

Intersection of Migration and Local Governance: Lessons on Methods and Research Design

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A recent study interrogating the ways in which municipal authorities in South Africa are governing their mobile communities demonstrated that there is potential for both conceptual innovation and methodological rigor when integrating the cross-cutting systems of migration and local governance. However, this integration also posed a number of challenges that were apparent both during the data collection phase, as well as when the diagnostic tool was designed. The process of implementing this research raised methodological and conceptual questions about how these two areas of work intersect. This paper aims to reflect not on the results of the study itself, but on the methodological process issues that can lay a foundation for a better understanding of how to study the intersection of two interdisciplinary fields. This research took place in five South African municipalities in Limpopo, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga, selected because they reflect a broad spectrum of migration dynamics and demographic patterns. An institutional ethnography approach was drawn on, which included mixed methods fieldwork with document review, key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and community mapping took place in all five municipalities, taking an inductive approach to developing a diagnostic tool, which was applied retrospectively based on the data gathered. This paper found that resolving a number of divergent conceptual issues is important to effectively interpret results around the intersection of the cross-cutting fields of governance and migration. This methodological reflection is important on its own, but it will also help ensure that future initiatives around strengthening local governance, or making systems more responsive to the needs of migrants, are on solid conceptual, methodological, and practical ground.

Keywords: migration, governance, research methods, urbanization

INTRODUCTION

The governance of municipalities and migration are both critical forces in reconfiguring processes of democracy and development both globally, and in South Africa. Megacities have long been recognized as spaces of global innovation, economic growth and creativity, but this lens has rarely been extended to South Africa's secondary cities. While these are the metropolises that are statistically receiving the highest percentage of migrants, they remain on the periphery of scholarship and policy-making (Mberu et al., 2017). They have a high degree of autonomy in development planning, but the competencies required to plan proactively towards the demographic changes posed by migration vary significantly.

This research found that the ability of local governments to respond effectively to a mobile population varied considerably on the basis of a wide range of factors. It also emerged from the research process that preconceptions held by both municipal officials and migrants about the nature of the community, the service delivery needs of migrants, and the processes of municipal planning have meant that municipalities are missing an opportunity for more effective and efficient service delivery, and migrants are unable to access the participatory channels that do exist. This paper does not primarily engage with the content of the findings of the study, which have been published elsewhere (Blaser and Landau, 2014). While these results are important for municipal planning and local government capacity building, the focus of this paper is on the conceptual and methodological lessons that were learned through the process of implementing the research. Studying the local governance of mobility, two cross-cutting topics that are hotly contested, requires methodological tools that allow the researcher to take respondents beyond their instrumental understanding of either topic.

Through a focus on the research process, this paper provides lessons for a wide range of stakeholders, academics, and practitioners who are working with cross-cutting governance or migration initiatives. This paper highlights key lessons for how both areas of focus are conceptualized and translated into research methods and tools. Illustrating how research methods hinge on these intersecting topics, is an important way of understanding how local government can be more responsive to migration dynamics in the future.

CONTEXT OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND MIGRATION

Local governance, and particularly municipal level governance play a central role in discussions on migration, and the management of mobile populations (Ahouga, 2018). The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have a strong focus on localization, looking at global issues through a lens of local management structures. Goal 11 focuses explicitly on sustainable cities, and urban planners and municipal managers are now engaging with a range of global processes that are actively seeking to understand what role local governance, and the governance of

cities in particular, play in key global issues such as inequality and climate change (Kanuri et al., 2016; Communitas Coalition, 2016).

