonging and indigeneity play an important role in defining some as permanent and threatening outsiders (see previous chapter) (Gausset *et al*, 2011). These notions are reinforced by state policies and political discourses and thrive in the soil of inequality and frustration (see last chapter). For example, Neocosmos (2010) and Nyamnjoh (2007) note that the post-apartheid government specifically pursued capitalist interests, through various neo-liberal strategies. These fostered a particularly competitive business environment, with major job losses, rising inequality and relative poverty, and hence continued to marginalise the many previously disadvantaged groups, like commoners in rural areas, and black workers, including migrant workers, in the cities and on the farms. Since South Africa remains socially and economically divided, despite the ethic of inclusion, immigrants are often seen as stealing the fruits of freedom, a perception encouraged implicitly or explicitly by state policy, politicians, and the media. The notion that opportunities that should belong primarily to "real" South Africans is part of this, and often results in violence.

Two last points are important here. One is that while middleman minorities often face discrimination and prejudice, these are cases where locals have showed different attitudes. Zenner (1991: 260) suggested that middleman minorities have been "tolerated if they showed proper deference for the majority," and that "occasional attacks can be seen as a ritual to restore the proper deference." Looking specifically at South Africa, Thompson (2012) found that middleman minority groups have been seen by locals as beneficial in some areas, but as an unwanted competitive force worthy of violent exclusion in others.

The second point is that it is important not to see middleman minorities and ethnic economies as monolithic. Bonacich (1973) and Zenner (1991) argue that factions and rivalries often divide ethnic minorities. The closest ties tend to be at the family level, and amongst friends, both in the new country, and in the homeland. Ties seldom go further. The closeness of ethnic minorities is often exaggerated by locals, who do not distinguish between the outsiders. The concentration of middleman minorities in certain occupations tends to let locals mistakenly view each member as representative of all members of the group.

2.3 Somali Migration to South Africa

As noted in the previous chapter, South Africa has experienced substantial immigration since the 1990s. One aspect of this is that the country's migration policy grants asylum to refugees from designated countries. These include Somalia, and Somalis were the first non-Southern African Development Community (SADC) nationals to immigrate to South in this period. Somalis have been present in South Africa since the 1890s, but the largest number came in the 1990s with collapse of the Somali government in 1991. Both Thompson (2012) and Liedeman (2013) find that the number of Somalis in South Africa is rising, even though the overland journey from Somalia to South Africa has become more difficult due to migrants being detained in various countries along the way. There was an influx of Somalis from 1995 to 2000, and another after 2006. Generally, Somalis in South Africa are not "illegal" immigrants, but have legal status and valid documentation (Jinnah, 2010).

Although Somalis generally identify under a pan-Somali identity, their identities are based on the parts of Somalia they come from, including the self-declared states of Somaliland and Puntland, as well as Ogaden in Ethiopia and Kenya. Although Somalis are generally Muslims, they belong to different branches of Islam, and are further differentiated by tribe, then clan, then sub-clan (Sadouni, 2012; Jinnah, 2010). The "noble clans" are the Darood, Dir, Hawiye, Isaaq and the Rahanweyn (Liedeman, 2013). These differences are also expressed in stratification in the Somali diaspora.

Samanani (2014) stresses that Somali interactions based on clan identities are subject to negotiation. The starting point for these negotiations are the circumstances faced by Somalis in the spaces to which they immigrate, which are often isolated and isolating. McGown (1999, cited in Samanani 2014) stresses that clanship is not necessarily the sole or primary principle of affiliation amongst Somalis abroad: rather, Islamic and other identities allow for the negotiation of non-clan-based modes of belonging within the Somali community. In the UK for example, Somalis working for community organisations that provide cross-clan support "framed their work as truer to 'Somali values'" (Samanani, 2014: 20). Liedeman's (2013) research in Cape Town shows something similar: Somalis shop operators preferred to employ assistants from the same clan and sub-clan, but this is not a prerequisite: any fellow Somali with a reputation for being trustworthy could be appointed. Sadouni (2012), in *Somalis in Johannesburg: Muslim Transformations in the City*, argues that Somali Islam is at the core of the Somali diaspora, acting as its political order in the absence of a Somali government, with the Somali ethnic economy acts as a key economic resource and the material basis for transnational ties.

Somalis have no ethnic or language commonalities with South Africa, besides Islam, which is adhered to by a small minority of South Africans, primarily a small section of Coloureds and Indians. The differences between Somalis and South Africans are pronounced in the villages around Cofimvaba. The villagers are distinctly black, Xhosa-speaking people, either Christian, or melding elements of traditional religion, like ancestor veneration, with the Christian faith (Cooper, 2009; Nongenile and Scheub, 1992). From the 1990s, Mayfair in Johannesburg, an area with a large concentration of Indian Muslims, many of them merchants, has been the central node of the Somali community and ethnic economy in South Africa (Sadouni, 2012). Bellville in Cape Town – with a substantial number of local Coloured Muslims – is another important enclave. The Somali ethnic economy is a social network that provides social capital facilitated primarily by the national, ethnic, kinship, cultural and religious ties shared by Somalis (Jinnah, 2010; Liedeman, 20131; Sadouni, 2012).

It is important to stress that Somalis do not only occupy the *spaza* market: in spaces like Bellville in Cape Town, and Mayfair in Johannesburg, there is economic differentiation and a range of forms of capitalist entrepreneurship within the Somali ethnic economy (Thompson 2012; Jinnah 2010 and Sadouni 2012). Furthermore, while Somalis' national and religious identity is central to their settlement and integration (Jinnah, 2010; Thompson, 2012), these Somali spaces reflect historical, cultural and political specificities and differences, and can in fact exclude Somalis who do not fit (Hyndman, 2000). Somalis carry these specificities and differences with them wherever they go (Nyamnjoh, 2006). These specificities and differences are so important to Somalis that Sichone (2008) points out that identifying a person from Somalia as simply "Somali" is an oversimplification, because Somalis highlight political, ethnic and cultural distinctions amongst themselves (cited in Hoeflich, 2011: 24).

Somali social capital is rooted in Somali culture and Islamic heritage (Thompson 2012; Sadouni 2012). Thompson (2012:45) says that "for Somalis, the minaret of a mosque was their compass to Johannesburg." Islamic heritage is seen by Sadouni (2012) as one of the major ways in which Somalis appropriate space with the intentions of maintaining social distance, including from non-Muslims. Although the presence of Somalis in places like Mayfair was eased by the presence of South African Indian Muslims, Somalis built their own mosques and *madrasas* because their Islamic jurisprudence was distinct (Thompson, 2012).

A spatial approach, looking at where people like and operate businesses, is imperative to understanding the group and where it creates spaces of belonging and nodes of interaction with outsiders (Thompson, 2012). Thompson (2012) finds that South Africans are excluded from Somali spaces, and engage with them through interactions mediated by nodes like businesses.

There are two main places where Somalis in South Africa engage in capitalist entrepreneurship: in the Somali ethnic enclave, and as middleman minorities outside the ethnic enclave. The two parts of the ethnic economy are linked, with the ethnic enclaves' function as a mediating space for the profits extracted from *spaza* and other retail operations (Thompson, 2012). Social capital, and the networks it enables, is a means of spreading risk and ensuring a safety net if xenophobic violence does arise and threaten the livelihoods of, for example, *spaza* operators. At the same time, Somalis' clustering eases their transition into the "host" community, provides safety, and enables the protection of their cultural and economic interests.

It seems, from the literature, that many Somalis in South Africa are transit migrants, with South Africa a transit country within the transnational Somali network. Thompson (2012) argues that the crime and xenophobia suffered by Somali *spaza* operators in the townships makes these Somalis more transient than the Somalis living and operating in ethnic enclaves.

Interestingly, Somalis acting as a middleman minority in South Africa feature consistently in media and academic study as a group of foreign nationals that suffer disproportionately from local xenophobia. However, there is very little work on the factors that keep Somalis doing business in "high-risk environments" (Thompson, 2012: 36-37). The group has seldom been analysed as a middleman minority, and those who have done so (Hoeflich, 2011; Thompson, 2012) have focused on the urban areas – mainly the townships.

Thinking about the Somalis as a middleman minority draws attention to their low status in the larger society, as well as their marginality. This locates them firmly in the lower end of the hierarchical spectrum of rights in South Africa, which has, as noted in the previous chapter, been identified by various writers (e.g. Neocosmos, 2010); Nyamnjoh, 2006). Somalis prefer the urban areas, partly because of easier access to "health, education, humanitarian assistance, skills training, jobs, anonymity etc." and to South Africa's Refugee Reception Offices, which are in urban areas: the short-term permits of asylums seekers require constant renewal (Hoeflich, 2011: 17). Somalis making a living in small towns and villages, and especially in the old homelands, are further marginalised, therefore, by their location.

But while they are outside the nation and its citizenship, and leaving aside issues of language, culture and religion, they actually have much in common with many poorer South Africans. For example, many South African urban township dwellers are migrant workers from the homelands, and deprivation and poverty are central parts of the lives of the over 30% of South Africans who are residents of the homelands (see Cooper, 2009; Eppel, 2014; Mapokgole, 2014; Noble, Zembe and Wright, 2014; Ntsebeza, 2006; Webster *et al*, 2014; Westaway, 2010 and 2012).

2.4 The *Spaza* Landscape of South Africa

The key role, and business advantage, of the *spaza* shop is servicing customers who are far from the business districts of the city centre: specifically, *spazas* emerged in (black) townships, which were set at a distance from the main (white) towns. In earlier years, *spazas* operated in a clandestine manner. The *spaza* market has continued to develop in townships, including informal settlements, and in rural areas. In these areas, access to necessities through large shops, shopping malls and commercial districts is limited, and the costs of transportation to those facilities are high, therefore opening the space for *spaza* shops which are closer to the customers, operate for longer hours and sometimes cheaper (Liedeman, 2013).

The emergence of the *spaza* shop needs to be understood in the context of South Africa's path of racial-capitalist development. From the late 1800s, successive governments made systematic efforts to prevent the emergence of African, Coloured and Indian merchants, traders, commercial farmers and other capitalists. Major aims of the 1913 Land Act were to remove black access to private property in land, and to remove of sharecropping, in "white" South Africa. The land allocated to blacks was not just inadequate for substantial farming operations, but held in communal tenure, meaning that it could not be used in business transactions (see e.g. Southall, 1980; Westaway, 2012).

A prosperous black peasantry was not in the interests of white commercial farmers, nor was it in the interests of employers, who needed more labour from the countryside. A small Indian merchant class did manage to emerge, but continually faced racial exclusion and barriers, and was unable to move into accumulation through large-scale production as opposed to distribution (see e.g. Dugmore, 1994; Freund, 1995). Mayfair in Johannesburg, for example, and its surrounds, Fordsburg and Pageview, were the site of repeated forced removals of Indians, notably Indian businesses, under apartheid. Today's centre-piece of Indian business in Johannesburg – the Oriental Plaza in Fordsburg – was created as a segregated shopping mall for Indian businesses displaced by apartheid (Mandy, 2015).

Compared to elsewhere in Africa, the black petty-bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie in South Africa was underdeveloped by the 1970s (Southall, 1980). Apartheid policies had contradictory effects. On one side, black traders were restricted in what they could trade in the townships, with a wide range of products and services forbidden: the aim was to force black consumers into white shops located in the central business districts of the white "down town" (Southall, 1980). By 1968, no black business owner was allowed to operate at more than one site, or to sell goods to persons other than those who lived inside the township (Southall, 1980: 44). The homelands provided few opportunities, either, with black entrepreneurial efforts limited to low-level trading and petty commodity production, and, by the start of the 1950s, only 10% of trading in the homelands was controlled by blacks. Successful traders were pressured to move to the homelands.

On the other side, in line with the "grand apartheid" policy of transforming the homelands into self-governing or independent states, and following the 1955 Tomlinson Commission's proposal for a state-run development corporation to promote black industries in the homelands, this started to change (Southall, 1980). The Bantu Investment Corporation, which started functioning in 1959, provided capital and entrepreneurial guidance, and black commercial layer did expand in the homelands. This was aided by measures to restrict white trading in the homelands, which provided some protection. The state also pressured black traders in the townships to move their businesses to the homelands. However, black traders in the homelands remained very much reliant on white South African businesses for credit and supplies.

Then, in the 1970s, the state relaxed most of the restrictions on black traders in the townships of "white" South Africa. There was a project of deliberately building a friendly black middle class by enabling upward mobility and business opportunities, and employment in the state (Giliomee, 2012). In the homelands, the aim was similar, "to create a collaborative petty-bourgeoisie within each of the homelands," with a strongly ethnic character (Southall, 1980: 40). State employment expanded consistently under the NP, from 1948 onwards, and by 1991 there were 349,832 officials in the "white" apartheid state but 638,599 in the homelands (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2011: 5).

Spazas, historically linked to poverty, economic marginalisation, social and geographical exclusion during the apartheid era, continue to exist – in part because the divide between poorer townships and more affluent suburbs, and the spatial divides of apartheid, continue to exist. The post-apartheid state also places a strong emphasis on job creation and self-employment through small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs), and on entrepreneurial behaviour, and many *spazas* clearly fit the mould. The *spaza* shop is now seen as sufficiently important that the

University of the Witwatersrand's Centre for Entrepreneurial Development (CDE) and leading headache powder brand, *Grandpa*, developed a partnership to equip *spaza* operators with knowledge that "ensures the sustainable growth of their stores" (Maqutu, 2012).

However, growing interest in *spazas* is also driven by concern with "the counterproductive and terrifying spectre of xenophobia" that has been associated with competition in the *spazas* since the end of apartheid (Ismail, 2013:2). Tengeh, Ballard and Slabbert (2011) finds that, an African immigrant entrepreneur is most likely to be a male between the ages of 19 and 41 who has been forced to immigrate by political circumstances in the country of origin. Research findings show that there has been a major market shift in ownership of *spaza* shops in many parts of South Africa, from South Africans to foreign nationals (Charman *et al*, 2012; Liedeman, 2013; Thompson, 2012). The number of foreign-owned *spazas* is increasing, with Somalis seeming to own a large share of foreign-owned *spazas* (see previous chapter).

The Sustainable Livelihood Foundation (SLF) conducted a survey of eight townships across the country between 2010 and 2013 (cited in Gastrow and Amit, 2013). The results were that 48.5% of *spazas* were run by locals, with the remaining 51.5% run by foreign nationals, the majority of them Somalis, who occupied 22.5% of the market. In Delft, Cape Town, ownership moved to being equally divided between foreign nationals (mostly Somalis) and locals in 2010, and 70% of locally-owned *spazas* closing permanently by 2013 (Paton, 2014).

This helps explain Hoeflich's (2011: 63) finding that, unlike other African migrants to South Africa, like Mozambicans and Nigerians, "Somalis seem to have an entirely different reputation – not as criminals or drug-addicts; the stereotypical Somali is a hawker, trader or a businessman." According to Liedeman (2013), who looked at Delft in Cape Town, the shift in ownership can be attributed to the competing business models that are employed by South Africans and foreigners. Further, the Somali operators are richer in social capital, that they conduct business through clan-based social networks (Thompson, 2012). These enable them to, for example, buy in bulk, and to draw on the Somali ethnic enclaves in Cape Town and Johannesburg. What this means is that Somalis use religion, ethnic identity and clan in an effort to create lives and livelihoods in South Africa.

Liedeman (2013: 93) suggested that Somalis deliberately chose the *spaza* business because the "business model utilises and relies upon important kinship networks for business partners and investment." Lindeman (2013) also cited Segatti (2011) to the effect that Somalis had a comparative advantage because they have a long history of trade from the homeland. Interestingly, Hoeflich (2011) and Thompson (2012) found that Somalis now acting as middleman minorities in South Africa had not necessarily been involved in trade in Somalia. Some were from "middle class" professional occupations including teachers, journalists, accountants, doctors etc.

The standard middleman minority pattern is that the group specifically seeks out entrepreneurial opportunities, and does not pursue options in formal employment. Hoeflich (2011) and Thompson (2012) suggest that even in cases where Somalis wanted to secure a job in the formal labour market, the primary barrier to entry was insufficient legal documents/paperwork upon entry into South Africa. Thompson (2012: 64) also adds that other sectors that are easier for Somalis to access like the "informal or semi-formal labor market entailed low level jobs in manufacturing or manual labor" and the salaries that could be earned in these sectors were often lower than what was earned through operating a *spaza*. However, middleman minority literature suggests that such groups may deliberately avoid formal employment in order to avoid cultural integration and assimilation (Sowell, 2005). I will return to this point later.

