

The Potential of the Useless Money: The Non-Disappearance of Hyperinflating Currency in Zimbabwe

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This paper examines popular economic practices under hyperinflationary situation in Zimbabwe. It especially focuses on how local people continued to use the hyperinflating domestic currency, the Zimbabwean dollar (ZD). Due to the rampant inflation, the ZD would erode its value so rapidly yet it remained in circulation for quite a long period. Moreover, sometimes people seemed to accept the inflating currency so naturally, as if it had no problems. There is an unexplored problem in economics that is called “the non-disappearance of hyperinflating currencies”: Under hyperinflation, (1) “when inflation reaches extremely high values, the economy naturally adopts substitutes to the depreciating currency”. (2) However, “the inflating currency does not completely disappear” (Giovannini and Turtelboom 1994). In this paper, I deal with this question from an anthropological perspective, by looking into people’s narratives and practices to seek the significance of the seemingly irrational or static phenomenon.

From 2007 to 2009, Zimbabwe experienced an astronomical hyperinflation. In July 2008, the monthly official inflation rate reached 2,600%, while the annual rate reached 231 million%, implying that prices would be doubling every seven days (cf. Hanke and Krus 2012). In addition to the rampant inflation, the domestic currency cash was in chronic short supply nationwide. As a result, foreign currency, such as US dollar or South African Rand, gradually got in circulation and was openly used as means of payment regardless of its illegality.

In the capital city Harare, it is true in general that many people would exchange the Zimbabwean dollar into foreign currency to avoid the erosion by inflation. However, looking closer at the actual situation, it cannot be concluded so simply. It was never inevitable for people to abandon using the ZD.

Through the case studies on how the ZD was used and the problems in using the foreign currency, this paper presents some key points summarized as (1) People could overcome the problem of erosion by using the ZD not as general-purpose money (modern money) but special-purpose money. (2) People could conduct transactions in ZD without any concern for the risk of erosion. (3) People faced some difficulties in using the foreign currency especially for daily use, due to the issue of sphere of exchange as well as the unavailability of smaller denominations necessary for change.

Hyperinflation has often been understood as collapse of the economy. This idea comes from the assumption that the “modern economy”, which consists of the integrated market, competition principle, and all-purpose money, is universal. It is true that the cases in this paper show the sharp decline of the modern economy in Zimbabwe, however, it does not mean the simple transition into either a pre-modern self-sufficient economy or “*Kiya-kiya* economy” (Jones 2010) in the sense of a survival economy where people were forced to reduce their living and moral standard to a low level. What the case studies suggest is that there is a kind of “popular economy” (Guyer 2004) that worked so actively under the hyperinflation in Zimbabwe, by allowing the co-existence of various economic spheres, different disciplines, and multiple monies.

Session 4: Everyday Wisdom 4-2

The 'African Hair' Salon: Hair Care, Rites of Passage, Intimacy and the Beginnings of Politics.

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Beyond the harsh red and white Ghana-must-go bags. Filled to capacity with kinky extensions and individually packed hair pieces. The pungent smell of newly opened relaxer cream. Afropiks. Teeth varying in size strewn all over the counter.

Beyond chipped ceramic sinks; clogged with tough curly hair. Complicated hairstyles; rigid and taut. Women, distilling the air in the back of their throats into deep guttural sounds. Familiar but still without an adjective. Young girls cowering under the weight of the mountain top of hair and extensions meticulously woven onto their heads. Beyond the grainy photos of disembodied scalps, pulled and pushed into submission, there lies, as I will argue, a site of transformative potential, perhaps even the beginnings of an emancipatory politik.

As customers negotiate the size and the colour of their kinky hair extensions with their hairdressers, brief moments of intimacy and recognition play out. Men and women exchange names. Details about who they are; where they live, who their dependants are and how often they in search of, or, are at work.

