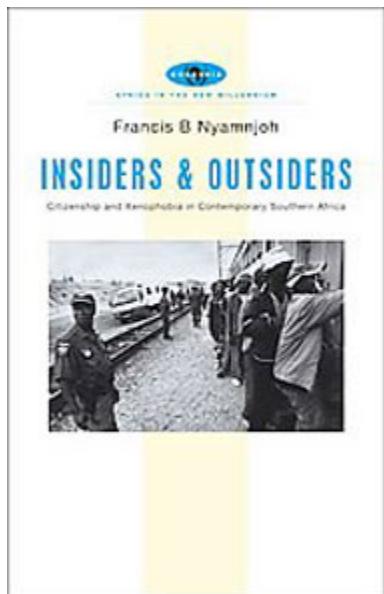


A Review Essay on Francis B. Nyamnjoh's *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2006, pp.288) by Munyaradzi Mawere (Associate Professor, Universidade Pedagogica Gaza, Mozambique) and Artwell Nhemachena (PhD Candidate, University of Cape Town, South Africa).



Living in a world that is simultaneously closed and open always poses challenges for humanity. This is because such a world privileges some while constraining others in different ways. Such a world is selective, segregationist, or discriminatory as it handicaps some while others sometimes exercise their agency with irresponsible freedom. This review examines Francis B. Nyamnjoh's *Insiders and Outsiders* in relationship to Zimbabwe by giving highlights on Zimbabwe around the time Nyamnjoh (chair of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, South Africa) wrote his book. Nyamnjoh has taught sociology, anthropology and communication studies at universities in Cameroon, Botswana and South Africa, and has researched and written extensively on Cameroon and Botswana, where he was awarded the "Senior Arts Researcher of the Year" prize for 2003. In March 2013 he was named African Hero of the Year by the African Student Union at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio.

Introduction

Humanity is arguably struggling to live in a world that is simultaneously closed and open, contained and containing. In a sense it is a world, if open has very small apertures through which only a small fraction of humanity can pass through and be free to move. It is a world that is containing for those whose freedom of mobility is absent or virtually nonexistent and it is a contained world for those whose freedom of mobility is extant and can be actualized, if at the instant of their imaginations. The rest of humanity may have to do with, if accessible, virtual mobility, moving to other worlds only through the media: watching other parts of the world on television, on the internet, in press pictures or having to listen to the stories of those who are free to move about to places that have been or are subjects of their sojourns. It is a world that has in place hurdles often put in place by humanity for humanity so that some are free while others are handicapped or made to carry burdens larger than their heads with which they cannot pass through the narrow apertures of the world's containers. In a sense the mobile become or are deemed by sections of humanity to be the lifeblood of the world whose free circulation the world cannot afford to do without, the rest have to be static even when where they are sitting is hot or even as the proverbial hut in which they are staying is burning.

These sentiments appear to be at least implied in “*Insiders and Outsiders*”, and brought out more forthrightly in his “*Intimate Strangers*”(2010) – both of which portray issues of citizenship, migration and xenophobia in southern African countries namely Botswana and South Africa at the time of the Zimbabwean crises which saw many Zimbabweans migrating or seeking to migrate to neighboring countries, if for relief at a time when the country was haunted by massive unemployment, hyperinflation, food shortages and political violence. Thus, Nyamnjoh shows how borders were enforced and policed with respect to Zimbabwean immigrants in southern Africa, and how Zimbabwean immigrants creatively navigated the border restrictions as well as how once inside the host countries, they are met with xenophobic violence.

Discussion

This review paper sifts out insights from Nyamnjoh’s book which might shed light on how borders, migration and movement are in fact politics and arguably politics that is often authoritarian to immigrants seeking to traverse the borders. In this vein, it is argued that a phenomenological perspective to movement and migration might not be adequate to understand the politics of borders and movement, and thus borrows insights on the phenomenology of movement from Ingold (2007, 1993, 2008 and 2011). The underlying assumptions in Ingold’s work are that everything is in processes of becoming, changing, and those beings inhabit an open world which has no inside or outside and are only comings and goings. For Ingold the open world is a world of formative and transformative processes and so he argues that we must shift our attention from the congealed substances of the world and the solid surfaces they represent to the media in which they take shape and how they may also be dissolved (Ingold 2007). Hence, the world in formation has open-endedness, having neither points of destination nor points of origin (Ingold and Vergunst 2008). The open and continuous world is understood through movement, walking and immersion, rather than in discontinuities, which engenders relational identities rather than attribution focused identities (Ingold 1993). Ingold’s work arguably sidesteps politics between human beings in an open-ended world. Contrary to Ingold’s open-ended world, Nyamnjoh’s *Insiders and Outsiders* focuses on borders and the politics of movement which show that the world is far from open ended, formative or transformative as there are enduring border structures which inhibit movement and create and or sustain xenophobic tendencies even for migrants from neighboring countries like Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa that are assumed to have relations (McGregor 2010).

