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Assessing how migration is understood in South African townships a case study of Katlehong Township

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ABSTRACT

South Africa is one of Africa's primary destinations for international migrants. Johannesburg and its surrounding areas are at the centre of these migration patterns. Yet while hundreds of thousands of people may arrive; not all are welcome. Through an exploration of popular attitudes among South African residents of Katlehong – a migrant rich township situated in the Southeast of Johannesburg – the researcher explores popular reactions to those coming from beyond South Africa's borders. This research paper establishes a ground to understand how migration is interpreted in Katlehong, an area subjected to migration challenges as mentioned by news coverages and other researchers.

This thesis examines the de facto allocation of rights to space. A qualitative approach is implored which engages the community leaders of Katlehong township. This is done with the aim of assessing how migration is understood in the township. It explores the construction of these views, variation in attitudes, and the connection between these attitudes and xenophobic violence.

Based on the interviews with the people across the socio-economic and professional spectra; it found that while township residents understand migration and often are domestic migrants, they still maintain selective criteria in determining who should settle in the already occupied areas of Johannesburg. This understanding is associated with a social construction of space and ideas that some people do not belong in certain spaces of the city. This is presented as an unconscious decentralization of power which has given the people the right to govern township spaces, the people with these spatial claims further dictate the terms and conditions of the use of space in townships.

Sentiments regarding migration remain uneven, with some who do not mind having them within their midst and others who do not want them at all. In townships; some perceive migrants as people who want to take over their township due to their non-adherence to the standards and rules set out in these spaces; essentially causing tensions within these townships. These expressions serve an important role in understanding how townships like Katlehong view migration.

The dissertation concludes that people in Katlehong understand what migration is and their understanding is not exclusively based on their experiences. Their perspectives are also shaped by

unconscious influences. Due to how people in the township understand migration, patterns of belonging have changed.