Having made the commitment to trading, Somalis involved in the *spaza* sector mobilised their identities for business reasons. Charman and Piper (2011) argue that in Delft and Eindhoven in Cape Town, conflict between local and foreign *spaza* operators (primarily Somalis) was more about differing business models, than the politics of identity. But, I would argue, the two are interlinked: the business practices employed by Somali traders drew on identities, while the responses by locals, including xenophobia, did so as well. The competition between local and foreign *spaza* operators was "not a struggle among equals on equal terms, as previously thought, but a struggle between very different modes of doing business" (Charman and Piper, 2011: 4).

Despite divisions amongst the Somalis, such as clan, Somali migrants to South Africa receive assistance from co-nationals upon arrival because they are fellow Somalis and this is based on Islamic principles (Liedeman, 2013). This point goes with the argument made by Samanani (2014: 17) that the identity of transnational Somalis is shaped by "marginality, isolation and even insecurity" experienced in the host community, and that clan is often of only limited importance.

The ethnic network provides an essential resource in competition. It has enabled Somali *spaza* traders to outcompete locals, primarily by aggressive price competition, including the use of economies of scale in procurement (Charman *et al*, 2012). The latter involves several *spazas* jointly buying supplies in bulk, at lower prices per item and with major savings in transport costs. In buying in bulk, Somalis chose between multiple suppliers, primarily based on prices, and, this further strengthened their bargaining power with wholesalers. Other work (Gastrow and Amit, 2013) indicates that other forms of coordination besides negotiating bulk discounts through collective procurement: for example, Somali traders have cooperated in the transport required for the delivery of goods, as many do not have their own vehicles. By acquiring stock in bulk at discounted prices, with lower transaction costs, they are able to undercut locals in of the *spaza* business (Charman *et al*, 2012; Liedeman, 2013; Thompson, 2012). Foreign-owned *spazas* were more in poor communities than South African owned *spazas*, because of the lower prices.

By contrast, South African-owned *spazas* tend to be survivalist in nature, based on the immediate family, and to operate hand-to-mouth. Research by Liedeman (2013) found that South Africans tended to see *spaza* ownership as a supplementary livelihood strategy, rather than a core activity. Friedland, Merz and Van Rensburg (2008), looking at rural South African-owned *spazas* (owned by locals) based on research conducted in Sekhukhune, a village in Limpopo, found that these *spazas* serviced a more demanding market: they did not face significant competition from large retailers, unlike urban *spazas*. But they had limited finances and liquidity, leading the operators to buy small quantities of trading stock, as needed, pay higher procurement prices per item while also suffering higher transaction costs, for instance, in transport. This meant that they traded in a few products only, at high prices but low profits. This obviously contrasts unfavourably with the more entrepreneurial, collective model of the Somalis, which is a direct consequence of their middleman minority character, which enabled pooling resources together in order to spread risk.

It is important to stress that the failure of South African small businesses, including *spazas*, is only partly due to rivalry from immigrant entrepreneurs. Researchers at the African Centre for Migration and Society (Gastrow and Amit, 2013) insist that there are multiple, other factors to be noted. These include the expansion of supermarkets into the townships and black rural areas since the 1990s, food price increases and a lack of business skills, as well as of means of accessing such skills. Liedeman (2013) and the study conducted by Cooper (2009) for the Centre for Social

Science Research also suggested that South Africans have low levels of trust, and therefore would struggle to emulate the business practices of the Somalis. Research in Delft found that jealousy and the resultant use of "witchcraft" against rivals, was a key reason South Africans could not pool resources, let alone prosper as individual *spaza* operators (Charman *et al*, 2012).

Although South Africa, as a society, centres on markets and stresses consumerism (it is what Mbembe, 2014, calls a "society of consumption"), the reality is that a majority of South Africans are geographically removed from the main centres of consumption, and have very little spending power. *Spaza* shops exist because of the geographical separation, but struggle to survive because they operate in tiny markets. No matter how skilled, a *spaza* operator is constrained by these material realities. They operate in a world where consumption is a key marker of status, and where even basic services are treated as commodities (Cock, 2014: 119).

Gastrow and Amit (2013) meanwhile suggests that Somali *spaza* operators were far less cohesive, both as a social group and in terms of how they do business, than commonly thought. This point agrees with the analysis made by Bonacich (1973) and Zenner (1991) who find that the level of cohesion of the middleman minority group is often exaggerated by locals, and obscured by hostile stereotyping and antagonism by ignorant locals. Park (2010), looking at Chinese and South Asian migrants to South Africa who entered retail, also suggested that migrants often did not displace locals at all. Rather than compete with existing businesses, they filled gaps in the market; or, where there were existing businesses, the immigrants purchased from (white) South Africans who were moving out of the sector or the area.

There is some evidence for this in the Somali case. It has been argued that the Somali spaza is a revolution (Charman *et al*, 2012) because before the advent of foreign-operated *spazas*, *spazas* were dying out in much of South Africa. From the 1990s, supermarkets – including smaller "superettes" – were expanding into townships and villages, pushing *spazas* out (Collins, 2003). Not only have Somali *spaza* operators stemmed this tide, but many purchased their businesses from struggling South African operators (Liedeman, 2013). In this way, the "revolution" in *spazas* benefitted consumers but also continues to reflect a deeply unequal society of consumption that is shaped by race and class, and is, for many, limited and precarious.

Further, Gastrow and Amit (2012) found that there were some South African *spaza* shops that were thriving in the face of competition. Some local *spaza* operators reported that their profits had increased in recent years because of a change in business practices, including selling stock in hamper packets, adding arcade games and pool tables, selling take-away meals which residents prefer purchasing from local people and installing "save-rite" machines that help customers weigh products such as sugar and flour so as to be able to choose to buy exact quantities. Other *spaza* shops have opted for (normally illicit) liquor sales. This gives them an advantage over foreign-owned *spaza* shops, which often fear law-enforcement attention and sometimes, in the case of Muslims, have taboos against selling alcohol (Charman *et al*, 2012). Likewise, some local *spaza* operators have welcomed foreign *spaza* operators and have opted to rent out their premises and earn income as landlords rather than *spaza* operators.

It is important to note that the various benefits arising from Somali traders do not rule out local prejudices against the Somalis. For example, one reason for locals preferring to buy take-aways from locally-operated *spazas* is the perception that Somalis lack proper hygiene (AMCS, 2012). The perception that Somalis are "dirty" is partly the product of local ignorance. Hoeflich (2011) notes that, on the contrary, Islamic prayer ablution practices require Somalis to wash their hands and feet five times a day. It may be argued that the perception is more one of boundaries, rather than one of actual hygiene, with those who are considered to not be part of the in-group often seen as somehow unclean and impure.

Foreign-operated *spazas* face prejudice and violence, including robberies, looting and murder, some organised by competing South African traders, some by other people (Gastrow and Amit, 2012; Charman *et al*, 2012; Thompson, 2012). Many persist in viewing foreign traders like Somalis as causing unemployment and as destroying local businesses, or as refusing to employ local people or partner with South Africans. Park (2010) and Hikam (2011) are among those who suggest concrete steps to reduce tensions. These include encouraging immigrant traders to employ locals, and help build local capacity and development, and provide charity. Given that groups like Somalis are long-term residents or traders in local areas, they should also be drawn into local community meetings and activities, that is, into local civil society.

One problem with such ideas is that the very success of middleman minority groups rests upon their being economically, socially and politically separate from members of the local population

(Sowell, 2005). Second, as Liedeman (2013) notes, many Somalis feel that South Africans look down on them, behave badly towards then, and discriminate against them. Further, many felt that South Africans were not trustworthy, to the extent that if they were compelled to employ non-Somalis, they would choose to employ non-South Africans. Thompson (2012) adds that since Somali *spaza* operators largely operate in South Africa with the primary objective of sending remittances to their families abroad, they could only aid local communities by removing resources from their kin.

2.5. The Villages around Cofimvaba

As suggested earlier, there is not much material on African immigration to rural, as opposed to urban, areas, or on movement between rural areas (Thompson, 2012). There is also very little material on Somali and other African immigrant entrepreneurs in South African rural areas, and practically nothing (except Eppel, 2014) on their roles and experiences in the large Cofimvaba region of the former Transkei in the Eastern Cape. Issue of xenophobia against and integration into local communities of African immigrants to rural South Africa are a neglected area of research.

Intsika Yethu is one of eight local municipalities in the Chris Hani district municipality and is the municipality with the highest number of people within the district with an estimated population size of 186 044 (Local Government, 2014a; Local Government, 2014b). The district has a predominantly African population at 94.1%, with Coloureds estimated at 3.9%. Women make up a slight majority population at 54%, and more than half of the population is under 20 years old. Unemployment is high, at 57% in the Chris Hani municipality overall, with heavy reliance on social grants and wage remittances.

The Intsika Yethu municipality is categorised as a "B4" municipality, meaning that it is mainly rural. It is divided into 21 wards, and Cofimvaba is the main service centre within the municipality. Cofimvaba is situated approximately 80km from Queenstown which is the administrative and economic centre of the Chris Hani district municipality (Webster *et al*, 2014). A study conducted by Webster *et al* (2014) on social needs and service provision in Intsika Yethu is the only comprehensive study conducted of the area. This report found that there was a large and growing need for welfare grant and indigent support, and widespread social ills such as poverty, theft and rape. There do not seem to be any solid plans to eradicate this as "elected government has not formulated or implemented a rural development strategy since 1994" in the former homelands that works (Westaway, 2010: 11).

As part of the Chris Hani district, Intsika Yethu is part of the old Bantustan territories, which have distinctive features, many carried over from the old regime. The land was reserved for Africans in terms of the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts and is largely under communal tenure, controlled by unelected chiefs via customary law. These persist alongside the institutions of the democratic state, and have features of a "parallel sovereign authority" (Mbembe, 2014; also Westaway, 2010). Whatever the role of the traditional authorities in the precolonial period, they were central to rural administration and labour control in the colonial and apartheid eras (Ntsebeza, 2006). Actual land ownership is in the hands of the state, following the 1936 Land Act, held in the South African Bantu Trust, later known as the South African Development Trust (Ntsebeza, 2006). Like other former homeland areas, it is marked by a scattered population in villages, and a poor economic base: commercial farming is largely absent, as is industry, reflecting the history of these areas as sources of labour migration (Mapokgole, 2014).

Westaway finds that "a typical life trajectory of a Bantustan resident, at least 55% of whom are females, is to start school at age six, leave at about 19 with a poor Grade 10 certificate, sink into permanent unemployment thereafter, and die" (2010: 117). Like in most former Bantustans, unemployment in Cofimvaba is a serious condition. Westaway (2012: 117) suggests that "the average rural household does not have a single member who is employed." Using a narrow definition of unemployment, 47% of the people in the Intsika Yethu local municipality were unemployed (under the expanded definition the number rose to 62%) (Webster *et al*, 2014). The people of this area are effectively part of what Seekings and Nattrass, (2006) identified as an "underclass" lacking adequate access to many basic items.

The compromises involved in the transition from apartheid to democratic South Africa included significant continuities in the black rural areas. The homeland bureaucracies and the chieftaincy were integrated into the new state, and former homeland officials remain central to the government of provinces like the Eastern Cape (Chipkin and Meny-Gibert, 2011: 5). Not only did the chieftaincy survive, but it has made increasingly bold claims in the new South Africa. Besides remaining the core group controlling South African Development Trust land, traditional authorities wield power through traditional courts which are recognised in the post-apartheid constitution.

(Koyana, 2013; Mabutla, 2001; Ntsebeza, 2006). The 2003 Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act (TLGFA) and other laws have further entrenched chiefly power (Classens, 2013).

Chiefs and their headmen have also positioned themselves as part of the rural development process, and as the repositories of African traditions, including for dispute resolution. Where the local municipality is poorly resourced or governed, chiefs play an even larger role (e.g. Webster *et al*, 2014). The role of chiefs and headmen in the villages could be important to understanding relationships between villagers and Somali *spaza* shop operators: in seeking to explain why xenophobic attacks have erupted in some places in South Africa, and not in others, Misago *et al* (2009) stress that the attitudes and actions of local leaders, important people of influence, can either fuel or discourage xenophobic sentiment.

2.6 Xenophobia in South Africa

Hostility to foreigners is pervasive in South Africa: for example, a study by Crush (2008) found that "66% of South Africans expressed the sentiment that irregular migrants should be granted no rights or protection, including the right to basic services" (cited in Cooper, 2009: 10). (This does, of course, mean that a substantial number of people are *more* tolerant, a point also made by an earlier work by McDonald, Mashike and Golden (2000)). There are a number of competing explanations for this situation. To call the problem "xenophobia" does not explain much: where do these ideas come from? Why do they get accepted, up to the extent of murder? Why are some foreigners targeted, not others?

Others note that the victims are almost always black Africans from other countries, and suggest the problem is actually "Afrophobia" (e.g. Mapokgole, 2014: 41). Again, this does not explain the source or popularity or expressions of these ideas. Also, this does not explain why some groups of black Africans are the main targets (e.g. Nigerians, Somalis), with others (e.g. Basotho) largely ignored. Also, some groups of Asians have also been targeted in xenophobic violence (e.g. Bangladeshis), notably in the 2015 anti-immigrant riots in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape.

Another approach stresses the role of poverty and inequality. For example, some observers noted that the widespread violence in 2008 took place at a "particularly depressed moment in the country's history" where "economic frustration was compounded by… political impasse" (cited in Charman and Piper, 2011: 2). Another version of this argument is relative deprivation theory, which holds that a negative discrepancy between expectations and present actualities provides a breeding ground for resentment and conflict (Charm and Piper, 2012). A successful shopkeeper in an area marked by unemployment, low income and poor services is highly visible, and often in contact with local people. This person can then easily become the focus of frustrations. A third version of these economic arguments was made by South African officials during the 2008 riots: they argued that xenophobia was not at work, because what was really happening was simple criminality, in which case people were using the cover of xenophobia to engage in looting and violence.

But these economic explanations have problems too. While xenophobic violence is most likely in urban areas with a high population of the black poor (including young men), it is rare in the poorest areas, including poor rural areas (Charman *et al*, 2012; Thompson, 2012). Unions have had some success in challenging xenophobic violence attitudes and actions among their members, most of them poor, black, urban and township-based (Di Paola, 2012; Hlatshwayo, 2010). Xenophobia permeates all races, classes and sectors of South Africans: it is not unique to the black poor, and so cannot be explained simply by reference to poverty. If the issue is criminality, why are the targets foreigners? If relative deprivation is the issue, why are foreign shopkeepers targeted, rather than local shopkeepers? South Africa has widespread negative attitudes towards foreigners, and it seems incorrect to suggest that these are not important in providing a reservoir from which violence can drink.

Middleman minority theory provides some solutions here, because it shows that outsider minorities may be very prominent figures in poor communities. Vulnerable to scapegoating by the upper class, they can be targets for the frustrations of poor. Where immigrants (like Somalis in South Africa) fill the role of middleman minority, they can become the target. Their success in areas where locals have failed raises difficult questions for locals (Sowell, 2005), and might get blamed on the supposed evils of the outsider, like “cheating” in business. There is some evidence that violent xenophobia against Somali *spaza* operators in the townships has been fomented by rival business owners and local leaders, as well as criminal gangs (Charman *et al*, 2012; Liedeman, 2012; Thompson 2012).

The middleman theory indicates the important role of identities in explaining xenophobic violence. To explain the problems in terms of poverty, criminality or relative deprivation is deficient and does not explain much (Neocosmos, 2010). Neocosmos (2010: 117) argues that "poverty can only account for the powerlessness, frustration and desperation of the perpetrators, but not for their target. Neither can it account for the violence of their actions." Identity, state policy and discourse all matter. Competition over resources does play a role, but this takes place in a definite context.

The relationships that South Africans have with foreign nationals are shaped by a citizenship hierarchy, which includes the "discourse of deserve," where black foreign nationals are placed at the very bottom. This is played out in latent and overt ways, ranging from words to violent actions (Hoeflich, 2011).