This interest in local governance is juxtaposed with a similarly strong interest in migration. Migration has often been part of a wider debate on development and identity, but a rise of populism globally is reigniting debates about the definition, identity and rights of migrants (Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018). Inspired in part by Brexit, the process of defining nation states and the populations they govern is part of a global conversation contemplating how these different definitional approaches connect to public sector bureaucracies, and what it means for migrants (Somerville, 2016). Furthermore, spatial mobility in Africa has long been defined by poorly defined borders between international and internal migration, due to colonial national boundaries that cut across shared culture and language (Adepoju, 2006). These two cross-cutting trends are the localization of analyses of global governance, and the importance of migration in understanding how places develop spatial definitions and cohesive communities.

In spite of the simultaneous importance of both areas of study, there is no consensus around how to understand local government's responsiveness to migration, let alone what good practice could look like in this regard (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). This research therefore required the development of a tool and method that could bring people together around common core concepts, and specify an approach that would allow the research team to understand how these concepts were operationalized by respondents, and analyze trends and areas of divergence. Through this experience, a range of important lessons were learned, and this paper aims to distill a few of the most salient points that have emerged from this process. In doing so, this paper first explains the design of a diagnostic tool designed to categorize municipal responses to mobility, and considers the practical, conceptual, and contextual challenges of applying this tool across several different municipalities. It concludes with lessons for scholars who are studying the intersection of cross-cutting fields.

Among the many scholars of governance in South Africa, Greffrath and van der Waldt (2016) posit that, "transformation of the local sphere of government has probably been the largest undertaking within the entire governance adjustment process since democratization in 1994". However, tremendous work remains for municipalities to be functional, let alone developmental entities. In the 2015-2016 financial year, only 49 out of 263 municipalities received a clean audit, and none of them were from Limpopo, where much of this fieldwork was conducted (AGSA, 2016). A wide range of capacity development initiatives are targeting municipalities in the hope of improving local service delivery, with an increasing focus on intervention by national and provincial structures (Reddy, 2014; Greffrath and van der Waldt, 2016). However, without a widely held consensus of what the composite components of planning capacity are, efforts are likely to remain incomplete.

DEVELOPMENT OF A MIGRATION RESPONSIVE DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

It was evident from the outset that building a diagnostic tool that would reflect the migration responsiveness of local government would be an important step in providing participants from different perspectives with a common reference point on a complex topic. However, it was also clear that the tool had to be informed by an iterative process of data collection, and could not be developed without first understanding the conceptual boundaries of the respondents. It has already been acknowledged that the way dimensions of local governance are conceptualized is a driving force in management research (Roiseland, 2011). A collaboration between the Migrating Out of Poverty Programme (MOOP), the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) at the University of Witwatersrand, and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) made it possible to spearhead iterative fieldwork to better understand the ways in which local government in South Africa is responding to migration in five South African municipalities. Municipalities first self-selected into the project, based on their identification of a need to build capacity in their response to mobility, and among the municipalities volunteering to participate, a selection of secondary cities was chosen. Secondary cities were targeted because they experience the highest rates of migration and are relatively under-studied (Awumbila, 2017). Selection was based on identifying the widest range of demographic and migration dynamics from the municipalities available, to allow for lessons that could be relevant across various contexts. This research was part of a longer-term, phased research project which aims to better understand how migration is reshaping communities, and what potential it holds for poverty reduction.

The overall methodological design of the research was based on principles of institutional ethnography. Fieldwork for this research was conducted in iterative steps guided by an inductive approach, with two visits to each site. Due to data privacy concerns, the specific municipalities involved cannot be named. The duration of the first visit was a week, and included a community mapping exercise, as well as interviews to get a sense of both the migration and governance dynamics within the community (Gioia et al., 2013). The second visit took place over a month and included key stakeholder interviews and focus groups. The tool emerged from these key stakeholder interviews rather than informing them. It was based on a conceptual framework of ecological systems developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and previously used by the author in a gender diagnostic study (Jansen van Rensburg and Blaser Mapitsa, 2017). This model includes the macro levels of social cohesion and participation, meso levels of accountability and participation, and micro levels of data collection and budgeting. This approach was adopted keeping in mind a systems approach to governance, which acknowledges the administrative and social dynamics therein.

