The volumes of people that cross the Beitbridge border of South Africa and Zimbabwe have increased substantially in recent years. With them, creative strategies that seek to assist the crossing of people and goods lacking the required documentation have proliferated. This thesis approaches such acts of facilitating undocumented border crossings as an everyday ‘social politics’ with deep historical roots. It focuses on the role of private transporters (omcalayitsha), who represent an important link between a stringent migration regime and undocumented travellers. Through analysis of border practice, the study connects political economic processes to questions of social identity and migrant subjectivities. By placing the figure of the hyena at the centre of border struggles, the thesis enables a synthetic understanding of how everyday contestations around low-skill labour migration in the region interact with broader processes of capital accumulation, and shows how acts of facilitation transcend binary classification (e.g., formal or informal, legal or illegal) that often characterize discussions of human mobility.

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