Latent xenophobia as described by Hoeflich (2011), is xenophobia that is expressed through hostile *words* rather than through hostile *action*. This is linked to inflammatory statements by top officials. For example, when violence broke in 2013. Deputy Trade and Industry Minister Elizabeth Thabethe said "you still find many spaza shops with African names, but when you go in to buy you find your Mohammeds and most of them are not even registered" (SAPA, 2013). Small Business Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu stated "foreigners need to understand that they are here as a courtesy and our priority is to the people of this country first and foremost" (Mwiti, 2015). They needed to share their "trade secrets," she added. Misago *et al* (2009) argue that latent xenophobia has often turned into violent xenophobia when key leaders in the community have advocated xenophobic action. They give an example of the influence of local leaders in Madelakufa I, an informal settlement that is a few hundred meters away from Tembisa Municipality on the East Rand. Foreign respondents in the study agreed that the latent xenophobia that existed in this site did not erupt into violent action in 2008, largely due to the role of community leaders in preventing such an outcome.

It is not just that some South Africans feel that foreigners should not have rights, but that they themselves feel rightless and let down, as service delivery protests indicate (Cooper, 2009). The idea that South Africans should be prioritised is important here. Xenophobia "is about the denial of social rights and entitlements to strangers, people considered to be strangers to the community (village, ethnic group, as well as nation) not just to 'foreigners' as conceived by the law" (Neocosmos, 2010; 13-14) and state discourse generally (Nyamnjoh, 2007: 73)

To explain the problems in te*rms of poverty or criminality leaves out the issue of identity. However, drawing attention to identity, state policy and discourse is also not enough. If social identity involves defining the self as different to the other, why does difference only lead to violent exclusion sometimes (Hoeflich, 2011)? Why are some foreign "others" subject to attack, while others are not? Why is the same group attacked in some areas, yet welcomed in others?

2.7 Synthesis

Economic, identity and policy issues all play a role, but it is important to pay attention to context and to local dynamics. These are key to variations. National pressures and processes do not have the same effects everywhere. The very different experience of the Somalis *spaza* owners in urban and rural areas in South Africa is a case in point.

Local communities respond to the same outsider groups in different ways, ranging from favourable, indifferent and negative (Allan and Bacon, 2003), and different communities have different dynamics, structures and concerns. As noted, Zenner (1991) suggested that rural people might be more accepting of middleman minorities, as these provided services that co-nationals did not. This indicates that a middleman minority group, might have different relationships with different members of a local community, depending on the social and institutional conditions in those different parts of the host community. This means that case studies can play an important role in deepening our understanding. This is what this thesis helps undertake. There is little work on middleman minority groups in the former homelands of the country, or on the factors shaping attitudes to, and actions towards, them.

It is not clear what role local leaders play in these processes, or how the two forms of state power in the villages – the elected ANC government and the traditional authorities – shape events. It is not clear what role local business rivals play, or how identity issues shape matters. Conditions in rural Cofimvaba are ideal for the development of a middleman minority group, and for a study of the dynamics of xenophobia at the local level.

CHAPTER THREE:

Attitudes and Views

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to start to outline the core findings of this study. It is based on research in select villages around Cofimvaba, and pays close attention to local dynamics. The focus in this chapter is on attitudes and beliefs. In the following chapter, the focus will be on interactions. In both cases, the aim is to explore relationships between nationals and non-nationals at the community level. These are key to understanding why xenophobic attitudes and actions take root (or not), and to explaining the striking absence of xenophobic violence in impoverished villages.

It should be stated that the Somalis and the majority of the villagers contacted, both warmly welcomed the study. The Somali *spaza* operators were very happy for the interviews to be conducted in their shops, and (like Somali *spaza* operators in the rural Western Cape: see Gastrow and Amit, 2012), they were observably at ease in the local community. Some villagers were worried that their responses would lead to reprisals, but once assured of anonymity, they were comfortable to partake and answered questions freely.

3.2 Safety in the Villages around Cofimvaba as the Main Attraction for Somalis

The Somali *spaza* operators operating in the villages around Cofimvaba in the Intsika Yethu District Municipality (IYDM) of the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM) are, in many ways, easily seen as different from the local villagers. Cofimvaba is largely inhabited by black Xhosa-speaking Christians, governed by a mixture of traditional chiefly authorities and democratically elected government. The Somalis have no ethnic or language commonalities with these locals, and Islam is adhered to by only a small minority of South Africans (under 2%, with local black Africans a minority of that minority). The villages are very poor, with high rates of unemployment, and, as argued earlier, seem left out of the promise of the new South Africa. The *spaza* structures reflected this situation: they often comprised only one room, although the room varied in size, and were built cheaply, with traditional mud walling.

Six of the eight *spazas* visited were stand-alone units, and the other two were in yard of a residential home. In seven out of eight cases, the premises were rented from local people. In the eighth case, the Somali was married to a local South African woman, and they co-owned the *spaza*. All of the Somali *spazas* were walk-in stores. Only two locally-owned shops were found, both in St Marks village. One was a *spaza*, and the other was a "house shop," which is smaller than a *spaza*, usually part-time operation selling only a few select items as opposed to general dealing or selling a wide range of daily necessities (Liedeman, 2013).

The Somalis slept in the stores, sometimes in a bedroom area, partly to save money, partly to be available to late customers, and partly to protect their assets (Gastrow and Amit, 2012; 2013). They could get more business, as they could assist people who came to the store after closing time. A common sentiment was that the *spazas* were already in properties rented from locals, and it would be wasteful to also rent properties to sleep in, when most of the time was spent in the *spaza*. This confirms Thompson (2012), who found in his study that Somalis slept in their *spazas* because it was more convenient financially.

The first Somalis to do business in the villages around Cofimvaba were hawkers, selling clothes. They did not live in the villages, but rather brought their products with them, and collected payments. A key measure was selling clothes on credit, which impressed the villagers. Because of their Islamic principles, they also did not charge interest. The opportunity for *spaza* operations in the villages around Cofimvaba was identified by these hawkers: they were the source of information for the Somalis now conducting the *spazas*. These arrived in the villages with few resources. Five came as a direct result of xenophobia experienced elsewhere in South Africa, which had destroyed the businesses they had set up with funds raised in Kenya and Somalia.

When the Somalis established permanent operations in the villages, they operated a variety of types of *spaza* businesses. Differences were evident from one Somali *spaza* to the next. The diversity was not only found in the products, but also in the way that the products were packaged and presented, as well as in other services extended to the customers beyond product sales.

The *spaza* in Ntshingeni village was the largest of the Somali *spazas* visited. It had far more product diversity compared to the other *spazas*, and looked more like a mini-supermarket or superette. It was the only Somali *spaza* visited that was set up in such a way that customers could touch all the products, rather than sometimes pointing out what they wanted to a *spaza* operator behind a counter. It offered a delivery service, as well as a transport service to pensioners, who would be driven to the government centre where social grants were distributed on designated days. This was a very significant service, given the high levels of crime in the villages around Cofimvaba (Webster *et al*, 2014), including mugging of social grant recipients on pay-out days.

The opposite type of Somali *spaza* was found in villages of Hoita (Lalini) and Luncwini. These two *spazas* were the smallest visited during the research, and had the least product diversity. They were similar to the locally-owned *spazas* elsewhere, which operated on a subsistence or survivalist level (see on these, Liedeman, 2013). However, while locally-owned *spazas* have a reputation for always being out of stock, these two Somali *spazas*, despite having the least product diversity, did not have any problems with a shortage of products. Everything that was sold on a day-to-day basis was always available to the consumers. Items were kept behind the counters. The third and final type of Somali *spaza* was a cross between these two types. Villagers could walk around these *spazas*, which had a medium level of product diversity. Some of the products were kept behind the counter, and had to be given to the customer by the *spaza* operator.

Despite the grim conditions, xenophobic violence is almost completely unknown in these areas; the waves of violence seen in years like 2008 passed these areas by. Only two Somali-operated *spazas* had burglar bars at the till area, separating the Somali *spaza* operators from the local customers. In one of these two stores, the bars had been put in place by a previous owner specifically for safety reasons, because that particular store had been robbed in a previous year. The Somalis took over from the operator, who moved away from the area. The other *spaza* operator did give “safety” as a reason for the bars, but he had no history of himself being robbed or attacked in the store. Although he was viewed (unlike the other Somalis) as ill-mannered, he had not suffered violence (see more on this case below).

Thompson (2012) raised the crucial question of how foreigner *spaza* operators cope with their hostile reception in black urban townships. Relocating to the villages of former homeland areas is one such strategy: these villages offer places of safety from xenophobic attacks. Safety, not financial gain, is the key element in an implicit cost-benefit analysis. Profits are low, markets are small. The Eastern Cape is the poorest province in the country with the villages of the former Ciskei and Transkei being the worst off. All Somali spaza operators interviewed in this study found that they made less than what they would be making if running a *spaza* in the urban townships. This was an informed view, based on their individual experiences of having worked elsewhere in South Africa. It is consistent with a finding made by Gastrow and Amit (2012) in the rural areas near Cape Town, where Somali shopkeepers in farming towns such as Ceres, Caledon, Tulbagh and Prince Albert Hamlet struggled to survive. Like Somalis elsewhere (Hoeflich, 2011) they found difficulty in sending remittances home to their families. Only two of the interviewees in this study were able to send remittances home on a monthly basis.

The villages in Cofimvaba definitely have problems of violence and crime (Webster *et al*, 2014), so the Somali movement from towns to villages is not based on a simple lack of crime or violence in the areas. In fact, all the Somali *spaza* operators slept in their shops, mainly as a means of deterring opportunistic local criminals, who were responsible for prevalent break-ins into the homes of locals. A recent study of villages in the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM) found that crime was pervasive: around half of all villagers felt that they were vulnerable to being victims of crime (Webster *et al*, 2014).

In this situation, it is inevitable that Somalis also faced some crime. The worst incident was one in which a Somali *spaza* operator was robbed at gun point by young men in Sabalele, although no one was harmed. The affected Somali had moved away by the time of my research, but, in an interview, the village headman argued that financial gain motivated the incident, not xenophobia. He stated that crime was common, and difficult to deal with, as there was often a lot of speculation but little hard evidence. In another case, in St Marks, the home of the landlord of the Somali *spaza* operator was burgled, with appliances stolen, but the Somali *spaza* on the same property was left untouched. The landlord believed that this was because the Somali *spaza* operator was known to sleep in the store, while his own home was widely known to often be empty.

Despite such problems, the *spaza* operators remain in the villages, and are willing to settle for less income. While the urban and industrialised areas of the Eastern Cape consistently stand out as among the most dangerous for foreigners, particularly the townships of Port Elizabeth (Thompson, 2012), the rural, former homeland areas are safe areas. All but one of the Somali *spaza* operators interviewed had first-hand experience of violence in South Africa, as they had previously operated *spazas* elsewhere in the country, leaving because of looting and pressure by locals. The Somali *spaza* operator in Sabalele had previously operated in Cape Town, and said:

> … they are taking from you your business… they are taking all that you have worked, profits, airtimes…cold-drinks and everything… they say they are taking from you as a Somali, but they are leaving their brothers to be happy, and selling that things in peace!

All the Somalis interviewed stated that what kept them going is the hope of return to the homeland. Failing this return, relocation to another country that was safer than South Africa was sought. The safety levels in the villages were appreciated, but individual Somali *spaza* operators felt isolated from fellow Somalis. They saw themselves as sojourners, awaiting asylum in another country where the Somali ethnic network was stronger, and where there was less violence. They regretted the isolation that came with being an entrepreneur in the villages, and the dislocation from co-nationals, but did not have any interest in living in the bigger centres in South Africa. The distances between villages with Somalis *spazas* were great, and the distance from Queenstown, where a modest Somali ethnic enclave exists (see below), was even greater. This also meant they had no easy access to mosques, *madrasas* or other facilities.

In other words, Somalis living in the villages around Cofimvaba saw themselves as "migrants" rather than as "immigrants," an outlook that, according to Neocosmos (2010), is a common sentiment among foreigners in South Africa. They did not seek local citizenship. Without making tangible claims for rights, foreigners can "live half-lives at best, always waiting for some kind of disaster and their existence is in a constant state of insecurity" (Hoeflich, 2011: 75). In the safety of the villages, at least, a "kind of disaster" did not seem imminent. However, the sense of "waiting" was very real – mostly waiting for the situation in Somalia to be favourable enough to enable their return. In the words of the Somali interviewee in Hoita:

> You can sit in one place for more than six months, and not go anywhere, because you are thinking what will happen to the shop if you close, maybe to go to Queenstown where all the other Somalis are. All day you wake up, come to the counter, sell to one customers here and the other customers there, sit, listen to the radio about news back home and just wait. When you are try to be safe, your life is just about waiting … you wait [so] you can [be] taken to another country…you wait for Somalia to be fine again.

In this situation, their behaviour is in line with what Bonacich (1973) contended: a middleman minority group tends to suffer short-term deprivation in order to hasten the long-term objective of returning to the homeland. But the situation was very painful, more so than in the towns, since short-term deprivation was not countered with the closeness provided by the ethnic group. The interviewee in Sabalele said:

> All you do is move from this counter, to the bedroom and back again, all day and the next. It is not really life…I'm only one year here, I get alone sometimes, so maybe I will make friends later. But it is safety and that is what is important.

Another factor reinforcing the identity of sojourners, and the life of waiting for a chance to move abroad, was not so different to that identified in studies by Thompson (2012) Liedeman (2013) and Hoelich (2011): South Africa was a stop-off in a longer journey, and a disappointing one. The lack of safety, and the situation of being trapped in small villages with limited business opportunities, made destinations elsewhere more desirable.

Isolation was linked to economic conditions. Somali *spaza* operators usually operated one Somali *spaza* per village (at most, two). Unlike urban townships, where Somali *spazas* could be found on many streets (Ismail, 2013; Liedeman 2013 and Thompson, 2012), in most of the villages, there was only one-Somali operated *spaza*. It was generally seen as unacceptable for another Somali *spaza* to be opened in a village where a Somali *spaza* already existed. Only in one village were there rival Somali *spaza* shops; in the other village with more than one Somali *spaza*, both spazas were owned by the same people. The main reason for this practice was that the villages had tiny markets, with shops having low profits. The Somali *spaza* operator in Hoita said:

> With my brothers, it is all about "I see you and you see me as my brother, and I am your brother."
>
> It is easy to say: "Okay, if my brother is doing a business here, then I must not come, and say I am doing a business right there," because I will be taking the bread from the mouth of my brother…We don't have to say we are fighting, [its] just about understanding we are in the same fight to survive.

The *spaza* operator in Sabalele said:

> If I am here and you come? Even as my Somali brother and you want to do the something I am doing? …You know there is not money in this place…We can't both be staying, so I

> just show you my fist, and then you will know that you must make your own place where I am not …

The agreements were informal.

These realities also affected the family life of the Somalis. Of the eight participants in this study, five were married, and three were single. Most of the married had deliberately left their wives and children in Somalia or Kenya, because their intentions were to return or to move. The Somalian who had married a South African woman had sent the children born in South Africa to live with his family in Kenya. The only *spaza* operator whose Somali wife and children were staying in South Africa ensured that they lived in the Somali ethnic enclave in Queenstown.

The low profit margins led to the inability to consistently send remittances to the people in the Somali homeland and this was a major cause of unhappiness and insecurity. One of the three single men was divorced. He said that the reason for the divorce was the difficulty of maintaining a relationship across borders, especially when he was unable to consistently send remittances, or afford to go “home” regularly. An inability to make much profit also meant that expansion in South Africa was not a feasible long term goal. This also reinforced the Somali interviewees’ view of themselves as sojourners. This was unlike the situation of successful Somalis noted by Liedeman (2013) and Thompson (2012), who intended to apply for permanent residency in South Africa primarily because of the success found in their respective spaza business. Safety was a major cause of concern, but the village-based businesses were not thriving enough to provide a great motivation for staying in South Africa.

3.3 Varying Attitudes to Somalis in the Villages

Xenophobic violence is almost unknown in homeland villages. What about xenophobic attitudes, though? Various studies on South Africa show that while xenophobic attitudes are common, not all South Africans hold such views. Research on locals’ attitudes and perceptions show the attitudes are never homogenous. Research (e.g. HRSC, 2008; Neocosmos, 2010) find that even at the height of the 2008 xenophobic attacks, different attitudes were held by South Africans, even within the same area, regarding whether the violence was right or wrong; some locals warned or sheltered foreign national neighbours from attackers. This is in line with research elsewhere. For example, Allan and Bacon (2003) found that members of a host society respond to middleman minorities in various forms, including favourable, indifferent or negative.

