



# Cash, Corn & Coffins:

## Migration, Self-Alienation and Social Status in Southern Africa

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**Myron Weiner Series on International Migration**

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

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# The end of remittance euphoria?

- Mid-2000's awareness of remittance
- Euphoria about migration and privatised development
- Securitization of remittance flows and migration
- Growing pool of research on links between migration, remittances and socio-economic outcomes
- Need to explain 'irrational' outcomes



# Socialities of translocal protection

- Social protection often seen as a state or institutional function
- Focus on mobility and social protection within the South
- Decenters formal 'immigration policy', surfaces sociality and informality
- Remittance scripts and the moral economy of social protection
- Not about countering inequality, but about negotiating socio-economic and political precarity
- Security and protection less material than social and existential





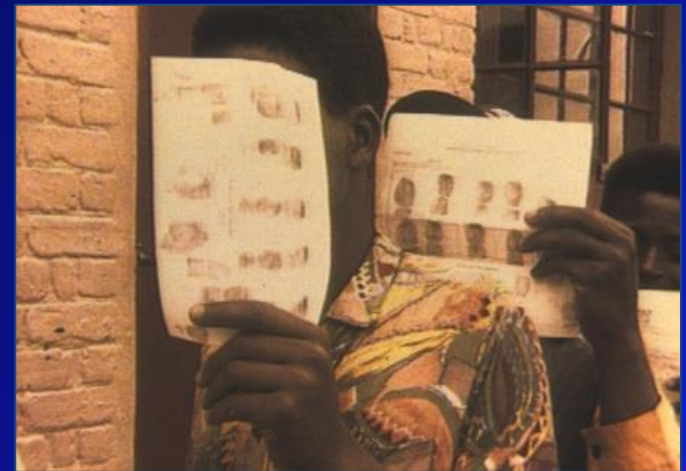
# Three ways to safety

1. Self-deprivation & Social death
2. Tactical cosmopolitanism
3. '*Zita rakanaka*:' Social spending and the 'god tax'



# Data, Approach & Qualifications

- A pastiche of projects
- Survey work on mobility and the remaking of urban lives
- Qualitative research on urban subjectivities and sociality
- Qualitative research in 3 Zimbabwean 'sending communities: Chivi, Hurungwe, Gwanda – followed by new survey work
- Effectively co-authored:
  - Peter Kankonde
  - Iriann Freemantle
  - Vupenyu Dzingirai
  - Patience Mutopo