While the diagnostic tool is deliberately reductionist to allow for comparability across a range of contexts, it did not replace a more exploratory, inductive approach, which was a hallmark of the research project. Without bringing together

both approaches, such detailed substantive and methodological reflections would not have been possible. The research team tried to balance issues of comparability across different administrative and institutional contexts, and held that a framework which simplified these issues was helpful provided that it was not at the exclusion of more exploratory work. However, the structured tool still created difficulty in reaching consensus among the various stakeholders around the scope of measurement, particularly with regards to which components of governance would be captured.

Scope of the Tool

Six dimensions emerged, which covered the widest span of key competencies municipalities needed to demonstrate in order to be responsive to mobility. The dimensions included: budgeting, data collection and use, participation, accountability, perceptions, and social cohesion. A deliberate decision was made to include a full spectrum of competencies, ranging from technical, to strategic. Moreover, the purpose of the tool was to be broadly indicative, so while each step of the five-point scale was generally defined (Blaser and Landau, 2014), a decision was made not to be prescriptive in the scoring process, because the value of the tool was to identify relative strengths and gaps.

Several criteria were identified within each dimension, to interrogate the degree to which mobility was found in the various dimensions. The criteria began with a score of 0, as entirely absent or even problematic to responding to mobility. The scale increased to a score of five, which was a robust and proactive response to a mobile population and the needs of migrant communities. The measurements were a deliberately imprecise process, with the numerical values being broadly indicative. That was to allow for a schematic comparison across contexts from which rich qualitative data had been gathered, rather than applying a specific quantitative scale.

Applying the Migration Responsive Diagnostic Tool

Once the tool was fully developed, it was applied retrospectively to the municipalities of Bushbuckridge, Lephalale, and Hammanskraal on the basis of data which had already been collected, and from which the diagnostic tool emerged. Sources of information for the assessment included Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), a review of documents from the municipalities, key stakeholder interviews and focus groups, and participant observation notes from a range of municipal public participation initiatives. Departments responsible for local economic development, planning, and service provision were explicitly targeted for interviews as well as observation, in addition to civil society organizations, and community-based organizations serving migrants within the community.

Data was collected through an iterative process described above. Once fieldwork was complete, data was analyzed, and the tool was developed on the basis of points of convergence and divergence across the municipalities studied. The tool was

then applied retrospectively on the basis of available data. The results were then discussed with the municipalities in a verification workshop. Had time and resources allowed, having an additional step of fieldwork to apply the tool collaboratively with stakeholders may have both resulted in less schematic findings and more refined criteria, but also strengthened buy-in and ownership. However, applying the tool retrospectively was a useful way of triangulating the consistency of data gathered across municipalities, and confirming areas of consistency and divergence in the findings.

Conceptual Challenges in a Comparative Case Study Approach

In developing the migrant responsive diagnostic tool, a key concern was to have some level of comparability across each municipality, and to the extent possible, to maintain comparability across different dimensions of the diagnostic. A first phase of research conducted at ACMS carried out detailed case studies within several municipalities, but the focus in this later stage was to target the potential for capacity building initiatives, and as such, while contextualizing the data was important, being able to compare and generalize was a central aim (Vearey et al., 2014).

Each municipality demonstrated key differences. Some will be discussed later in the paper, while others are illustrated in detail in publications addressing the content of thematic findings of the research (Blaser and Landau, 2014). These differences ranged from contextual differences around the dynamics of mobility within the municipality, to institutional differences in the structures of governance and political incentives. Sometimes, these institutional differences presented a challenge in defining concepts around both migration, and governance (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Consistently applying these concepts in different institutional concepts was a constant struggle for the research team. This was made even more challenging due to the fact that a range of responsibilities were required to respond effectively to mobility, including planning, data management, etc. Each municipality defined and delegated these responsibilities differently across different offices, with some functions located strongly in departments of economic development, while others were performed by service delivery departments. Finally, others conducted these functions through institutional partnerships with other bodies (Vearey et al., 2014). Since no municipality had specific, defined outcomes around migration, understanding what these different capacities looked like, and where they were located within the municipal administration was a crucial part of the diagnostic study.