In *Insiders and Outsiders*, Nyamnjoh articulates some rather unsettling constraints and treatments of migrants in Botswana, South Africa and even in other world centers of opportunity or other places where there are opportunities. Zimbabwean immigrants are treated as *Makwerekwere* or stutterers who cannot speak the local languages, as infested with and communicating diseases in the host countries and as snatching away wives or husbands as well as jobs from local citizens of the host countries.

And even if the immigrants are hard working or more hardworking than the citizens of the host countries they still attract the ire of not only the citizens of the host countries but even the iron hands of the host governments that seek to and actually deport countless numbers of the immigrants. And to make matters worse, all this was done with the knowledge that wherever the immigrants are being deported to, the political, social, cultural and economic situation was too bad for life to be worthy living or even conceivable. Arguably Zimbabwe's multiple crises were not unknown in any corner of the world as the global media served to beam and disseminate news on Zimbabwe, arguably with more frequency and graphic examination than before the crises. And as a result, civil society organisations conducted demonstration at places where world leaders were gathered, or where civil society organisations sent emissaries to conferences, and thus, the media disseminated pictures/photographs of Zimbabweans who were assaulted and tortured; some Zimbabweans even went as far as to expose their tortured buttocks to the media arguably in the hope that other countries of the world and the civil society including the media would intervene or offer help of some sort as statistics moved from Zimbabwe to all parts of the world bearing the horrendousness of the crises, and the violence under which Zimbabwean citizens lived or struggled to live, day and night.

However, in spite of all the knowledge availed, the world as shown in Nyamnjoh's book did not open the flood gates, at least not sufficiently enough to bring as many sighs of relief by the then suffering Zimbabweans. The many cries of pain and agony did not necessarily meet with summons to relief by the world which kept its doors closed and its border police patrolling as Nyamnjoh say, to "Keep the barbarians at the gate". Nyamnjoh's rendering implies that while the emphasis appears to have been on Zimbabwe's failed character as a state, the failures were much broader than Zimbabwe. Arguably the borders failed the suffering and help seeking Zimbabweans too in that they enclosed and contained rather than permitted open and very open passages or gates for mobile Zimbabweans. And so, if the failure was with borders every state with borders and with policed borders was a failure because it facilitated and fostered authoritarianism by not isolating the authoritarians in Zimbabwe or by opening border gates and letting the "authoritarian" remain alone and dictate to emptiness. In a sense therefore Nyamnjoh's rendition diffuses dictatorships from centers to borders: dictatorships take place as much at the borders where "barbarians are kept outside" never mind their tearful pleadings that they are running away from a hut that is on fire and seeking relief while the fire is being extinguished. Thus, global democracy and human rights failed at the borders as it include and exclude people harassed in the service of an electoral democracy. And at borders, the logic was to beckon the pleaders for relief as their proverbial huts were burning to go back and stay in their burning situation until solutions to the Zimbabwean crises was found and disappeared. In his explication of border jumping and the agency of the Zimbabwean maids, Nyamnjoh shows how the struggles played out with border authorities and their relentless efforts to discipline and punish the "recklessly" mobile bodies of Zimbabweans, endangered by a dictatorship within.