Of the 41 villagers interviewed 21 (51%) expressed "xenophilia" (based on positive views of Somalis *spaza* business practices); 7 (17%) expressed "xenophilia" (based on social relationships with Somalis); 5 (12%) were "indifferent"; and only 8 (20%) expressed some "ambiguity" (which had an element of xenophobic thinking: latent xenophobia).The findings varied from village to village and within the same village, but only eight out of 41 people – the "ambiguous" category – expressed latent xenophobia, and even then, there is no evidence that they expressed it openly to the Somalis.

Most villagers who expressed xenophilia based this on the benefits provided by Somali *spazas*, and the lack of similar services in the villages. Strikingly, those who expressed xenophilia based on social relationships with the Somalis were the young, unemployed men of the villages. In every single village studied, the young local men had positive, friendly relationships with Somali *spaza* operators. This does not mean that all young male villagers were xenophilac, but the fact that members of this group showed any xenophilia at all is noteworthy. Studies such as those done by Polzer (2010) found that although there is no simple "xenophobic profile" in South Africa, there is a higher probability of xenophobic attacks at the hands of young men. But the situation in the villages was the opposite: young men were close to the traders, rather than their key enemies. This needs more discussion (see next chapter).

Most who were indifferent as to whether the Somalis were operating or not were those who stated they used the services of Somali *spazas* infrequently, and did not rely on these shops. The majority of these lived in the villages closer to Cofimvaba town, and could make more use of other shops than people in more outlying areas. The headmen interviewed in this study formed part of this group as even the headman who lived farthest away from Cofimvaba (i.e. in Sabalele) stated that he was hardly in the village as he frequented Cofimvaba town to "conduct village business" and it was therefore easier for him to shop in Cofimvaba. Those who expressed ambiguity stated that they did not like the Somalis, and were unhappy that the Somalis were living and operating businesses in the villages, but most also stated their dislike for Somalis was modified by the fact that Somalis were providing much needed services and benefits.

Attitudes did not vary between villagers who were employed and those who were unemployed, and employed and unemployed villagers had a range of views. Unemployment was pervasive: only seven of the villagers interviewed were employed. Two were employed as civil servants (one was a nurse and the other a teacher), two were village headmen, and the other three were in elementary jobs: making clay bricks, herding livestock and pumping water. Only the teacher and the nurse had Matric: the rest of the villagers dropped out after primary or during high school. Most of the high school dropouts dropped out between grade 9 and grade 11. This is consistent with findings made by Webster *et al* (2014) and Westaway (2010), regarding to the high levels of unemployment and the low levels of formal education, in former homeland villages.

There were, as far as could be discovered, no cases where xenophobic sentiments were expressed to the Somalis directly in any way, whether through verbal harassment or physically. Only one out of the eight Somalis in this study claimed to have experienced verbal abuse from locals. However, the evidence is that he experienced verbal abuse, not because he was Somali, but rather that he was considered ill-mannered to customers, especially youth, both men and women. A young female interviewee from this village said: "One time he gave me the wrong change, but when I went to explain this, he argued and argued, and finally threw the right change at me; he is like that."

3.4 Race and Nation: Who are the "Somalis" in the Villages around Cofimvaba?

As indicated in section 1.4., one of the challenges in research design was to locate Somali *spazas* in the villages: there is no map or database that can be used. Having chosen eight villages as possible research sites, I visited each. The location of *spazas* operated by Somalis was ascertained through asking local villagers. As it turned out, only six of the eight villages had Somali businesses, and these were where the research was undertaken.

However, the views of villagers when asked whether Somali businesses were operating locally provided some interesting and useful information that the research design had not anticipated. What seems clear is that people used racial features to classify people, but did not always agree on which features marked each racial type. In one case, when asking a group of eight villagers, both men and women, if there was a local Somali *spaza*, they confidently pointed to a Pakistani-operated *spaza*. They believed the operator was a lighter type of "Somali," unlike the darker-skinned "Somali" with curly hair (in reality, actual Somali nationals) found in other villages.

Meanwhile, in Banzi village, Indian, Ethiopian and Malawi nationals were often mistakenly identified as Somalis by the villagers interviewed. But a young female villager in Banzi village, asked for directions to a Somali *spaza* store said of the local operators:

> They are not Somalis…they are not from here, I guess you can call them foreigners also, but they are not as dark, even though they are dark, they don't have that curly hair [of Somalis – AM] …

In Luncwini village, a middle-aged male villager stated:

> Oh my sister, you must know that there are two types of foreign *spaza* operators here…it is the white ones, and the black ones, and then those other black, black, black ones with curly hair.

By the "white ones" he meant Indians and Pakistanis, by the "black, black, black ones," he meant the Somalis, and all other dark-skinned foreigners were lumped into one group as "black ones."

In the case of the identification of foreigners in the villages around Cofimvaba, "white" foreigners were not Europeans, but, rather, Pakistani and Indian nationals. These were sometimes seen as "white" versions of Somalis, who were seen as Africans, and not as being of Asian or Indian descent respectively. That is, the majority of the villagers simply saw the foreigners as Africans, but not all the people "from Africa" (which implicitly locates South Africa elsewhere) were necessarily black. The people were grouped as from "Africa," rather than as being from Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and other countries.

Villagers were generally unable to distinguish dark-skinned black foreigners by nationality, even clearly differentiate the Somalis on the basis of extreme darkness (compared with other nationals) and, in particular, curly hair (and sometimes, national dress). Even then, a small number of villagers continued to confuse Somali and Ethiopian *spaza* operators. It does seem that "shades of blackness" served as a "shameful basis for distinguishing African immigrants among black South Africans' (HSRC, 2008:15), and that that villagers tended to see the darker foreign nationals as more foreign than others.

Hoeflich (2011) suggests that simply the act of lumping foreigners into one category is a form of latent xenophobia, but my findings suggest that this is not a strong point. Neocosmos (2010) suggested that there is, in current South African politics and discourse, an obsession with differentiating black South Africans and black non-South Africans (and a racialisation of difference), in order to assert hierarchy of rights claims. However, the data I collected suggests a more complex situation.

In order for the grouping of foreigners together into one category to be xenophobia, there needs to be a degree of hostility towards said foreigners. The research revealed little such hostility, and while darker foreign nationals were seen as more foreign, this did not translate into a difference in treatment of foreign nationals based on skin tone. While the villagers used simplistic racial forms of identification, this was not necessarily xenophobic in practice. The idea that there is a racialised differentiation of foreigners, which then translates into a hierarchical differentiation of treatment (e.g. Nyamnjoh 2007) does not seem borne out in these villages.

Ignorance, fostered by the lack of interaction with foreign nationals living in the villages, was the major reason for grouping foreigners together in simplistic ways. For most people, most interaction involved brief visits to the shops. Closer business interactions did not necessarily lead to more knowledge. A landlord who leased her property to Indian nationals in Banzi village also fell into the category of villagers who could not properly identify the nationality of the *spaza* operators. She said:

> Who can really say who is who anymore? They are all the same to me… there are many of these Somalis: you can't escape them, from here to town [Cofimvaba – AM] it is the same people.

A cashier employed by Pakistani nationals in a *spaza* shop showed similar ignorance about them.

These two people, despite more contact with foreigners, were like the majority of the villagers, who tended to lump all foreigners in the village into one group of people, and t know very little about them. The reality is that locals and foreigners had few connections. They did not attend the same churches or participate in the same associations; intermarriage and courting was very rare; there were almost no family links; cultural and linguistic and ethnic differences all played a role. Ignorance was key: a particularly telling point was made by the village headman of Sabalele village, who said, "Just because they are all from outside [South Africa], it is easier for us just to see them as one people…"

The only layer in the villages that had a detailed knowledge of the different foreign nationalities, and who were able to differentiate amongst the foreign nationals, were local young men. This was true of both passers-by asked for directions, and of interviewees. They could distinguish between Ethiopian, Indian, Malawian, Nigerians, Pakistani, Senegalese and Somali *spaza* operators. This was because they had the closest relations with the operators, relations that went beyond business transactions (see next chapter).

It is important to note that the lack of ongoing social relationships (and the resultant lack of knowledge of the nationality of the foreign nationals) was not just a result of the villagers' behaviour, as the middleman groups like the Somalis *also* preferred to limit their insertion into the social fabric of the areas where they operated. This is consistent with the global pattern of middleman minority behaviour, noted in the previous chapter. In other words, limited interaction in these villages should not be explained simply as the direct result of xenophobic hostility by the villagers.

It should be stressed that, despite the social distance that existed, the Somali *spaza* operators interviewed all stressed their desire to build respectful relations with local people. They invoked an Islamic principle of mutual respect, and stated that they used it to guide social relationships with villagers. The Somali *spaza* operator in St Marks village said:

> I am … [a] friend with everyone here because Allah says you must show people respect…I am Somali and Muslim; my brother from next door is not…All we can do is be my friend, my friend with respect, even if we are not same people…

While South Africans sometimes use the derogatory terms like *makwerekwere* and *quirigamba* to refer to foreigners (insulting references to their alleged inability to master local languages: Nyamnjoh, 2007), local villagers often called the Somalis as a group by a collective nickname: the "My Friend" group. This is an apparent reference to the Somalis' regular use of the phrase when speaking to locals.

3.5 Good Business: Xenophilia and Somali *Spaza* Business Practices

The first category of "xenophilac" villagers identified earlier were those who viewed the Somali *spaza* operators positively on the grounds that their businesses were beneficial. There were a number of reasons many villagers had positive attitudes to the Somali *spazas*. The first was the perception that the individual *spazas* had product diversity at fair prices, and shelves fully stocked. This was very important, as villagers would otherwise need to travel far, and incur expenses, to do shopping elsewhere (like Cofimvaba town). Even where a village had the smallest type of Somali *spaza* shop, it was often cheaper and easier to go to other villages' Somali shops than to go to Cofimvaba. The villagers were generally far from the city centre in Cofimvaba, and preferred to do as little shopping outside of the village as possible, and the Somalis helped make this possible.

The more differentiated and innovative the services a Somali *spaza* had to offer local villagers, the better the relationship with villagers. Somali *spaza* operators often added new elements to the *spaza* business. One example is innovation through the sale of products that were not previously sold by other *spaza* operators, like petrol and electricity, and the provision of services like the extension of interest-free credit or transport.

The *spaza* operators in Ntshingeni, with their large store, their assistance to pensioners on grant days, and so on, had an excellent relationship not just with villagers in the village itself, but people from other villages. In this case, the *spaza* was run by a married couple: a South African woman and a Somali man. Their *spaza* was seen as benefitting local people by operating a business where no business had previously existed, and by going beyond the call of duty in doing so.

For example, the *spaza* sold car fuel at around the same price as that of petrol stations in Cofimvaba city centre. Local owners of vehicles interviewed in this study felt that this was not done for profit, but as a means to assist the villagers, who were often left stranded because of the considerable distance to the nearest petrol stations. The *spaza* owners extended credit to pensioners without interest being charged. When the pensioners bought groceries in bulk, the owners delivered the goods to their homes. They drove pensioners to collect their social grants. By providing deliveries and transport, they helped pensioners avoid crime, filling a safety gap that traditional authorities and municipal governments left. A middle aged male villager from St Marks, who often shopped in Ntshingeni as the villages were close together, stated:

> These people help us, *sisi*. *Yho*, I don't want to lie about them and say otherwise…they came here and brought us things we didn't have, like selling electricity and petrol. No one here had thought of that before… they are quite cleverm if you ask me…To think about taking the elders here to get their *inkumnkum* ["income" i.e. social welfare grant - AM] you can see that.Okay, yeah, sure, this is not just about helping [but also business – AM] …but it is also a way of helping to keep our old people safely away from the criminals…

Another appreciated feature of the Somalis *spaza* operators was their charitable work. Thompson (2012) has argued that Somalis in South African townships do not neatly fit the middleman minority model, as they engage in some forms of social responsibility that go beyond business. They do this as part of Islamic charity. This was also true of Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba: it was a trait that was spoken about at length by both the local villagers and the Somalis. They gave gifts, like assistance with food for funerals, but were also seen as doing business with an element of social responsibility, as doing more for the community, earning their keep, and so, were more accepted and built good relations with local villagers.

It is clear from the data that the Somali *spaza* operators' manner of doing business was viewed positively. It was an improvement from the way in which local *spazas* had worked (when they existed: local *spazas* had not even existed in some villages). In this, the results confirm claims by Crush and Pendleton (2004) cited in Neocosmos (2010) that local communities tend to be more welcoming to foreign nationals in cases where their economic impact is demonstrably positive. It is clear that villager xenophilia was, for many, closely linked to positive experiences of Somali business practices.

As stated earlier, many villagers had little contact with Somalis outside of business transactions, which led to ignorance and a tendency to lump all foreigners together. However, it does seem clear that the business transactions were enough to foster positive views – rather than xenophobia. This argument is also borne out when looking at the villagers who were described above as indifferent to the Somalis. The majority of these villagers were in Banzi, Luncwini, and St Marks, which were nearest Cofimvaba; and in Banzi there were no Somali operators; and these villagers did not rely on business with the Somalis, and could often afford to travel to Cofimvaba. The product diversity, good stock levels, innovations and so on of the Somalis did not really matter to them. Therefore, there was no basis for a xenophilia based on Somali business practices. But even some of these indifferent villagers complimented the Somali *spazas* for their ability to supply bread and airtime (which saved a trip to Cofimvaba), and for catering effectively to the villagers who did not have the same access to town.

3.6 Grudging Appreciation: Ambiguity as a Response to Somalis

As noted, a section of villagers who did not really accept the presence of Somalis in the villages, but they did not actively campaign for the removal of the Somali spaza operators. Their "ambiguity" was expressed in their mixed views: dislike of the Somalis as outsiders, along with some appreciation for them as service providers.

Some were frustrated with poor services and unemployment, but appreciated the electrification, running water and social grants that had been provided so far by the state (albeit in a slow and limited manner). Some lived in the hope that waiting longer would yield more results. Importantly, none blamed the Somalis for the problems.

Others felt that there was no real use complaining or protesting, in general, because little was done for rural people. This also meant that xenophobic mobilisations were seen as unlikely to achieve anything (and there was some doubt as to whether locals had a right to chase the foreigners away, in any case). In fact, much as these villagers might not like Somalis as a people, they generally also held that they had a positive side:

> These people, you might not like them… you can complain and complain…then remember that… we don't have these things that they are bringing here. You catch a van [mini-bus taxi – AM] from here to town with that small money, that is a grant money, and then what? You pay for groceries still in that van. So how can you say to people who are here for a fifty-fifty chance for you and them, that they must leave? The government will not then came here and make things better for the rural people: we are far from the real people of South Africa, who can go to the malls and use real money without worry[ing] about vans…

The use of the phrase "real people of South Africa" is very interesting, as it indicates the continued exclusion and perception of exclusion of people in the former homelands, from the promise of the new South Africa. But the quoted statement also suggests that, given this exclusion, and inability to make claims, including on consumption and modernity, is that a substitute can be provided by "these people," who are also not "real people of South Africa."

Likewise, a young man in Qamata argued:

> You can't say, "No, okay, They must go!," because they bring things here that are far away from the people, simple things like a chips for the small childrens. Can you think of that when you are busy paying in the van for all your grocery? Every cent, every cent is gone, and you cannot even pay for your small child a chips, like they are not like other kids of this new South Africa? That thing is not fine.

A middle-aged woman in Banzi stated:

> Yes, well, even if you don't want them here, they won't go anywhere. But what can you do? …even if you don't want a Somali here, and say "Okay, I want this business to fail," you can't escape it (laughs) because they are even in town. You still shop there with them and where will you go? You need them yourself.

Another villager, who was among the most hostile to foreigners of all those interviewed, conceded:

> *Sisi*, I don't know how else to explain this to you, but I just don't feel [for] those things [Somalis]. I don't feel them. But you can complain and you will stop by yourself, because no one will do anything about them. Even if you don't want them, their customers will want them because of their cheapness …

The owner of the local *spaza* in St Marks – who was related to the previous person cited – was also hostile, and also in a way that recognised the attraction of the Somali *spazas*. A family member stated that the owner had been approached by Somalis to rent out the premises, but had denied the request. The local *spaza* was not doing particularly well, but the owner of the shop did not like "those foreigner people," who "were here to take advantage and enrich themselves."