Furthermore, each municipality had varied migration dynamics, which interfaced with mechanisms of governance in different ways. In some communities, migrant workers remitted a significant portion of the economy, and represented a powerful political force. In other municipalities, international migrants were closely aligned to the ruling political party, and were again a powerful political force. In yet other municipalities, the ruling party was actively involved in perpetuating xenophobic violence to build its electoral support (Blaser Mapitsa, 2018). These differences in context between the various municipalities had a tremendous influence on the way

the diagnostic tool was applied, and the way the results were interpreted. Due to this, it is particularly important to have stronger tools, applied more broadly, for understanding municipal institutions and their role in responding to a mobile population.

Reflecting on the methodology of developing and applying the diagnostic tool from a comparative perspective is important because the results of the diagnostic tool will only translate into learning if the context from the municipalities is reflected. Further studies about municipal planning capacity can only be appropriately contextualized if the methodological approach, as well as the study's results, have sufficient reflection and interrogation.

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

While this paper primarily deals with the study's conceptual framework and research methods, rather than its explicit findings, a summary of the key results helps to contextualize this methodological discussion. The most central finding of the study is that both migrants and local government officials are co-creating the community through a dynamic process of governance and contestation around how communities are defined and served.

Municipal policy is developed in a way that largely ignores both the specific service delivery requirements of migrants, but also that does not take into account the ways through which migration is shaping the community (Blaser and Landau, 2014). With the introduction of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act (SPLUMA), which gives municipalities widespread powers linked to land use, strengthening municipal capacity to spatialize planning processes is becoming increasingly vital. There are other key powers in the municipal domain that are critical for migrant well-being, such as the management of nodes of transport, and shaping social cohesion, where municipal authorities play a central role in shaping migrant experiences in South Africa.

This paper synthesizes the results of a research project that entailed fieldwork in five South African municipalities in 2013-2014, exploring how secondary cities in the region are responding to mobile populations. What emerged were three themes, that, when seen in aggregate, point to a need for a conceptual shift to be shared by migrants and local government officials if mobility is to achieve its potential of enabling development. The first is that migration is seen overwhelmingly as a problem, by both municipal authorities, and sometimes even by migrants themselves. While there are some nuances within this, most local authorities within municipalities are certainly not embracing migration as an opportunity. Blaser and Landau (2014) previously explored the various capacities required for local government officials to respond effectively to mobility at a municipal level. However, none of these dimensions will work effectively if municipal officials are not, first and foremost, willing to view the opportunities migration presents.

The second theme that emerged as particularly important for the way municipal responses to mobility should be designed, is that state practice is experienced

locally. While both municipal authorities and migrants have a discourse that speaks to a belief in a rationalized bureaucracy that is uniform at least at a national level, in fact, the evaluation of governance and people's experiences of management happen on a very localized scale, and this needs to be understood in planning. While scholarship on local governance in Africa acknowledges that the state has varied manifestations at a local level (Fukuyama, 2017; Börzel and Risse, 2016), it is critical to explore this in more granularity for issues which are often not considered a local competency.

Finally, migrants are currently seen as being in limbo, in a bureaucratic, social, and political 'no man's land' in terms of state governance. Claimed by neither their communities of origin nor their hosts, there is no clarity of mandate in terms of either what is needed to govern migrant communities, nor where that competency and responsibility should reside. The result is an oscillation between a policy vacuum, and a cacophony. As one scholar summarizes, "where policy instruments have, explicitly or implicitly, addressed issues of migration, there have been contradictory and confusing messages" (Atkinson and Marais, 2006). The confluence of these three things means that both the migrant experience is made far more difficult, but also that municipal authorities are missing a tremendous opportunity for more efficient service delivery and accelerated economic development.

METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

This paper considers reflections that came from all researchers who were part of the project, as well as the data gathered in the findings. It specifically assesses three different aspects of the research process. The first area is of practical considerations, such as differences in language and migrant status of the research team, preparation of the research project, and the data collection itself. The second section reflects on the conceptual challenges in applying the tool, and the institutional differences in the municipalities. The third and main area of reflection looks at the intersection of and fragmentation between governance and migration. It is through this third area that it becomes apparent how both fields need to be reconceptualized to better articulate areas of intersection. It also points to areas where capacity building may gain traction at the municipal level.

Practical Challenges in Transecting Two Interdisciplinary Areas

Working multi-locally was a time- and resource-intensive process. Even with significant time allocated to the fieldwork process, multiple trips needed to be taken to each site, for an iterative approach to data collection. With a small team of researchers all at the behest of municipal officials' schedules, a significant travel budget and generous time were both requirements to ensure coherence in data collection approaches. Additionally, since the research began as inductive, as the diagnostic tool was forming, the research team needed to be in constant communication about the findings emerging from each site, and developed a tightly coordinated approach to

data collection. That was particularly important with the most critical stakeholders, with whom the interview instruments were open-ended, to allow for maximum benefit from an inductive approach. However, it also meant that results were reliant on skilled interviewers who were in close communication with each other, to build the data collection in a common direction across sites.

One decision was taken to aggregate the technical capacities of the municipality across all departments and entities. In fact, there was significant variation across different departments and entities, around everything from accountability and participation, to data collection and use. That was true in some places due to individual competency, but also in other places due to the location of a function within the municipal administration. While the diagnostic tool could be adapted to be applied to a smaller unit of analysis, keeping it at the municipal level was an important decision in order to maintain the possibility for researchers to compare across municipal contexts. Departmental levels were too varied and localized for the purposes of the research.

Additionally, defining both the concepts of migration and governance in a way that resonated across all the municipalities was difficult. While there were administrative definitions in place, these were not always accurate reflections of the way the concepts were practiced. Furthermore, the same terminology, both around migration and around governance, was often used to represent very different concepts. For example, governance in some places looked at the exercise of the audit function, while in other places it referred to ethnolinguistic dimensions of the ruling political party. It emerged through the course of fieldwork that there was a very evident practical challenge linked to existing stereotypes of migration. While international migrants were particularly targeted with xenophobic beliefs, the negative sentiments were not restricted to migrants who had to cross international borders. Negative associations with migrants and migration are reasonably well documented in the literature on migration and governance (Vertovec, 2015). However, governance is also subject to a range of stereotypes, particularly at a local government level, where municipal capacity and political violence dramatically impact individual attitudes and perceptions (Benit-Gbaffou, 2014).

Conceptual Difficulties Applying the Tool

An immediate struggle in developing the tool and applying it effectively is because migration was often a politically charged topic at the municipal level, prompting officials to respond in a certain way. However, these influences were not the same across municipal contexts. As a result, it was difficult to know that respondents were engaging with the concept of migration in the same way. For example, in some places 'migration' immediately triggered discussions of foreign-born spaza shop-owners. In other places, 'migration' spoke nearly exclusively to migrant mineworkers. Both migrant communities existed in all these municipalities, but due to the local social and political dynamics, one particular migrant community was a reference point, and

certainly informed the approach of municipal officials to the research.

Related to this problem was the challenge that many municipal officials had not thought in great detail about the various ways in which migrants shape communities, and as a result, questions that were articulated around migration specifically, either led to officials saying that migration is a national competency and does not have anything to do with their work, or spoke only to issues of service delivery towards international migrants, which was of interest, but a very limited component of the research. While this did come out in the pilot phase and was mitigated by the introduction of a range of questions related to planning and demographic change and less explicitly about migration, it remained a key conceptual issue as the research unfolded.