Indeed, as hinted above, there was more movement and flows of statistics and representations about violence and economic meltdown in Zimbabwe than there were movements of the victims of violence. The statistics and representations arguably flowed to the corners of the world (see for instance see *Afrik-News* 1 August 2008, Amnesty International 16 May 2008) in ways that indicated the presence of a world interested more directly in statistic and representations than in victimised people – a world that preaches rhetoric democracy. The kind of global democracy and flows that were emphasised was those of statistics, representations and images. Obviously the statistics, photographs and other representations did not need passports (even as they are also meticulously controlled and vetted at the epistemic borders in myriad other ways depending on the localities that make them possible), visa or permits to enter other territories and it is this representations that circulated more than the afflicted persons. Only human beings were repatriated or deported, considered to be refugees or displaced persons while the statistics, ideas, representations images were not deported or classified as displaced even if they portrayed violence in a different setting in Zimbabwe. And ironically, in many ways, generating and disseminating statistics, images and representations have become an industry and way of life for many outside the burning huts of Zimbabwe as they are able to earn a living by putting profit over the suffering of Zimbabweans who make possible their businesses, jobs and activities.

Arguably the information society in the global society needed information more than it needed the imperiled and “static”/immobilized people who provided the information. Thus, the salient issue in Nyamnjohs’ book is that borders exclude and include and that one has no freedom to walk, move and travel as one might want, and in a sense, the book is a challenge to phenomenological literature on movement which presumes that people can move to underplay the politics of transcendental structures that bound, constrain and place hurdles and barriers to movement. And also, what is implied in the is that world humanity are not merely a world of immanence; rather it is also a world of transcendence where to ignore the transcendental structures would be to ignore the politics attendant to movement and thus work to falsely assume equality between subjects and persons, falsely assumed to be equally mobile.

Nevertheless, for Francis Nyamnjoh there is greater freedom of movement for capital, skilled immigrants, white immigrants, and for immigrants with the wherewithal to secure passports, permits and visas. In Zimbabwe a travel document TTD cost US\$38, a standard passport cost US\$140, a passport granted in two days cost US\$250 and a passport granted in a day cost US\$315 (see *The Herald* 10 July 2010) and these inhibitive fees made it impossible for the majority of the poor to acquire the proper travel documents. And notwithstanding, in Zimbabwe, the government had no money to process passports or temporary travel documents as the South African government rejected the cheaper and easier to acquire Zimbabwean Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs), arguing that they could easily be forged (see *The Herald* 15 September 2010, *The Herald* 10 July 2010). And even when immigrants were granted permits, visas and passports, they still suffered because the documents would expire and therefore the structures and politics surrounding them became a legal quagmire.

And while some migrants succeeded in staying without the risk of immediate deportation, they had to bear the structural labels of refugees (such as *makwerekwere* in South Africa and *zvingondo* in Mozambique) or displaced persons, and even some immigrants who did not fit the labels were deported. And although some other Zimbabweans could not acquire travel documents by reason of poverty, others (black and white) who had some origins in other countries, thus dual citizenship discovered that quest for relief was slowed when the government legislated against dual citizenship. But most interesting, the capital that took flight from Zimbabwe did not face the risk of deportation or repatriation; instead it was welcome abroad even as many companies left employees stranded in the process. And also, even the leader of the opposition party MDC-T (Morgan Tsvangirai) left his supporters and members stranded in violence when he moved from Zimbabwe to South Africa and subsequently in Botswana as he argued that the situation in Zimbabwe was too dangerous for him to stay there (*New York Times* 21 April 2008) as members of his party were losing their lives and properties due to political violence, hunger and the cholera epidemic. Yet, he could afford to move because he had the money to secure the travel documents, and the goodwill of other countries allowed his entry.

The importance of Nyamnjoh's book is further evident in that some persons are more citizens of the global village than others, although the noncitizens of the global village that stand to bear more burdens than exercising the privilege of sustaining the global village in the example that migrant laborers work and make the economy of South Africa and Botswana better, however the government sought to subsequently repatriated immigrants

The observation by Nyamnjoh that in South Africa, some of the media played a role or was used in fanning xenophobic tendencies and inclinations speaks to the shortcomings of some sections of civil society or to the uncivility of civil society. It arguably speaks to civil society which retains predominance in globetrotting, together with global capital, while they keep everyone else under the yokes of inertia and stasis, and some civil society organisations such as media houses also fanned xenophobia, civil society as they emphasised the freedom of journalists to move into Zimbabwe, and operate which included pirate radio stations and statistics generating machines. There was also an outcry when the *Daily News* and the *Tribune* (which subsequently migrated to operate from South Africa) were deregistered and disallowed by the government to operate in Zimbabwe (Thondhlana 2011). In a sense, therefore, the global civil society appears to want the freedom of movement on missions to civilise the "static" and "inert" subjects without letting or facilitating the migration and immersion of those subjects in the civilised world. In fact one might wonder why civil society organisations seek to civilise stationary subjects (contained in borders) rather than let or facilitate that the subjects, if in their numbers, move to the presumed centers of civilisation where there are bigger "global cakes" for the "global village".