Faced with the instability of time and place, these moments –brief, intimate and irretrievable once gone – can and *should* be understood as political. These moments can be understood as sites of resistance set in a room of hair; twisting and uncoiling. As citizens and foreign nationals produce these sites of liminality, I would argue that they experience what James Tuedio argues is a space in which there “is an uncanny exile, for we still intuit a sense of home: the cultures of domination, the schemes of normalization, exclusion, disruption, resistance, translation, excess” (1989:1).

This paper is a chapter from my Political Science, Master of Arts Dissertation titled ‘Why are The Hair Salons Not Burning? African Migrant Women and Xenophobic Violence in Ladysmith, South Africa.’ In this discussion, I will be referring quite closely to an article entitled *Accessing Imagined Communities and Reinscribing Regimes of Truth* co-authored by Sherrie Carroll, Suhanthie Motha and Jeremy Price. Carroll et al (2008) explore the complex and “nebulous terrain between two theoretical concepts, imagined communities” by Bonny Norton (2000, 2001) and Benedict Anderson initially, which are the ways in which individuals manage their “imagined affiliations with certain groups and regimes of truth as suggested by Michel Foucault (1980)” and the ways in which dominant images are inscribed and “re-inscribed into individual consciousness until they become normative”(2008:1). They are effectively thinking through the ways in which social structures and contexts can behave simultaneously as tyrannising regimes of truth and as liberating imagined communities.

My analysis on ‘Imagined Communities’ will be two-fold:

- a) How the hair salon as the physical manifestation of place can signify an imagined community in which both South African and foreign national women can occupy space and create interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships with one another as a means of affective nurturing.
- b) Think about the ways in which the Zambian salon owners and hair stylists that have been interviewed for this dissertation, although dislocated physically from their homeland while in South Africa, create various manifestations of Zambian community within their hair salons by employing predominantly Zambian hairstylists and staff. Further to that, I’d like to think through the ways in which these women perform national pride in the face of pervasive xenophobic threat and violence.

**Divided Land, Shared Land:
Recent Land Issues among the San Hunter-Gatherers in Central Kalahari**

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Land issues have been one of the most serious challenges among the hunter-gatherers in Africa. In many cases, because of their mobile lifestyle and unique livelihood activities that was widely believed as backward, inefficient or nature destructive, their land uses have rarely recognized by colonial and post-colonial government official, while the land closely links with their cultural values and the lives of the members. Simultaneously they have challenged this difficulty in many ways, and during the last two decades, some of their land rights movements have achieved by using the global indigenous rights discourses.

One of the typical cases is the Central Kalahari San in Botswana. In the late 1990s, they lost the land, because of the relocation program from a nature conservation area to government-planned resettlement sites. After the relocation, with support of the global indigenous rights movement, they won the court case to return to their land in the conservation area. However, the ruling did not obligate the government to provide social services for people living inside the conservation area, and the government's ruling was that it only entitled the people who filed the lawsuit to return to the land. This presentation analyses their historical struggle for the land rights and remaining difficulties after the acquisition of the rights.

My continuous field research elucidated that economic disparities among the San have become widened with the years, and the gap has started to influence their land uses, particularly after the court case. In other words, the land issues turned into economic disparity issues among the San. In the nature conservation area, wealthy individuals who could arrange their own transportation and other necessities are able to live in their land, while others found that they could not make a living in the conservation area without welfare services and reluctantly remained in the resettlement. Among those who remained in the resettlement, some of the riches were given a huge area to set up ranches for their livestock in surrounding bush area, under a government program to control overgrazing. On the other hand, most of the residents were excluded from such opportunities, and their access to the land is becoming more difficult, while they had created informal mobile dwellings in the surrounding bush land, where they engaged primarily in hunting and gathering.

San in the conservation area and those in the resettlement site have made attempts to maintain their mobility, and to strengthen exchange relations and family ties. There is frequent movement and exchange as well as mutual support among the people living in the different setting. This is the way of facilitating physical and social mobility between the resettlement site, the ranches, and the conservation area as well as between rich and poor. Moreover, the people's mobility has gradually changed the characteristics of each space and expanded their living space. It has contributed to appeasing the tensions within the community as well.