It is evident that due to a lack of consensus about the importance and competencies to respond to a mobile population, different municipalities located these functions in different places (Parnell et al., 2002; Harrison and Todes, 2015). While exploring these functions in more detail may have been interesting, pragmatically, it meant that entry points into municipalities varied, and that understanding how these functions were expressed was inconsistent and often difficult. It also made it more complex to go through a process of obtaining buy-in and support for the research process, as it was not immediately evident who the most important stakeholders were. The fact that this hurdle was encountered in every single municipality, demonstrates that there is a definite lack of consensus around how municipalities should best respond to migration.

Contextualizing and Comparing Results

The previous sections have already agreed that analyzing the results of the diagnostic study required returning to a large amount of inductive data on how municipalities understand migration, and how communities understand governance, to look for points of intersection and divergence. A diagnostic tool then summarized the most salient features, to allow for comparability across a range of municipal contexts. This is important to allow each municipality to plan for coordinated capacity development responses.

A further challenge to comparing municipal responses to mobility across different municipalities is that it is difficult to contextualize each site's demographic variations, as well as the political dynamics these imply for migration. Both are socially and historically embedded, constantly changing, and require a high level of contextual knowledge about each community. In future studies, methods around these intersections might introduce respondent coding to address some of these contextual variations, but it was not possible to introduce such approaches for this particular study.

Finally, the research encountered a simple shortage of contextual information in all the municipalities that would have made it easier to draw stronger comparisons. As discussed earlier, the municipalities were specifically chosen due to their

relative exclusion from migration-related research. While this is a strength in terms of the study's contribution to literature in the field, it is a weakness from the perspective of contextualization and comparability. Understanding the richness of the social dynamics in each municipality was part of the strength of the research, but for purposes of future research, a more nuanced comparative analysis would be possible if these contextual diversities had a stronger basis in research.

INTERSECTING MIGRATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Mainstreaming migration across local governance in South Africa faces a wide range of challenges. Both include divergent technical and political concepts that different stakeholders understand and practice in different ways. The mandates and practice within local government for responding to mobility are complex and at times, unclear. While both fields have been widely recognized as priorities, given the economic development trajectory and the SDGs, activities are unlikely to increase as long as there are not commonly held definitions, or widespread capacity.

Without consensus on core conceptual tenets of migration and local governance, it was a difficult task to pull together a diagnostic tool that will gauge their intersection, particularly one that could then be compared across a range of municipal contexts. However, that was precisely why the research team found the development of the diagnostic tool so valuable. This iterative process of sharpening the scope and focus of the tool helped uncover the core competencies that municipalities need to respond effectively to migration, and to see how these looked across different municipal contexts. The research process was an important part of defining the problem, which may be a theme in better understanding how cross-cutting fields intersect.

One important aspect that emerged, is that a wide range of roles and responsibilities are involved in making municipalities more responsive to migration. However, for this to happen effectively, it is important to separate out each role and mandate within each administrative body, and strengthen cross functional coordination. This has not traditionally been a strength of local government (Rogerson, 2014), and points to an area that may require capacity building if a mobility citizenry is to be responded to effectively.

Finally, complexities in this research, and the development of the diagnostic tool, highlighted that each municipal context had a distinct political, social, and administrative structure. It is within each of these contexts that migration and local governance processes of planning and participation are contested, conceptualized, and operationalized. This points to considerable variations in how migrations are conceptualized and received by municipal institutions. For example, in some communities, international migrants shared a common linguistic heritage to the community, and were considered more 'local' to the municipal authorities than migrants from other provinces of South Africa. While the diagnostic tool development was one step towards teasing out some of the points of contestation, and making these divergent views more explicit, more work is still needed to translate this into a process

of building capacity and encouraging consensus.