Da



Hurungwe

Chivi

Gwanda

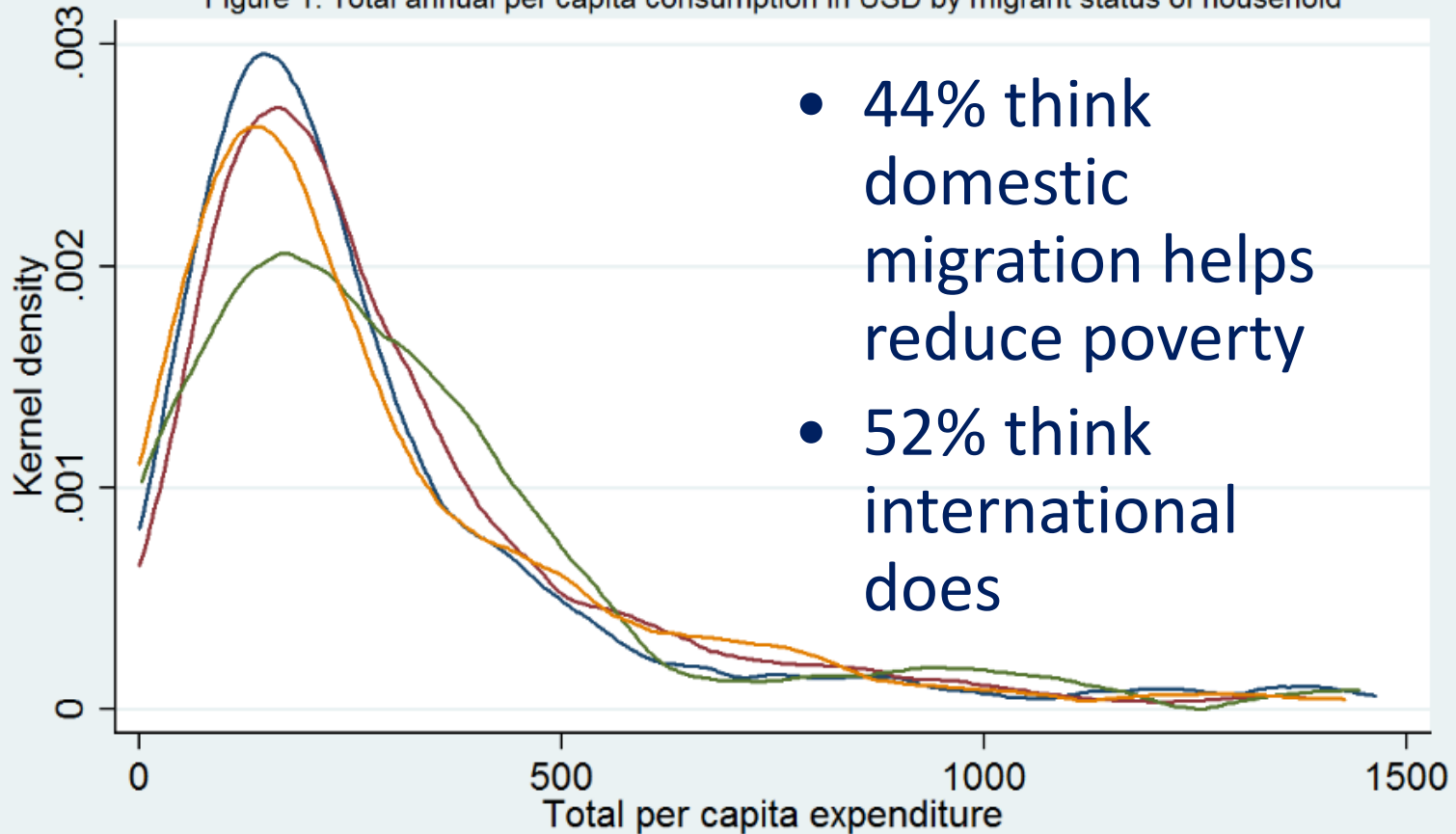
Zimbabwe

Botswana

South Africa

# Remittance patterns in comparison

Figure 1: Total annual per capita consumption in USD by migrant status of household



- 44% think domestic migration helps reduce poverty
- 52% think international does



# Self Deprivation & Social Death

*“Here I hide from the South African government; I hide from my government at home; I even hide from my family and the Congolese community here.”*

Congolese woman, Johannesburg

- Narratives of remittance measured success drives self-deprivation
- Persistent demands for local and trans-local protection tax resources; heighten vulnerability
- Unmet expectations by choice or necessity result in ‘social death’
- Not ‘hunkering down,’ but fragmentation and isolation
- Potentially liberating, but risks heightened precarity



*Take Me Away From the City*  
Senzo Shabanugu



# Tactical cosmopolitanism:

- Response to fluidity, hostility, pressure to avoid local capture
- Denies desirability of place-based membership; denigrates purported 'hosts'
- Pastiche of translocal rhetorical forms and practices leaves migrants 'floating' – often corrodes kinship
- Only significant membership is in religious bodies
  - Religion is fragmented, conflictual
  - Fosters translocalism and deterritorialized allegiances, 'tactical cosmopolitanism'
- Significant moneys sent home and elsewhere (and received)

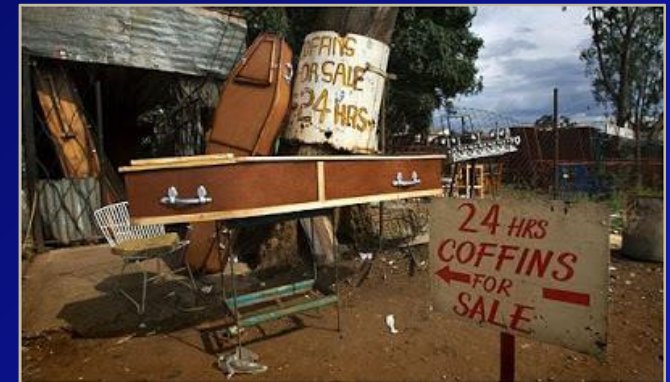
***“God owns everywhere, so even if you break the law here, he will forgive you.”***

- Stella, Ugandan migrant, Johannesburg



# Zita Rakanaka: Status and the 'God Tax'

- Moneys and resources spent on flashy consumption, construction, ritual and religion
- 'Irrationality' a response to material incentives & social scripts
- For some it reinforce power, status and inequality
- Amidst mass precarity, social and god taxes helps ensure physical, economic and social security



*“if you do not have a network of supporters, your misery is worse, and you may commit suicide. I will give my goods to my neighbors because I need a future without trouble”*

– Batamoto-Hurungwe

# Reflections on the sociality of protection

- In environment of illegality and state fragility, protection follows socially mandated imperatives
- Remittance scripts are powerfully generative
- Reinforce status, strengthen the social, and promote abjection and alienation
- Understanding translocal social protection demands a understanding of multi-sited social fields and subjectivities



*Obsession, Senzo Shabanugu*





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