

## **ABSTRACT**

Building upon Mbembe's insight, this article examines the multiple identities and economic strategies of Zimbabwe's women cross-border traders, which enable them to survive and sometimes prosper within the context of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The implementation of the ESAP, at the behest of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, began in 1991 and has resulted in a great deal of hardship for the urban population, and particularly for women (Brand, Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1995; Kanji and Jazdowska 1993; Killick 1995; Osirim 1994 and 1998; Potts 1995). While the majority of women have struggled to subsist in towns under deteriorating socio-economic conditions, women cross-border traders, most of whom are heads of household, have managed not just to cope with urban poverty, but to escape from it.