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The claim for urban space and the problem of exclusion: the perception of outsiders' rights by communities affected by xenophobic violence in contemporary South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This research is located in the broader body of literature and activity that have sought to comprehend the xenophobic violence of 2008 in South Africa and the persistence of this phenomenon, especially in poor locales of the main urban areas. The primary objective is to explore the perceptions that South Africans have of the rights of those people designated as outsiders and/or foreigners who live in areas that have experienced xenophobic violence targeting foreigners as well as people of South African minority ethnic groups. This study attempts to unpack the discourse of insider versus outsider rights within South African communities in relation to South Africa's recent history - the xenophobic violence of 2008. Notably, it examines the challenge brought about by the crushing of space and time as an effect of globalization and how this has contributed to the process of multi-culturalism and multi-ethnicity that local communities are largely unprepared to cope with. This study contributes to the understanding of "otherness" as a key issue to design and implement better policies and practices that are necessary to promote the social and spatial inclusion of international migrants in Africa and the world. The empirics of this study give credence to the view that migrants' rights operate at the rhetorical level, largely due to the lack of political will to translate them into actual benefits. The study specifically looks at two communities affected by xenophobic violence - Tembisa and Alexandra. Focusing on South Africans, the study draws on information gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews and group discussions carried out from July through October 2011. The findings are examined through thematic content analysis.

Key Words: Urban Space, Exclusion, Perception, Rights, Xenophobia, Violence, Belonging, Entitlement, Insider, Outsider, Inclusion, South Africa.