It is probable that those who explicitly expressed these ambiguous positions had the potential to be spurred into xenophobic action if encouraged to do so. Villagers often took the position that they would follow the general position of the community, whatever their own views. A woman pensioner from Hoita said:

> For me it depends on whatever the people want, they can't go left and I go right: I go where people are going. If they want Somalis I want them, if they don't want them, then me too, I am there also.

This could mean either support for, or opposition to, the Somalis. While overall sentiment was positive, people would tend to follow the popular position. A middle-aged man from Qamata said:

> You have to do what people are doing if you are one people. You can't attempt to disagree and say these people [Somalis - AM] must go away when you know the people want them here...

Local identity – ethnic as well as village-based – is powerful, and co-exists with the national South African identity. It is linked to a tendency to conformity, which could assist xenophobic outbreaks.

3.7 Hygiene as an Issue of Contention

Despite these positive, neutral, or ambiguous views of Somalis, there was one definite area of contention: the perception of the outsiders as unclean. Hoeflich (2011) notes that Islamic prayer ablution practices require Somalis to be very clean, contrary to the stereotype, and this indicates that the issue is more one of boundaries than actual hygiene.

In all the villages, villagers complained about the cleanliness of the Somali *spaza*s, with the fact that the Somalis slept in the shops a major concern. For example, the Somali *spaza* operator in Hoita stated that he had heard that villagers complained about the cleanliness of his shop, and so, he put much energy into making sure the spaza was clean. He added that he sometimes employed a local woman villager to assist, and would have hired her more, if the *spaza* had a higher turnover.

It was widely believed Somalis did not clean themselves properly. For example, a woman pensioner in Qamata echoed ideas of backward African "others," when she stated:

> Maybe they do not do much cleaning in the parts of Africa where they come from. Not everyone stresses about cleaning. Even some Africans you find they do not bath like others...everyday...

Ignorance played a role, with a lack of understanding of Somali Islamic ablution practices.

When Somalis were seen washing their hands and feet with water bottles outside, some villagers in the study misinterpreted this action as their sole type of bathing. One young woman in St Marks village expressed another common view: "those people are so dirty…those things [Somalis] carry 2L bottles when they go to the toilet and wash their bums with it." Obviously, the phrase "those things" is, in this context, derogatory. But though the respondent was expressing latent xenophobia, there is no evidence she expressed herself in such a way to the Somali *spaza* operator in question, or incited violence.

The issue of cleanliness was so serious that the only case of villagers ordering a Somali *spaza* operator to leave was over this issue. In St Marks, a Somali *spaza* operator was asked to leave the village after a conflict with a neighbour, who claimed the Somali was allowing discarded rubbish from his shop to be blown by the wind into the neighbour's yard. He also did not show due deference in dealing with the neighbour, and her request that he clean up. Although the Somali was expelled, this was not done violently. According to a young woman:

> When we did not get what we wanted from that guy…well, the community just went there to ask him to leave…You can say he was chased out, because he was told to leave, but no one hit him or said anything that was bad.

The issue was, however, resolved within two weeks when the *spaza* operator came back to the village, apologised and assured the villagers that he would clean up around his *spaza*. The villagers were reported to have forgiven him, said a middle-aged woman, because

> … he showed us that he can be a person who can see other people…to say that we welcome you into our community … there must be respect for everyone, especially if you are an outsider …

This response is telling in that it demonstrates that indeed villagers have an expectation of a level of deference from the outsider. This confirms Zenner (1991), who found that middleman minority groups who showed "proper" deference to the majority were often more tolerated, and that the majority might use sanctions – even violence (although this did not happen at St Marks) – as a way to attain or restore this deference.

The reference to deference, and the view of the outsider as unclean, needs to be understood socially: these do indicate a form of othering, and attitudes about cleanliness that go beyond simple issues like soap. It indicates a distinction drawn between villagers and Somalis based on culture, not physical appearance, and on the idea of an inferior culture.

3.8 Ties between Somalis in the Villages, and to the Ethnic Enclave in Queenstown

Solidarity among immigrants is heighted by the discrimination by members of the local community, and by the benefits it enables for economic cooperation (Whitehouse, 2009). A lack of ties with local communities also makes the ethnic network of a middleman minority group essential for the group's survival (Bonacich, 1973). The evidence suggests, however, that ties between the Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba are relatively weak.

This is not due to clan allegiances, sometimes cited as a major contributor to a lack of cohesion (e.g. Hoeflich, 2011). Five of the seven *spaza* operators interviewed came from one clan, the Hawiye clan. It is true that there was no intermixing of clans in *spaza* shops (each spaza was operated by members of one clan), but all the Somalis interviewed claimed that clan ties were less important than common nationhood in the villages: it did not matter what clan people came from so long as they were Somali. The reason for this is similar to the argument made by Samanani (2014): outside of Somalia, clan divisions can perpetuate isolation, and so, become relatively less important than Somali-ness or Islam as bases for solidarity. The Somali *spaza* operator in Sabelele stated that "there is no time to discuss that you are this person or that person in Somalia when you are in South Africa because in the end we are all Somali when we are here." The operator in Hoita argued:

> … maybe you can say it is good to be divided back home, but not here. What is the point? Even if you are not friends with the other Somalis, you can still say "that is my brother from my country," and you know when you see him, that, yes, this is a person that you know. Because you are the same people, even if you have a different something here and here…

The relative lack of xenophobia also helps explain the relative lack of cohesion among the Somalis living in the Cofimvaba area. There was no urgent need to work together, as local hostility was low.

Contact was also difficult to sustain. As mentioned previously, in most cases, there was only one Somali *spaza* operating in each village, and the villages were far from each other. This made it difficult to make friends with, or interact with, Somalis in other villages. Besides the distance, time was short, mostly spent tending to the *spaza*. Local Somalis did not cooperate much, and there was no real pooling of resources other than instances where *spaza* operators who lived in the farthest villages assisted with transport of minor stock, such as airtime.

There was only one group of Somalis who kept close contact, around the Somali *spaza* operator married to a South African. Besides his big shop in Ntshingeni, he also had a second *spaza* shop in that village, and another in Sabalele. He employed his kin in two of the *spazas*. Even then, the villagers generally did not see the various Somali *spazas* and traders as connected. They were viewed as always being inside their own stores. He was one of only two Somali *spaza* operators who lived with their wives in the villages. The other had his child living with him as well. He stated that the reason that this child was living in South Africa was because she was a few months old. When she was old enough she would be sent to live with his family in Kenya.

The situation was similar to that reported by Liedeman (2013) and Thompson (2012) elsewhere, which was that of Somalis being far less cohesive than often believed by outsiders. Conflict was limited by an understanding, stated by individual Somalis, that one Somali would not open a *spaza* in a village where another Somali was already operating. The only exception was when the new *spaza* was opened far away from the one already operating, *and* the village was big enough to accommodate the two Somali operators' profit needs. One result of isolation was that Somalis pursue a strategy of integration, what Thompson (2012: 76) calls "deep physical embeddedness," into the local area, as opposed to residing in an ethnic enclave. However, this was not seen as a substitute for links to co-nationals.

The Somalis in the villages experienced major frustrations from social isolation, as already noted. The existence of an ethnic enclave and an ethnic economy in Queenstown provided some relief, with comprising friends, clansmen and close relatives, as well as facilities like mosques and access to ethnically specific goods and services, some from the homeland. As the *spaza* operator in Hoita commented:

> When you are far away from your people, you see, you are feeling alone, even in the food you eat. Because then you have to eat the food that is clean for your culture. So, I always eat bread and eggs, all the time, all the time. It is only when I can say I go there, to Queenstown, that one time when I can eat something that is right for me as a Somali.

But access to the enclave was not easy because of the lack of time the Somali *spaza* operators had, and because of the enclave's distance from the villages.

3.9 Social Distance in the Villages

At the same time, the Somali *spaza* operators are relatively isolated in the villages around Cofimvaba. The villagers, with the important exception of some of the local young men, rarely interact socially with the Somalis. Most of the local villagers stated that this was because the Somalis kept to themselves. In fact, most of the locals could not differentiate between the Somalis as businessmen and Somalis as people. They saw them only in their capacity as traders, and could say little about the group beyond how they conducted the *spazas*.

It is important to stress here that this social distance was not simply created by the villagers. In line with other studies of the middleman minority groups (e.g. by Whitehouse, 2009), the Somalis tended to create an in-group. It may be that enforcing differentiation from the people of the host community was key to the operations of a middleman minority: if they had the same social habits, there would be no need for, or possibility of, a middleman minority group (Raspberry, 1995; Sowell, 2005).

But this was not how the Somalis interviewed understood the issue. Their understanding was that the social practices of the members of the local community were inimical to their own. All of the responses given by Somalis went along the lines of arguing that they were not being able to mix with the villagers, because the villagers drank and smoked, which was against the religion of the Somalis.

It is interesting to note that the ignorance of the social practices and culture of the Somalis, which was held by the locals, was matched by the ignorance of the social practices and culture of the locals, which was held by the Somalis. The Somali group did not have a clear understanding of local ways, and the main reason was because they specifically kept themselves separate from the local population. There was no Somali interviewee who could provide much description of the culture of the villagers, or of their cultural differences with them, beyond the issue of drinking and smoking. In other words, the overtly culturally-based justification for the distance did not actually show much in the way of knowledge of the culture. In their own way, the Somalis also construed the villagers as the "other." Local practices were cited as the reason for staying separate, but the separation actually meant there was little knowledge of local practices.

Studies looking at the relationship between immigrants and local community members are often one-sided, stressing the manner in which the locals exclude the foreigners, and neglecting to note that foreigners can also deliberately exclude themselves. For example, the Somali *spaza* operators did not seek to integrate into the local community. Their relations with locals were mainly business ones: paying rent for premises, and dealing with customers. As Whitehouse (2012: 14) puts it in her discussion of foreign traders in Congo-Brazzaville, "stranger-hood is a phenomenon maintained jointly, if not always consciously, by hosts and migrants alike."

The reality of ignorance does not remove the fact of important cultural differences between the two groups. One example is that of the child-bearing practices of the Somalis. The Somalis interviewed did not raise their children in the villages, or elsewhere in South Africa – outside of Somali ethnic enclaves. Children, they stated, would only live with them if there was the support of an ethnic enclave where the children could learn "how to be Somali." These included learning respect for the elders, proper Islamic comportment, the avoidance of illicit behaviour such as drinking alcohol, and, especially, mastering of the language of the homeland. It was seen as impossible to attain these in areas like the villages around Cofimvaba, on the assumption that the local environment and people would have a negative impact on attempts to groom a child into "how to be Somali."

As noted, only one of the Somalis was married to a South African woman, who was the co-owner. Even here, the Somali took care to ensure the children would "be Somali." The couple's two children both lived in Kenya, and while the mother stated in her interviewee that she kept contact with them, she believed that the children were his and belonged to his people. She also indicated that if her husband decided to return to Somalia or Kenya, the marriage would end, as she would not leave with him. She did not know much about his background in Somalia, or the details of the business: she stated that her husband took care of all business-related matters, even though they were co-owners.

Somali men did sometimes try form romantic relations with local women. A young woman in Qamata said:

> … they have a tendency to ask to speak differently to you when you are a young woman. Maybe they can say they respect the older women, or they don't try tricks with them because they are older, but with us, they think "*Ja*, maybe if I try here, then I can find someone to keep me company in South Africa…"

Few of the young women found these relationships appealing. Some suspected that the Somalis may be seeking local wives, to access citizenship. Others brought up the stereotype about hygiene. A young woman in St Marks said:

> Sometimes these Somalis will ask the girls here to be their girlfriends and stuff like that, but the girls here won't agree to that…I would never agree if they approached me with romantic proposals. *Yho,* no ways, those people are so dirty…

Somalis also expected local women, in the case of marriage, to adopt Somali ways and Islam, which was not seen as an attractive prospect by many. A young woman in Sabalele commented:

> I have seen it happen in another village, where the girl there is married to "My Friend" [i.e. a Somali - AM]. Okay for her, maybe it's better, because she used to dress like those people before she was married into them…They want to make sure that you are one of them and you must change, and cover your face and all that …

I did not direct specific questions directed to any Somali *spaza* operators regarding plans for local marriages, but one Somali stated that he was divorced, and would like a South African wife:

> This would be a nice something because then, we know me and her, that we can help each other when I am living here. To say "Okay, am doing this for you and you doing that one for me."

He added that because visiting:

> PE [Port Elizabeth] and changing the papers [at Home Affairs - AM] every other time, it is the time, is far away. When you get someone, like my brother who owns the store [i.e. the Somali married to a South African in Ntshingeni - AM], then you know that you can make easy to get things.

But again, the issues of preserving Somaliness was still paramount:

> …it is difficult to find someone who can say "Okay, they will change" …Islam is Islam and I can say "no" to marrying another person because it has to be the same. So she must also change to my religion…

Writers like Bonacich (1973) argued that middleman minority groups were pushed out of "desirable occupations" and spaces because of their cultural, racial and religious distinctiveness. However, the Somali case in these villages suggests a more complex picture. None of the Somalis interviewed had attempted to find employment elsewhere before being self-employed, or working for a co-national. In order to "be Somali," Somalis in South Africa have actively avoided entering the South African labour market. Rather than be pushed out, they have defined the distinctions for themselves, and hence have opted out of many occupations and South African spaces.

The distinctiveness of South Africans is seen as making participation in such, less desirable. For example, the Somali *spaza* operator in Sabalele had been a music producer in Somalia. He expressed his passion for the music industry but stated that:

> …when you are in a new country, you know that, even maybe what you are loving to do and as your job, is not the same, because of the religion and the life that the people are living in that new country…it is not the same something even if it is the music that we are doing.

Four of the other Somalis had been employed in Somalia and Kenya, but in South Africa, they preferred to work in the *spaza* sector as a middleman minority group. Somalis did not operate in the formal sector for the same reasons they maintained social distance from the villagers. This is different to findings by Hoeflich (2011) and Thompson (2012), whose data suggested Somalis now acting as middleman minorities in South Africa entered trading because they could not access the labour market i.e. they were forced to the margins, into the informal economy, out the labour market.

I found Somalis in my study were not necessarily operating *spazas* because of exclusion or discrimination in the labour market, but because social habits and beliefs prevented them from desiring work with South Africans. It was not simply the hostility of the local community that led to a lack of interest in assimilation and the maintenance of a sojourner identity (cf. Bonacich, 1973). The Somali *spaza* operators thus avoided assimilation as well as they maintained their sojourner characteristics, something they did in the villages as well, despite acknowledging the safety of the villages and the lack of conflict with villagers.

This outlook can cause difficulties. The misunderstandings of Somali hygiene mentioned earlier are one example: locals knew very little about Somalis and misunderstood their Islamic ablution practices, and Somalis did not engage with most locals outside of business. Park (2010) argues that such isolation can foster xenophobia, contrasting more hostile attitudes towards Somali immigrants (who restricted themselves to trade), and Asian immigrants (who engaged in trade, as well as in the professions in the private and state sectors).

This outlook also had unexpected advantages: for example, whereas a commitment to maintaining a middleman minority sojourner status can often foster resentment by locals (Bonacich, 1973; Hoeflich, 2011), the social distance between local villagers and the Somalis was so great that the villagers were generally completely unaware of the Somalis' commitment to being sojourners.

It is possible that this was reinforced by the Somalis' commitment to charitable work and assisting locals in various ways: unlike sojourners who were resented elsewhere for keeping back every cent they could, in order to raise funds to move away see Bonacich, 1973), local villagers saw the Somali *spaza* operators as giving back to the community.

Finally, while there was social distance between the local villagers and the Somalis, this did translate easily into the sense of relative deprivation that has been seen as contributing to xenophobia elsewhere (e.g. Charman and Piper, 2012; Cooper,2009). The Somalis were generally better educated than the locals, with all but two having Matric, the other two being just one year short of Matric. All of them spoke fairly fluent English, better than most of the villagers, especially the older villagers. They could communicate in Xhosa, although most could only do so enough to communicate with customers.