LESSONS LEARNED IN INTEGRATING CROSS-CUTTING TOPICS

Over all, this study highlighted several lessons for integrating mobility and local governance, both of which are cross-cutting fields with multiple points of intersection. Any effort at understanding municipal capacity, or planning capacity development interventions, will only be successful with an in-depth engagement of the intersection between local governance and mobility, to ensure that planning processes effectively accommodate demographic change. There are clearly multiple factors ranging from technical skills around data and use, to the structure and implementation of participation practices, and more contextual components of social inclusion. Municipal officials would benefit from clear guidelines around how they can better respond to migration in the community, and these materials would be best developed with engagement from a wide range of stakeholders, using the diagnostic tool as a basis for discussion and consensus building. It is important that the capacity to respond to a migrant populace does not lie with specific individuals responsible for service delivery or participation processes, but that the complexity is owned across the municipality, and that a range of functions can be drawn on to ensure responsive planning and implementation. Sometimes, a resistance to engaging with migrants or issues of migration can be a helpful starting point for understanding how best to transform municipal practice.

Finally, it was evident that a municipality's capacity to respond to migration was interwoven with its capacity to engage with a large range of other issues, from planning to service delivery. As such, this diagnostic tool should not stand in isolation of other tools to gauge and support municipal effectiveness, ranging from the Local Government Management Improvement Mechanism (LGMIM) to audit functions (Reddy, 2014; Sanderson, 2001). However, using the lens of a cross-cutting issue, migration in this case (though other population indicators like gender, could provide a different and equally interesting analysis), can occasionally uncover intersectional linkages that other approaches to understanding capacity might miss. In this case, what came out most clearly were the interlinkages between technical and institutional capacities within the municipality, as well as the way in which political authority within municipalities is historically and socially embedded. While this is not a surprise to those working on issues of local governance, capacity development approaches may not always integrate this reality.

CONCLUSION

The results of a preliminary application of the diagnostic tool in three municipalities, Lephallale, Bushbuckridge, and Hammanskraal, offer a significant opportunity to identify strengths and gaps in municipal capacity to manage a mobile community. Technical challenges were identified, such as data availability and management, as

well as the existence of forums for coordination and mechanisms for participation. There are also political and social factors which range from the ownership of spaza shops to historical economic ties across migrant communities. Despite the unique localized landscape of mobility and governance, there are many common threads in municipal response capacity.

Municipalities and migrants are both engaged in a dynamic process of creating a common community. However, expectations and perceptions held by both migrants and municipal officials are limiting robust participation and effective service delivery. One step towards overcoming this will be developing a shared understanding of what municipal responses to mobility could look like. Given the level of autonomy municipal authorities have in South Africa, empowering municipal officials to translate the lofty goals held nationally in the Constitution and the National Development Plan (NDP) requires equipping officials with appropriate tools to understand migration-responsive budgeting, participation mechanisms, and accountability. An important foundational step to facilitate this is to build recognition for the fact that municipal policy-making has an impact on migrants. There is a widespread perception that migrants can only be governed by national government, and this ignores the realities that governance is experienced locally, and local policies and practices are crucial frontline links between migrants and governance.

One of the results of implementing the study is that it revealed the extent to which definitions and concepts linked to migration and local governance are divergent, and dependent on the specificities of the municipality and its unique social and political dynamics. This was unexpected; it made a strong case for the importance of the diagnostic tool, given the difficulties of comparing the empirical data across different contexts. At the same time, it generated additional results. The diagnostic tool helped identify and draw attention to areas of contestation that otherwise may have been overlooked. If these discussions are continued and deepened, there is a possibility to build consensus among stakeholders who have an important role to play in municipal responsiveness to a mobile population. Additionally, such results will help all levels of government better understand the current capacity and landscape to identify the most relevant capacity development interventions. Given that municipalities having such autonomy in the way migrants are received, starting to define migrant responsive local governance is critical for meeting SDG targets around inclusive cities.

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