Even churches in and outside Zimbabwe while preaching and praying (McGregor 2010, *The Herald* 16 December 2010) about the need to toil for the way to the all inclusive heaven (presumably underlining the need to be mobile even upon death) could not assist, perhaps in the same sense Moses did to the Israelites, the Zimbabweans wanting to migrate to other countries to get the documents and the gates will be opened. It was more of in situ prayers for a way to heaven even as some citizens demonstrated that they wanted not only to go to heaven but to also seek relief via migration to other countries. Arguably, churches could have sought to remove encumbrances to movement between parts of the world so that the world could be all inclusive.

Also implied in Nyamnjoh's book is that Zimbabweans were being told in different ways by different people and organisations to be resilient and to bear their own sorrows. Countries and governments from around the world were telling some Zimbabweans to go back home (by way of deportations) and be resilient. Employers in host countries who underpaid particularly Zimbabweans, including maids without travel documents and visas or permit, were effectively telling them to be resilient in their suffering. In this sense, too Zimbabwean maids found some quarters within the households in which they worked out for their boyfriends, children and spouses (Nyamnjoh 2005) or madams were protective of their husbands and they erected borders between the maids and the madam's husbands (granted that some of the madam's husbands may have sought to ignore the maids' own boundaries around their own bodies as they sought to exploit the maids in more intimate ways). The confinement of Zimbabwean women maids to borders of the households while their masters (in host countries) enjoyed the freedom to move within and outside the countries speaks to the inequalities in a global village as reflected in a violence of no freedom. In a similar sense ZANU PF militia were noted as confining villagers to their villages requiring them to produce letters from their ZANU PF inclined headmen. The ZANU PF government also played the "*Rambai makashinga/Be resilient*" jingles on national television and radio stations (see *The Zimbabwe Situation*, 6 November 2010) encouraging Zimbabweans to be resilient even as they suffered deprivation, assault and torture.

Francis Nyamnjoh's book is inspiring in so far as it looks at border politics and structures rather than merely on migration as if movement has no politics. It is inspiring too in the sense that it looks at insiders and outsiders the same way national boundaries and borders speak to human anatomy outside and inside. In this respect, the accusations that immigrants were carriers of and spreading diseases is best understood through the body metaphor transposed to the body politic or body national. The sciences that deal with bodies would arguably have prescribed treatment, operations and removal of the contaminating or despoiling foreign bodies that made the body ill. Similarly, the bodies politic prescribed deportation and repatriation as forms of exorcism of foreign bodies invading the body politic or bodies national. The metaphor of invasions was also used in Zimbabwe to refer to "farm invaders," that is, people who settled on white commercial farms and prescriptions were made to evict them, to exorcise them.

Arguably then Zimbabweans and other immigrants to Botswana and South Africa attracted the same label, if implicitly, of invaders (often illegal and not possessing travel documents) taking away jobs belonging to locals, or appropriating land without the capacity to make it productive, as if productivity in a narrow commercialist sense is the only legitimate criterion for acquiring land. In a similar sense alien species are often exterminated and therefore the label alien was also used as Nyamnjoh notes in legislations by the host countries which used to deport foreigners. But the question is how to make the world more radically inclusive without sacrificing the other. In a sense, implied in Nyamnjoh's *Insiders and Outsiders* is that there is need to rethink the containers or enclosures that visit moments of inclusion and exclusion for some and others. Nyamnjoh notes that behind inclusion and exclusion lurks capital which sadly is not regarded or perhaps not conceivable as a citizen of any nation, but rather much more globetrotting and footloose than the majority of the citizens of the world who remain locked in some sort of Bantustan writ large called nations with surveillance sanctified national borders. Nyamnjoh's *Insiders and Outsiders* is, thus, an invitation for students of human mobility not to take that mobility or the borders it generates and enshrines for granted. Politics is to understanding insider and outsider-ness anywhere and everywhere. Nyamnjoh ably shows how the world is bounded via borders, necessitating insiderness and outsiderness, but he also shows how through agency and migrants navigate their often tremendous cost to life, border restrictions and border policing.

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