However, despite these advantages, they did not work in high-paying trades or professions, and almost certainly earned less than the best-paid people in the area – nurses, teachers, headmen, Local Community Development Workers – from their shops. They also did not live ostentatious lifestyles, partly because of the low profits from their stores, and partly because they were committed to remittances, investments and saving for a hoped-for return to the homeland.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that, the relocation of Somali spaza operators to the villages around Cofimvaba is not an ideal one, but rather a strategy used as a means of escaping the xenophobia experienced in urban townships. (Thompson, 2012 and Zenner, 1991). Although the Somalis partly slept in their shops to protect their assets and in some cases, burglar proofed their stores, the threat against their assets was never based on their nationality as Somalis, but rather on the pervasive crime in the villages (see Webster, *et al*, 2014). The fact that strategies likes these had an ability to deter criminals shows that the Somalis have enough importance to be able to influence the level of their safety among the villagers.

Somalis are safe in the villages of Cofimvaba, because they have not displaced locals, but rather provided a service that did not previously exist. Villagers respected the Somalis as business people and where forms of latent xenophobia have existed, the benefits of charity and reasonably priced products, that are consistently available have outweighed any need to react negatively to the presence of Somalis. The better the provision of these benefits by the Somalis, the more positive the view. Though the Somalis are safe in the villages, they have a social void as they view the lives led by villagers as socially antagonistic to their own (Whitehouse, 2009). Similarly, the view of the Somali national only in his capacity as a businessman, means that villagers do not see a need to actively form social relations with Somalis. This reinforces the ignorance and social distance that exists between the two groups. Young men in the villages interact with Somalis, but this is not enough to close the social gap between Somalis and villagers at large, nor is it enough to fill the social void and the need for Somali group consciousness.

Owing to the social void, the safety levels experienced are not enough to keep the Somalis operating in the villages. From both ends, the lack of meaningful social interactions creates dangerous ignorance's that could be a potential breeding ground for xenophobia. The forms of xenophobia that exist (including those based on ignorance) and the heavy reliance of the villagers on what popular discourse dictates, proves that there is potential for xenophobia should a popular discourse in favour of xenophobia arise (Neocosmos,2010 and Tsheola, Ramoroka and Muzondi, 2015).

CHAPTER FOUR:

Interactions and Explanations

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focussed on attitudes and views, and indicated a general lack of conflict between Somalis and South Africans in the impoverished black villages around Cofimvaba. It indicated that the social distance between the two was generally a large one, but at the same time, there was xenophilia towards the Somalis on the part of most villagers, and indifference by others, while those who were more hostile were nonetheless ambiguous towards the outsiders: they disliked them, but did not actively mobilise against them, grudgingly acknowledging some of the benefits the Somalis provided.

This situation was very different to that seen in many poor black urban areas, including the large towns of the Eastern Cape. It was also noteworthy that young men, often seen as heavily involved in attacks on immigrants elsewhere in the country, were the group that was closest to the Somalis in the villages. This chapter tries to explain this distinctive situation, engaging with and evaluating the usefulness of the literature on the causes of xenophobia and the situation of middleman minorities.

4.2 The Dispersed Settlement of Somali Traders

Zenner (1991) has argued that the proportion of a middleman group to locals in a specific area, can contribute to the relationships between the two. The larger and more cohesive the middleman group is, or seems to be, the more of a threat it might be seen to pose to the locals. While the lack of ties to local communities fosters solidarity and networks amongst middleman minority groups (Bonacich, 1973), these connections can be hazardous, as they feed into resentments about exclusivist outsiders colluding with one another. It has been argued, for South Africa, that there is a relationship between the concentration of Somali *spaza* operators in certain areas and levels of xenophobia: this can be construed as taking space from locals, affirming views that foreigners are "flooding" local spaces (Hoeflich, 2011; Thompson, 2012).

However, as seen in the previous chapter, the Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba struggled to maintain close ties to each other, and do not seem to cooperate much. Their isolation was linked to distance and a lack of time. Where there were connections, they invisible to villagers.

This very isolation might help explain the relative lack of xenophobia. The villagers interviewed did not view the Somalis as working together, or connected with each other. The one case of close links – the Somali *spaza* operator based in Ntshingeni and married to a South African woman, who owned three *spazas* – was not really known among the locals. The local villagers did not associate these *spazas* with each other and there was no mention that the Somalis were a cohesive, tightknit group. The Somali *spaza* operators did not mingle, the villagers did not see them as physically concentrated, and all villagers knew that visits between villages, by locals or foreigners, were rare because of distance and a lack of transport.

The situation of the village Somalis, and the perception of them by the local villagers, was different to that in other areas, where Somalis had close ties and had been accused of working together against locals. There was no real pooling of resources, other than some assistance with transport of minor stock such as airtime, involving Somali *spaza* operators in Sabalele and Hoita, and in St Marks and Ntshingeni. The Somali *spaza* operators around Cofimvaba were not accused by local villagers or local traders of driving down prices by getting bulk discounts from wholesalers, or colluding to weaken South Africans. Instead, the Somalis tended to be seen as individuals, always inside their stores: the villagers did not feel that the Somalis were connected in anyway.

While the lack of cohesion among the Somalis living in the Cofimvaba area might be due to a relative lack of xenophobia, it also seems that the lack of cohesion also contributes to the relative lack of xenophobia. This finding is striking, because it suggests that group cohesion can be both cause and effect of xenophobia.

4.3 The Limits of Relative Deprivation

The financial commitments and sojourning outlook of middleman minorities led to thrifty and modest lifestyles (Bonacich, 1973). In the case of the Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba, thriftiness assisted the group as it made it harder to compare their financial situation with those of locals, since the Somalis did not express their financial situation through consumption or status symbols. The lack of a visibly higher standard of living meant there were less grounds for resentment. Others find that the sojourning outlook is beneficial to the "host" community. Migrants tend to send remittances back home in kind rather than in cash. This means that money that is accumulated in South Africa when doing business is often spent in South Africa (*Sunday Times*, 2000: 17).

People often want to assess whether their place in the social hierarchy is justified (Cooper, 2009), but in the villages around Cofimvaba that were studied, the Somalis did not seem to be in a notably superior material position to most of the locals. Somalis were also not seen to actively be flaunting having a better lifestyle. There was no display of class-based exclusivity or markers of social mobility that were higher than that of the villagers. They lived in rented buildings, for the most part, slept in the shop, and worked long hours.

They were given a high status by the villagers, in comparison to themselves, because they are primarily seen as successful entrepreneurs. The majority of villagers were reliant on the government social grant, or on remittances from elsewhere (Webster *et al*, 2014), but the Somalis had access to an independent income. The villagers often drew comparisons between themselves and the foreign *spaza* operators, but since the majority of the villagers did not interact with the Somalis outside of business, they assumed the Somalis were a bit better off, but they had no real idea what the Somalis earned, or owned, or remitted, or invested.

Although some Somalis had vehicles (vans), this was seen mainly as part of their business needs, rather than a sign of personal affluence. They were only ever seen driving the vans for the needs of the business, for example, for buying stock or delivering goods to customers. The problem that middleman minorities often face, which is the suspicion that they accumulate wealth at the expense of locals (see Sowell, 2005), did not appear since the Somalis did not seem wealthier than the locals.

4.4 Filling Gaps: The Importance of a Lack of Conflict of Interests with Locals

In chapter two, mention was made of the role of conflicts of interest in fuelling xenophobic violence. Locals have used the language of rights and citizenship to make claims on the South African state and to deny the same to foreigners. This is about "the politics of access; a struggle for political and socio-economic resources" (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013: 192). Non-natives are constructed politically and socially as "others" (Neocosmos, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2011).

There is evidence that "community leaders," state officials and politicians have collaborated in xenophobic violence and that local business owners, threatened by foreign businesses, played a key role (Charman and Piper, 2011). Charman *et al* (2012) and Liedeman (2013) found Somali *spaza* operators used a three-fold strategy to wrestle market share from local *spaza* operators in Delft South and Eindhoven in Cape Town. The first measure was price reduction, the second was positioning Somali *spazas* near to, and in direct competition with, locally-owned *spazas*, and the third was competition through a diversification of services and product range. Their success was resented by local traders as wrong, because it supposedly involved unfair practices and because South Africans had a stronger claim to business opportunities than outsiders. This point of view was also represented by Small Business Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu who said the foreigners were "here as a courtesy," and must share their "secrets" with locals (SAPA, 2013). In this context, some township-based business people responded to their foreign rivals by stoking violence against them.

A major reason for the relative lack of xenophobia in the villages around Cofimvaba, and the definite lack of xenophobic violence and efforts to drive foreigners out, is the lack of such conflicts of interest. As seen in the previous chapter, in section 3.6, even locals who disliked the Somalis did not blame them for inadequate state services and grants, and did not see the Somalis as competing for these resources.

Furthermore, the Somali *spaza* operators did not come into conflict with local *spaza* operators in the villages around Cofimvaba. In most of the villages studied, there were no local *spazas*. Locally-owned *spazas* existed only in the villages of Hoita, Luncwini and St Marks. Villagers interviewed believed that these *spazas* were failing well before the arrival of the Somalis. They had a very small range of products, were often out of stock, the prices were not reasonable. (In Masiphumelele in 2006 local business owners hired groups of youths to loot and destroy Somali *spaza* shops based on the idea that local *spazas* were failing due to the "unfair" cheaper Somali spaza shop (Misago *et al*, 2009)).

These problems forced villagers to travel long distances to Cofimvaba at great cost. There was no innovation, such as bringing in new goods and services, like petrol and electricity. A young woman, interviewed in Hoita, said of the local *spaza* that had operated:

> They [the local *spaza* operators- AM] could see that it [the *spaza*] was falling down… If you are seeing that the people that have been in support, and in need, and you can see that you can't give them what they need, then you can't expect them to keep the support. We are far, we need things that are cheap and not far from us. So we need to know if you go the *spaza* you will find your soap, or your mealie meal, milk and everything without being told "Okay, today, *ayikho* ["it is out of stock" – AM].

A middle-aged man villager in St Marks said:

> You will find that, with the villager, it is not the proper *spaza* that you want. Most of the time they are selling *iayikho*[a sarcastic way of saying that a product is out of stock – AM] …Times are hard for everyone and if you go there you will find bread today, there and then bread is not there tomorrow…even they [the local *spaza* operator and her family], you will see them at the Somali buying what they are saying they sell at their own *spaza*!

The Somalis benefited the great majority of villagers directly. It is through lower prices and innovations that Somalis have succeeded where local *spazas* have failed, and they have not just been more successful than local *spaza* operators, they have actually been able to win local people away from the big shops and supermarkets of Cofimvaba town. Villagers interviewed did not see the Somalis as competing for scarce resources or destroying local businesses, but instead as offering a much-needed service through their entrepreneurial creativity and skills. Even the daughter of the local *spaza* operator in St Marks stated:

> … their small prices also help with us, because at the end of the day we also use some of their things, when we are short of that bread, or that milk…we might not be happy because of the competition, but the people here love their prices and we can't force them to say "Okay, come here, buy from us here."

But the success was more than about prices. As the previous sections indicated, the Somalis took a range of measures: providing a wider range of products, ensuring the availability of items, new services and goods like electricity and petrol, assisting pensioners with credit and transport, and charitable works. The Somali middleman group helped close a spatially-based gap around consumption, by bringing well-equipped shops that went well beyond the provision of basic necessities, to villages at a distance from the Cofimvaba city centre.

Former South African *spaza* operators interviewed in this study (I managed to locate and interview two, both in St Marks), gave various reasons for the failure of local *spazas*: countrywide food price increases had reduced consumer spending power; they had a lack of time for the efficient management of the *spaza*; and they lacked business and management skills. They also believed that the Somali *spaza* operators were successful because they did not "pay tax." Finally, they complained that local people, given goods on credit in local stores, did not always pay back the money. As much as these local *spaza* operators were disappointed by the fact that the Somali *spaza* operators being more successful, they felt that the villagers could not be blamed for turning to the Somalis.

For the villagers interviewed, the local *spazas* were already failing before to the establishment of the Somali *spazas*. From the perspective of the *villagers*, the *spaza* operators from the villages were unsuccessful because they lacked a lot of products, and had little product variety, and that these problems worsened overtime.

Moreover, they claimed, the failing local *spaza* owners benefitted from the arrival of the Somalis, because they could to withdraw from active trade, and make money easily, without work, by simply renting their premises to the Somalis. In this situation, local *spazas* owners felt it better to simply rent out their premises to the Somalis. They could breathe a sigh of relief that rent money was being offered by the Somalis that compared well with the money the locals were previously making through the *spaza* with long hours. There is no evidence of tension between the local landlords and the Somali tenants, as has been reported in other areas (e.g. Charman *et al*, 2012; HSRC, 2008; Liedeman 2013). Instead, local-spaza-operators-turned-landlords had a vested interest in the success and the safety of the Somali traders.

There was also little scope for other community leaders and state officials to stoke up xenophobia. The headmen, the most important leaders in the villages (outside of the chiefs), had almost no dealings with Somalis or other foreigners in the villages. One reason was that headmen hardly engaged with the Somali *spaza* operators as customers, as they could afford to travel to the Cofimvaba city centre, unlike the majority of villagers. Their power, wealth and status were not threatened in any way by the Somalis.

Two headmen were spoken to in this study, as well as the wife of a headman, and these indicated they sporadically bought items like bread and milk from the Somalis, when there was no other choice. But they did not rely on them. The headmen earned perhaps the highest salaries in the villages: estimated by Westaway (2012) at around R6700 per month by 2010, the figure is presumably increased since then. Furthermore, the traditional leaders in the area were not a constant present in the villages: the headmen were hardly available to be part of this study. When asked about their whereabouts, family members uniformly stated that the headmen tended to leave in the morning, and come back late, because they are taking care of the "business" of the village. Exactly what this "business" was, was not clearly ascertained by this study.

It also seems that the Somalis generally did not need to approach headmen or chiefs to access land for their shops. As Westaway (2012) has explained, land in the black African rural areas is still held under conditions of "traditional" "communal tenure." Effectively, the land is held in trust by the state, and administered in trust by traditional leaders: headmen and chiefs. It cannot (legally) be sold, but it can be granted in various types of arrangements.

However, the Somali *spaza* operators in this study generally did not need to approach headmen and chiefs for land, as they accessed it via landlords: six rented the *spaza* as a business from the locals; seven also rented the building; only one was the owner of the building in which the business operated, and this was the Somali married to the South African. Renting was essential as Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba could not own land, as it was restricted to people from the villages, or from the Xhosa-speaking group, and implicitly, to South Africans only. According to the South African *spaza* operator, married to the Somali, the claim to land was tied to the view that the land belonged to ancestors of the villagers that first inhabited that space. Villagers accessed land by making a request with the headman, who then discussed the request at a village meeting. If the land was awarded, the villager could do whatever they wished with the land, but not sell it.

This meant the Somalis mainly got land from locals, who had it from a headman. They did not have to approach a headman directly, and it was not clear whether a headman would have listened to any request for a land award or taken offence. One major advantage for locals arising from this system was that it meant that Somalis had to pay rent to locals, which gave the fortunate locals – often former *spaza* operators themselves – a definite interest in the success of the Somalis. Although the thinking about land was linked to ideas linking land and rights to autochthony and indigeneity (and colonial and apartheid systems of rule: Ntsebeza, 2006), this did not therefore translate into a xenophobic reaction.

It also seems from the evidence that the Somali *spaza* operators did not really find fault in this arrangement, which entailed an inability to own land. Several reasons were given by the Somali *spaza* operators. The first was an issue of safety: they believed it safer to rent a property from a local person, so that the local community would associate the business with the local landlord, and therefore be reluctant to cause harm to the Somali or his business as it would harm a local. The second was the issue of their identity as sojourners: they had no long-term intentions of living in the villages, so land-ownership was not a key concern. It can also be added that rents were quite low, ranging from R1200 to R1500 a month. The rents did not vary significantly per the size and turnover of the *spaza*.

However, the inability to acquire land – even under traditional tenure – did help reinforce the distinction between the local citizen, whose identity was tied to a Xhosa ethnicity presented as age-old in the system of traditional rule, and the Somalis, presented as permanent strangers despite living in the villages. The Somali *spaza* operator, married to a South African, was the only one who could claim to own the premises. In fact, his wife was initially denied land because she was married to a Somali. The issue went to the traditional or tribal court, where the case went on for three months before the land was finally awarded. Even then, formally at least, the land belonged to the South African wife, rather than belonging to the two as a couple. The ongoing power of the traditional courts allows chiefs and headmen to have judicial power equivalent to magistrates' courts, but more in reality, as they controlled access to resources (Westaway, 2010: 12).

When asked about the process of land allocation, the two headmen interviewed stated explicitly that, while Somalis are welcome in the community, they were not considered to be villagers. The Somalis were rather seen as being there to conduct business. None of the headmen had been asked permission by the Somali *spaza* operators to operate in the village, as the Somalis made their arrangements with local *spaza* operators. The headmen were not concerned about this. They felt that it was the responsibility of the landlord to inform the village headman when their property was leased out, but only as a courtesy.

Only in Sabalele village had one of the Somalis had direct contact with a headman, and this was more an informal meeting than anything else: the headman introduced himself, because they were neighbours, and because the Somali was the victim of a robbery. This expression of concern does not fit the pattern of local authorities allowing criminals to act against Somalis with impunity. The informal character of this contact also underlines the fact that the Somalis are left to their own devices within the villages, beyond their relationship with their landlords and their customers. There was also no real enforcement of business regulations, a situation of informality that has been identified as important for *spazas* (see Liedeman, 2013). One simply needs a space to do the business, time, and the money to stock products.

Besides having little contact with the headmen besides their (headmen's) occasional purchases in the *spaza*, the Somalis also had little contact with the other higher income-earners – the nurse and the teacher – in the area. Local Community Development Workers, who visited the villages as part of the government's development efforts, also did not live in the villages and only came into the villages infrequently.

The villages around Cofimvaba and in particular, those villages where Somalis operate, are far removed from the city centre, where the democratic state was based. This also meant very little interaction with government officials, including police officers. It was not even clear what channels Somali *spaza* operators might be able to access in order to resolve any legal disputes, or whether they could access the traditional courts, or even the main government's structures.

None of these more elite groups directly benefited or lost out from the new shops and there was little pressure for state officials or police to crack-down on the immigrants. In the absence of substantial protests and social conflicts in the villages, or challenges to the traditional authorities or the local state, local elites also did not have any need to find scapegoats.

The perspectives of the locals and of the Somalis, regarding their access to land, were basically the same: the villagers viewed the Somalis as not really belonging, and the Somalis saw themselves as temporary residents only. There was no conflict over this issue.

Although the Somalis *spaza* operators recognised that acquiring land in their own right could save them the cost of rent, they did not see this acquisition as likely or worth pursuing. They sometimes also justified the payment of rent as a form of contributing to the community, and meeting Islamic moral obligations in a context of deep poverty. All of the Somali spaza operators spoke of the plight of the rural people, worse than that of many other South Africans. The Somali *spaza* operator from Hoita village commented:

> You can see here, people are far, far from all everything. They have not much and you as a person from outside…it's not right to take full advantage to say "Okay, we take your business, and then we also want what belongs to you as the people, and that is your land" …to find that all we are doing here is "profit this" and "profit that." All the Somali know that the law of Allah is kindness, and giving to the people who need, and you can see here, that people need lot.

The Somalis stressed that they were motivated, in their business dealings, by moral and religious principles. For example, prices remained low even after the Somalis were the main businesses everywhere (except in St Marks), and did not face any more local competition. One Somali *spaza* operator stated that they kept their prices as low as possible, because they understood that the village people were unable to afford heavily marked-up goods. According to the Somali *spaza* operator in Hoita, it was against Islamic principles to make high profit "from peoples such as the people here, because the people here do not take out of much with money: you can just see that they are in more need than other people, so you must show kindness." While in the urban townships this approach to business could be seen as a way of reducing xenophobia (Ismail, 2013 and Sadouni, 2012), the moral and religious injunction to help the needy seems to be the key cause of such behaviour in the villages, as levels of xenophobia were very low.

This ethical approach also helped avert the charge – often made by locals towards middleman minorities (e.g. Whitehouse, 2009; Zenner, 1991) – that the foreign group had double moral standards, applying different ethics to their own people and the local people.

Sowell (2005) has argued that because middleman minority groups are the main economic link between producers and consumers, the fact that they make profits on products that they have not personally produced may lead the locals to view them as parasitic. The same applies when they charge interest on money lent out, or credit extended. However, the Somalis in these villages were difficult to see as parasitic: prices were kept low, and, importantly, they did not act as money lenders as such, nor did the credit extended to customers accrue interest. The principle was that a customer could take a product on credit, and pay for it at a later stage. When the customer was paying for the product, the cost of the product would not change over time. The extension of the credit was informal, in that there was no enforced payment structure or deadlines. There was no real way of ensuring that this credit would be paid back at all.

Islamic practice shaped interest-free credit. Loans from the Somalis were also attractive to locals for another reason: as Zenner (1991: 255) has noted, people prefer to borrow from strangers, rather than members of their in-group. This is because "in borrowing, the debtor reveals much of himself to the borrower…One may prefer to borrow from a stranger, who has little power over other aspects of one's life." Besides, familiarity with the lender can lead to difficulties in securing repayments: Charman *et al* (2012) report local *spazas* businesses in Delft South and Eindhoven in Cape Town going bankrupt, partly because of debtors who did not pay because they knew the creditor well, and could play on this relationship.

Of course, as Zenner (1991) argues, there is also no real way for middleman minorities, as outsiders, to recover borrowed credit from the locals who do not want to pay. The way that the Somali *spaza* operators in the villages seem to address the problem is simply not give more credit to a customer, until they had paid back the initial credit extended. Only one of the Somali *spaza* operators had an experience where credit was extended, but never paid back. On the other hand, locally-owned *spazas* in the villages did struggle to recover debts. The daughter of the St Marks *spaza* operator complained: "The main frustration is that the people who take from us on credit…as soon as the Somalis arrived, they ran to them and left here without paying their debt."

It seems clear that the Somali *spaza* operators in the villages around Cofimvaba benefitted locals, not just from their low prices and their innovations, but their moral approach. Whereas middleman minorities including Somalis are often accused of being parasitic, of taking from local communities without giving back, and of using local spaces to accumulate remittances for their country of origin (e.g. Raspberry, 1995; Sowell, 2005; Thompson, 2012), the Somalis in these villages were viewed very positively. Locals often described the business practices of the Somalis as being the practices of people with *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* means togetherness, is an idea based on humanness, that people realise their humanity through interaction with others," and is seen as a positive African cultural value or aspiration (Lodge, 1999 cited in Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013: 194).

The local people in the villages around Cofimvaba generally stated that the Somalis charged fair prices, even though they were in a position to charge more as most villagers had no access to other shops. Their prices were around the same as those charged in Cofimvaba, but worked out cheaper because there were no transport costs involved. Charging low prices, sometimes giving products on credit (without interest being paid), and even giving things away for free (like food for funerals), were all described by the villagers as examples of the Somalis doing business with *Ubuntu.* This sort of entrepreneurial practice, with its elements of social responsibility and avoiding the exploitation of people who are struggling financially, is widely appreciated by locals (Oldfield, 2012).

Such practices also helped offset another possible criticism, which was that the Somalis did not employ local people in the prime job of cashier: This was unlike many other foreigners in the region's villages. The Somali *spaza* operator in St Marks did employ a non-Somali as cashier, but this was a woman from Lesotho. He stated that this was not intended as discrimination against locals, but was done as an act of charity: he had heard she was also an immigrant, desperately seeking employment. He said the job was to assist her standing on her own feet, in a foreign land, but he admitted her salary was not high. This he attributed to the limited income of the *spaza.*

However, the Somalis did employ locals in other capacities, usually on a part-time and irregular basis. They were sometimes hired to build mud houses, or mix mud to expand the *spaza* building (with the permission of the landlord), which were obviously not permanent jobs. Young men were also sometimes given small jobs (see below).

The hygiene complaint against the Somalis also proved somewhat beneficial to the villagers, in that it led to the employment of women in the villagers, albeit on a part-time or sometimes infrequent basis, as cleaners. A middle-aged man in Luncwini stated:

> …at some point their dirtiness helps, because the only time you see a South African working there is, if it's a lady they have hired to clean for them…maybe they are not allowed to clean in their culture…

Another villager, a pensioner from St Marks, agreed with this stating:

> *Yhu, yhu, yhu*! I like them, they help me as a grandmother, but *yhu,hayi,Sisi*, they are dirty. But I guess dirty helps out people because now they hire someone to clean.

In any case, locally-owned *spazas* also did not employ many villagers, as they rather used family labour. Although the Somali traders prefer to hire kin in their shops (Liedeman, 2013; Thompson, 2012), they created at least some local jobs, which locally-run *spazas* rarely did, relying on family labour instead.

Overall, tolerance towards Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba was linked to the reliance of villagers on Somali *spazas*, the new resources that the *spazas* (e.g. rent, low prices, wider range of products, new services, transportation, some jobs, charity, some credit), and the lack of competition with locals. This makes it hard for claims that Somalis are pillaging the resources of the country and causing the suffering of locals to take root. For example, villagers no longer have to travel far, at great expense, to Cofimvaba, to get items. This does not mean that there are not negative attitudes – these were shown in the hygiene issue – but local hostility is rare, and violence unknown. Obviously, the future cannot be predicted: for example, the rise of an alternative to the Somali *spazas* would have real effects. But for now, xenophobic violence seems unlikely.

4.5 "My Friend," the Stranger: Somali *Spaza* Operators and Young Men in the Villages

As shown so far, local dynamics play a key role in explaining the relative lack of xenophobia in the villages around Cofimvaba. These dynamics are specific to these areas: for example, foreign *spaza* operators in some other Eastern Cape villages seem to have had much more negative experiences (see Ntshobane, 2013). This points to the importance of balancing sweeping claims with local case studies. Just as it is important to differentiate between the experiences of immigrants of different origins in South Africa, and to differentiate between the situations of immigrants of the same origin in different parts of the country, so it is also important to recognise variation amongst South Africans, and to avoid simplification.

While there is substantial evidence that young black men, usually unemployed, have played a key role in xenophobic violence (e.g. Gastrow and Amit, 2013), and that one of the most xenophobic groups in South Africa are young males located in areas with a high population of young males and black 'urban' poor, not all this group is involved in such violence. Youth in the same area have different opinions and responses. Moreover, the xenophilia of local young men, seen in the villages around Cofimvaba, contradicts the stereotype, and shows the need to be careful when generalising. Not all young men in these villages were xenophiles, but *only* young men in these villages developed social relationships with the Somalis that went beyond business transactions; *only* these young men did not base their sympathy for the Somalis entirely on their business and charitable work.

The trend across all the villages in the study, even in villages where other immigrants were present, was that local young men would be found outside the *spaza*, or inside chatting with the spaza operator. The Somali *spaza* shops were somewhat of a social hub for the unemployed young men of the villages. Only these young men, amongst all the villagers, were able to easily differentiate between the different immigrant groups, or understood that the reasons the Somalis came to South Africa were only partly to do with the search for business opportunities. A young man from St Marks, who often spent time in Ntshingeni because he had relatives there, expressed empathy and admiration:

> … these ones here [in Ntshingeni - AM] they are open: we can just sit and talk; we are always there outside…you look at them with a different [eye], to say "Hey man, these people come from far…from wars and danger on the way, to this place … and here they are offering all these business from nothing."

Almost all of the Somalis interviewed agreed that the only relationships that they had with villagers, which they understood as "friendships," and which went beyond business transactions, and beyond the mutual respect for people that they believed was demanded by Islam, were with young men in the villages. This was not simply about interactions or even banter between *spaza* operator and customer during sales. The Somali *spaza* operator in Hoita said:

> With the young men, you can say you are not just doing a business, but you can also tell them about you as Somali. The life that you have here and back in Somali…not just about a business understanding, but about you as a person…they can understand why you are here, your struggles and your future.

The Somali *spaza* operator in Sabalele commented:

> They can be like our South African brother…they are here outside even if they are not buying, you can stay indoors and when you stretch your legs you can just share a word about you and listen to them about what the life story of your South African brother is…

The Somalis felt that these were people in the village that they could chat to about social matters or their personal lives. They were lonely, and found some company with the local young men. According to a young man in Ntshingeni:

> *Sisi*, we are here and these guys, *neh*, even if okay, at first we sit outside, they notice, maybe they think we are here for trouble, but know we just want to check out…

The same young man emphasised that the relationship was not about financial transactions:

> So we get to talking and they even take us to our soccer games now, with their own transport and even give us food. Sometimes we get shy, to say "No guys, take: here is a R100 for petrol." But they don't take it…

Isolated in the villages, and from the promise of the new South Africa, they could see something to admire in the other men. The young man from St Marks who often visited Ntshingeni said of the Somalis in Ntshingeni: "What can they teach us? Maybe we need to look to say they can offer us some guidance." The young man in Ntshingeni added that "sometimes, they even employ you around the yard, maybe to fetch water, and they don't pay you money, but they give you the airtime, you see."

Other factors facilitating the friendships may have been gender, as well as age. The only Somali *spaza* operator who did not have friendships with the local young men stated that it was because of age differences. He was the oldest of the *spaza* operators in the study, at 45 years old. On the other side, many older villagers saw the Somali *spaza* operators as "kids," with whom it would be inappropriate to build friendships.

A female pensioner in Hoita said: I like those people, but I can say, it would be funny if I just go and stay there all day like the boys from here. I can go and buy, and we laugh and talk when I am buying like we are friends, but we have to keep that distance of I am your elder.

Many other villagers echoed this response.

It is also important to note contrasts between the urban townships and the villages. In urban townships, xenophobia is perpetuated through the use of the language of rights (Hoeflich, 2011), with differentiation is based on the attainment and protection of resources on the basis of a politics of autochthony (Neocosmos, 2010). Protests against the government, especially around living conditions, are common, and often spill over into attacks on foreigners and on foreign-owned businesses, especially *spaza* shops (Gastrow and Amit, 2013). In the villages studied, however, there was little overt xenophobia (see section 3.3) and frustration with the state did not translate into protests. Young men were not mobilised politically, including around a politics of xenophobia. In this situation, friendship was possible in a way that it might not be in more polarised areas like, for example, Delft and Eindhoven in Cape Town,

Obviously, not all young men in the villages were friends with the Somalis. Both the Somalis and the local young men interviewed stated that crimes in the villages, including robbery and sometimes rape, were largely committed by young men. The worst crime against Somalis in the villages studied– when a Somali *spaza* operator was robbed at gun point in Sabalele, and then moved away – was undertaken by young men. The young male villagers interviewed felt that some fear was warranted, in that not all young men in the villages could be trusted. Despite the friendships, the Somalis' general sentiment was that if in the event that any harm befell them, the chances are that young male villagers would be responsible. The Somali *spaza* operator in St Marks, a new arrival, even stated:

> … they want to be a friend, but it is not easy to say I trust the people here because of the history, where all the Somalis have suffered danger in this country…I am new, so I still need to see, okay, the safety is the one that come first. It is better to be safe and a stranger, than to be a friend and you are not safe.

The Somalis also admitted that they were more sceptical of extending credit to the young men in the villages than anyone else, because they felt that if they did not pay, they would not be able to get them to do so.

4.6 Conclusion

The data confirms the views made by Neocosmos (2010) and Thompson (2012) who insist that economic deprivation cannot completely account for attacks on immigrants. The villages around Cofimvaba are amongst the poorest in South Africa, with some of the poorest South Africans: as Webster *et al* (2014) note, 14 of the 21 wards in the IYLM are in the poorest decile nationally. As poor black people, living in former homelands, with high rates of unemployment, they are distant from the new South Africa in important ways: they are, in a way, the almost foreign versions of South Africans. Rather than foster xenophobia, it seems that this deprivation causes foreign *spaza* operators to be welcomed, as they help address deprivation by selling diverse products at affordable costs. It does not necessarily lead to empathy with similarly marginal foreigners – outside of some young men, most villagers were quite ignorant about the Somalis experiences and aspirations – but it does enable common interests to come to the fore.

The HSRC (2008) and Neocosmos (2010) found that violence or genocide did not necessarily always follow xenophobic sentiments. This also seems true of the villages studied: only a minority (eight of 41 villagers) expressed (latent) xenophobia, but did not act on it. Attitudes on the sides of both the Somalis and the locals maintained insider / outsider relationships, but this did not translate into growing tension, and local young, unemployed men – in many ways the least likely group – were the one layer that built personal relations with the foreigners (Charman *et al*, 2012).

As this chapter has shown, local dynamics play a key role in explaining why xenophobia is rare in the villages around Cofimvaba. If those dynamics changed significantly, xenophobia could grow in importance. Evidence from the 2008 xenophobic attacks also indicates places with the most recent arrival of foreigners are less likely to experience violent xenophobia (HSRC, 2008). As time passed, and foreigners became seen as becoming more entrenched, resentments grew, and prospects for violence increased. It is possible that this might also be the case in the villages. The existing situation is a positive one, but it cannot be guaranteed permanently.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

As shown so far, local dynamics play a key role in explaining the relative lack of xenophobia in the villages around Cofimvaba. These dynamics are specific to these areas: not all villages in the Eastern Cape are safe, as it seems that *spaza* operators from Somalia, Ethiopia and Pakistan in the villages around Elliotdale, Kofi Bay, Mqanduli and Ngqeleni were living in fear, although they had not actually suffered violence (see Ntshobane, 2013). It is possible, for example, that there was more competition with local traders, or less care taken to demonstrate charity. Whatever the case may be (it falls outside this study), it illustrates the different treatment of immigrants in different parts of the country, and the importance of balancing sweeping claims with local case studies.

5.1 Discussion and Concluding Remarks

In closing, the parliamentary-democratic era in South Africa has prided itself on the realisation of rights and entitlements for all those who live in the country; however, as this study and many others cited in this thesis have shown that the full realisation of these rights exists only on paper. For black African foreigners and (many) nationals alike, there has not been a clear path for the ability to convert these rights and entitlements into lived experience. There is, instead, a hierarchy of rights and citizenship. This thesis has argued, for example, that villagers in the former homeland areas created to keep black people out of national citizenship, remain marginal in South Africa, by no means full citizens. Villages continue to be dependent on welfare like social income grants and experience more deprivation and poverty than the rest of the country; they also remain geographically far removed from other South Africans (Mapokgole, 2014; Ntsebeza, 2006; Southall, 1980).

Endemic inequality and poverty, combined with an exclusionary conception of South African citizenship, expressed in many cases in languages of nativism and indigeneity, fosters a situation where claims on rights are often linked closely to the exclusion – sometimes violent – of foreign “others.” This is the context in which widespread xenophobia festers in South Africa today, taking its violent form in urban townships. However, these economic and political conditions alone cannot adequately explain why xenophobia flares in some areas, not on others. Part of the explanation for variations lies in mediating institutions – like unions, which have generally helped reduce xenophobia. Local dynamics also play a key role: there is a range of attitudes and beliefs held by South Africans, and local social structures, and interactions between South Africans and immigrants vary considerably.

Somalis have been especially prominent in the *spaza* sector in South Africa, catering mainly for the black poor isolated by poverty and apartheid geography from the main business areas. At a political level, the Somali *spaza* operators, as black African foreign nationals in a South Africa that regulates people as foreign based on their race and nationality alike (Neocosmos, 2008; 2010 and Taffir, 2011), are a marginal but visible group. Culturally they have little in common With South Africans, besides Islam (which has a tiny presence in South Africa). Economically, Somali traders are a classic example of a middleman minority group that has filled a marginal business space, with great success. Unlike immigrant groups that have integrated more fully through entry, for example, into the professions, they have resolutely held into a distinct national and cultural identity, constructing themselves as sojourners away from a homeland, as migrants rather than as immigrants.

As in other contexts, this middleman minority has been persecuted for this success, seen as illicit and unfair (Charman et al, 2012; Liedeman, 2012; Sowell, 2005; Thomson, 2012). The political discourse of autochthony and indigeneity has been deployed against non-South Africans, to argue that people truly entitled to the resources of a nation state are those who are the natural born citizens of the state (Ceuppens and Gischiere, 2005; Gausset *et al*, 2011). In the *spaza* sector, this is expressed as the view that *spazas* should be reserved for South Africans – a view actively encouraged by South African traders under pressure from foreign rivals. This exclusion – often violent – has been justified as essential to preserve the rights and claims of South Africans.

Yet, violent exclusion of Somalis – common in bigger towns and cities – is widespread, it is almost unknown in the villages of former homeland areas. This thesis has argued – through a case study of eight villages in Cofimvaba in the old Transkei – that there are a number of reasons. Villagers are generally not politically mobilised, and do not make the same urgent rights-based claims on the state and its resources that more urban South Africans do. Protests are unknown, and local identity – ethnic as well as village – is important; many do not see themselves as part of the "real"

South Africa, with its cities and shopping malls. Xenophilia is the norm, and even those who expressed ambiguous or hostile attitudes to the Somalis did not act upon it. Deprivation and poverty in the Cofimvaba area has led to ongoing crime, but not to xenophobia. Criminality in the villages is often based on financial gain, and includes burglaries and armed robbery. However, it mainly affects the villagers.

Economically, there is little in the way of conflict over resources. Villagers in Cofimvaba need good *spazas* as they are the geographically removed from commercial centres, and are low-income earners, dependent on social welfare and wage remittances from migrant workers elsewhere. Somali traders have won over many with low prices, better stocking, and a wide range of services, including interest-free credit. The Somali *spaza* operators provided an effective and innovative service, but also some local employment and acts of charity and aid. By contrast, the state has failed to stimulate economic recovery or employment in these depressed areas. This helps explain why even the minority of locals who expressed negative attitudes to the Somalis recognised their benefits, and saw no point in driving them away.

Rather than drive locals out of business, the Somalis entered where local *spazas* were already failing, and for reasons that had nothing to do with the Somalis, including competition from bigger businesses in Cofimvaba, and poor business skills and practices. The Somalis have almost always simply rented premises and shops from failing local traders, ensuring a regular income from rent that compares favourably to that earned through their own business – but without the hours or work. None have argued that the Somalis destroyed their business or livelihoods. Somalis have no obvious conflict of interests with local traditional leaders of state officials. Rather than destroy local opportunities, the Somali *spaza* provided lower prices, rents and some wages.

They do not seek to own land, or challenge their status as marginal outsiders. Somalis are not actually allowed to acquire land in the villages as they are not indigenous Xhosa, but they view this as acceptable, arguing that the rent money paid to locals contributes to alleviating the poverty in the villages. Additionally, given their sojourning status, Somalis have no real use for ownership of land within the villages. Besides, locals are less likely to destroy the premises of another local or act in ways that will cost that local lost rent income. Where villagers have had conflicts with Somalis – mainly on the issue of cleanliness or manners – the Somalis have showed due deference to locals, and conflicts have been easily resolved.

Using the Islamic financial principle of consideration, Somalis have also insisted that they do not act purely from profit-seeking motives, and so, keep prices lower than their monopoly position could allow, and also offer charity e.g. giving free transport to the elderly, an act which also contributes to the safety levels of these villagers and free food for funerals. This creates a degree of complementarity and also helps generate continued safety. However, it would be a mistake to see acts of social responsibility as simply a way to secure safety, for the simple reason that they do not have a need to mitigate xenophobia as this is rare, and as they do not have long-term plans to live in the villages.

It should be stated here that the situation for the Somalis conducting business in the villages is not ideal, despite its safety. All middleman groups suffer short-term deprivation in order to hasten the long-term objective of returning to the homeland (Bonacich, 1973). But the Somalis in the villages, most of who have left the urban townships due to xenophobia, cannot easily raise funds to save for the future, or remit, or afford to return to the homeland. The villages are safe, but the markets are small, and the villagers penurious. There is little room to make adequate profits, so much so that Somalis agree not to operate more than one *spaza* per village. This creates great social isolation and deprives individuals of the comfort of group solidarity. Family is also absent, sent to Somali areas or enclaves elsewhere, in order to prevent assimilation into local ways. Spending much time in the ethnic enclave in Queenstown to access mosques, *madrasas* and other ethnic facilities is largely impossible because of the money and time involved.

Low incomes, and the isolation, also help remove conditions for xenophobia – the Somalis are not seen as a clique conspiring against locals, and their impoverished lifestyles make it difficult to present them as wealthy parasites on locals – but makes the short-term deprivation extremely harsh. Social relations with most villagers only involve business transactions, and marriages and courtship are extremely rare. To some extent, the Somalis help create this social distance; they are not just forced into it, by a hostile "host" society. They did not seek local citizenship or integration. Based on a shallow understanding of villager culture and social habits, Somalis see the ways of the villagers as inimical to their own. They would only consider marriage to a local, if she adopted Somali ways.

The only local group with whom the Somalis have relations beyond business, are the young men in the villages; it is only among these that they consider themselves to have friends. Elsewhere in

South Africa, young and poor black men have been central actors in xenophobic violence (e.g. Charman *et al*, 2012; Thompson, 2012), so this is quite remarkable. The Somali *spaza* has become somewhat of a social hub for young males. It is here that the two groups learn about each other in terms of their cultures, personal stories, and other general conversations. The social relationships between Somalis and young men are important, even if not enough to fill the social void experienced by the Somalis. Not all young men are friends with the Somalis, but all the Somalis' local friends are young men.

It must, finally, be said that there is potential for xenophobia in the villages. As noted earlier, local identity is very important, and is linked to conformity. Some villagers interviewed worried about reprisals if their views were not the same as those of the rest of the village. Others stated that they simply followed popular opinion, and if popular opinion turned against foreigners, they would follow it too. This demonstrates the importance of popular views and community pressures.

The popular discourse at the moment is that the Somali *spaza* is beneficial in the villages. A challenge to this discourse could arise, should there be a suitable alternative to the Somali *spaza*, whether from local *spazas*, the government (through better service provision) or elsewhere. The villagers who expressed ambiguous positions and forms of latent xenophobia, especially, had the greatest potential to be spurred into xenophobic action, but others would follow as well. A significant consideration in the villages would be whether chiefs, headmen and local business owners start inciting violence against Somalis.

For the villagers, the Somali *spaza* is an actual substitute for effective service provision by the governing structures where consumption is concerned. During the apartheid era, the *spaza* was a mediated form of black consumption and in this case, the very nature of the *spaza* has always ascetically highlighted the tensions between citizenship and consumption (Bear, 2005). The Somalis have bridged a spatial, economic and inadvertently, the citizenship gap that disables some citizens such as villages from being able to purchase necessities like food at affordable prices where they stay. The villagers have welcomed and tolerated the Somalis based on this and there exists no xenophobic violence against Somalis in the villages. The Somalis welcome the safety, but continue to be active sojourners as safety is not an adequate substitute for the geographical and economic distance of the villages from places with a strong Somali ethnic network and from making limited profits. If the situation changed, the village-based Somalis would be very vulnerable.

5.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The scope of the thesis is limited, and its focus on local case studies limits the extent to which its findings can be generalised. It is not a general overview of the relationship between Somali *spaza* operators and villagers in former homelands across South Africa; it is not even a fully representative study of the relationship in all the villages around Cofimvaba.

However, by narrowing the subject to a few villages around Cofimvaba, it was able to examine the subject more deeply, develop an in-depth understanding of the relationship between foreign *spaza* operators and villagers, and get a deeper insight into local attitudes and dynamics. I have also set up a dialogue between the case material and the literature, and comparisons with the situation in other areas, as a way to contribute to theory and the larger patterns in South Africa

There are many areas in which future research could be developed. The basic research design could be applied to different areas, both in the former Transkei and other former homelands. Other ethnic groups could be examined, as well as areas of immigrant business besides *spazas*. The study could also be expanded to examine changes over time. Although the Somalis see themselves as sojourners, this is surely not a guaranteed reality. It would be interesting to research what changes may take place in the relationship between the Somali *spaza* operators and villagers, the longer the Somali *spaza* operators remain in the villages, and as prospects for a return to the homeland fade. Would the social distance between the two groups persist? Would levels of xenophobic sentiment change?

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview for the Somali *Spaza* Operators

Dear Sir/Madam, my name is Avuyile Maselwa. I am a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. I am doing research on the relationship between Somali spaza operators and the villagers around Cofimvaba. I am conducting this survey as part of my Master's dissertation. The purpose of this study is purely an academic one and I will appreciate your honest and sincere responses to the questions below. All information will be treated with the strictest level of confidentiality. No names of persons and or business will be mentioned in our report.

1. Age?
2. Language spoken?
3. Which part of Somalia are you from?
4. What clan are you part of?
5. What is your highest level of education?
6. Occupation prior to arrival in South Africa?
7. Occupation prior to arrival in the villages around Cofimvaba?
8. How long have you been in the villages around Cofimvaba?
9. When did you leave Somalia?
10. Did you receive any assistance along your journey to South Africa?
11. Do you have any legal documentation, if yes what kind?
12. Did you know other Somalis prior to arriving in South Africa and the villages?
13. Where else in South Africa have you lived and for how long?
14. Why did you leave this area?
15. Do you own the *spaza* you operate, if not who owns it (how many people)?
16. Who owns the building you are operating the *spaza* from?
17. How did you get involved in the *spaza* business?
18. How long have you been operating this *spaza*?
19. Have you operated a *spaza* elsewhere in the country, if yes what is the difference in your experience between the areas?
20. Were you the first *spaza* operator to operate from this building, if not what is the nationality of the previous operators?
21. How was this building acquired?

22. How do you buy stock for the business?
23. How much profit do you make?
24. What do you do with the profit made?
25. Do you extend credit to the villagers and how is it paid back?
26. How are you connected to other Somalis in the villages around Cofimvaba?
27. How are you connected to the Somalis in Queenstown?
28. What kind of relationship do you havewith the villagers around Cofimvaba?
29. What is your level of interaction with the villagers around Cofimvaba?
30. Do you feel welcome in the villages around Cofimvaba?
31. Have you experienced any violence in the villages?
32. Do you feel safe in the villages and if not what measures do you take to ensure your safety?
33. Do you plan to stay in the villages around Cofimvaba permanently?
34. Do you plan to stay in South Africa permanently?

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview for the South African *Spaza* Operators

Dear Sir/Madam, my name is Avuyile Maselwa. I am a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. I am doing research on the relationship between Somali spaza operators and the villagers around Cofimvaba. I am conducting this survey as part of my Master's dissertation. The purpose of this study is purely an academic one and I will appreciate your honest and sincere responses to the questions below. All information will be treated with the strictest level of confidentiality. No names of persons and or business will be mentioned in our report.

1. Age?
2. Language spoken?
3. What clan are you part of?
4. What is your highest level of education?
5. Do you have another occupation apart from being a spaza operator?
6. Where are you from and how long have you been operating a spaza in the villages around Cofimvaba?
7. Do you own the *spaza* you operate, if not who owns it (how many people)?
8. Who owns the building you are operating the spaza from?
9. Were you the first *spaza* operator to operate from this building, if not what is the nationality of the previous operators?
10. How was this building acquired?
11. How do you buy stock for the business?
12. How much profit do you make?
13. What do you do with the profit made?
14. Do you extend credit to the villagers and how is it paid back?
15. What kind of relationship do you have with the villagers around Cofimvaba?
16. What is your level of interaction with the villagers?
17. Have you experienced any violence in the villages?
18. Do you feel safe in the villages and if not what measures do you take to ensure your safety?

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview for the Villagers

Dear Sir/Madam, my name is Avuyile Maselwa. I am a student at Rhodes University in Grahamstown. I am doing research on the relationship between Somali spaza operators and the villagers around Cofimvaba. I am conducting this survey as part of my Master's dissertation. The purpose of this study is purely an academic one and I will appreciate your honest and sincere responses to the questions below. All information will be treated with the strictest level of confidentiality. No names of persons and or business will be mentioned in our report.

1. Age?
2. Language?
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. Are you employed, if yes what is your occupation?
5. Which village are you from?
6. How do you identify Somali *spaza* operators in the villages?
7. Do you know which country of origin other foreign nationals (that are not Somali) in the village are from?
8. How often do you shop at your local *spaza*?
9. What do you purchase at the *spaza*?
10. How much money do you spend at the Somali *spaza* on a monthly basis?
11. Are there any local owned *spazas*?
12. What is the difference between locally-owned (even those that closed) and Somali owned *spazas*?
13. How often do you go to Cofimvaba to do your shopping?
14. What is your view on the relationship you have with Somali *spaza* operators?
15. What is your level of interaction with the Somali *spaza* operators?
16. Are you happy with the presence of Somali *spaza* operators in the villages?
17. Are the Somali *spaza* operators welcome in the villages around Cofimvaba?