



**Migration and Socio-Economic Development  
in African Cities:**

**The Dual Challenge to the Aerotropolis Project of  
South Africa's Ekurhuleni Metropolitan  
Municipality**

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## **Abstract**

This paper engages with efforts by cities and municipalities across the developing world to find favourable positions within the global economy. While many aim to attract highly skilled talent, tourists and industry, few adequately consider that economic success is likely to attract and, indeed, requires other migrants. The 'Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis' project illustrates this point. Indeed, this paper argues that South Africa's Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (one of the country's fastest growing cities due to migration) faces an acute dual challenge: negative perceptions towards low and medium skilled migrants and a lack of migration policy that threatens to derail its newly launched aerotropolis project. If not addressed, these challenges mean the city is unlikely to meet the minimum aerotropolis requirements including: a safe and stable environment that is attractive to foreign investment and skilled labour; adequate and modern infrastructure that ensures a successful global competitiveness. For its aerotropolis project to succeed or at least be the catalyst for the mandatory inclusive socio-economic development, the city needs to overcome these popular and institutional cognitive blocks.

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## Executive Summary

This paper draws on empirical study conducted in multiple sites in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM)<sup>1</sup> from June to August 2015. The study's aim was to identify popular and official perceptions of migration's effects on destination communities. More specifically, the study sought to explore popular and official perceptions towards migration and human mobility, their origins and implications for socio-economic development in EMM. The study identifies pervasive negative popular and official perceptions towards migration and human mobility and this paper argues that these negative perceptions coupled with lack of proactive migration policy (or lack of context-specific proactive measures to manage migration and human mobility in ways that maximize their benefits while minimizing their costs) threaten to derail the city socio-economic development plans, particularly the newly launched aerotropolis project.

Using this case study, this paper engages with efforts by cities and municipalities across the developing world to find favourable positions within the global economy. While many aim to attract highly skilled talent, tourists and industry, few adequately consider that economic success is likely to attract and, indeed, requires other (poor, low skilled) migrants. Aerotropolis development is perhaps the most illustrative form of this blindness. The paper identifies multiple ways in which negative perceptions and lack of proactive migration policy negatively affect EMM socio-economic development and specifically discusses how this dual challenge is likely to derail its aerotropolis project.

First, the paper shows that negative perceptions are not just benign or harmless individual feelings; but have the potential to and indeed often translate into active discrimination, marginalization and violent exclusion of target groups. The paper illustrates that marginalisation and violent exclusion have profoundly negative developmental, socio-political and economic effects that extend beyond targeted groups and are indeed harmful to the security, social stability and socio-economic development prospects of all city residents. In particular, these negative perceptions threaten to undermine the successful implementation of the aerotropolis project in a number of ways: i) by leading to discrimination and violent exclusion, these perceptions create a hostile and unstable environment not attractive to foreign investment and human resources an aerotropolis requires to succeed; and ii) with no concrete plans to address these negative perceptions and related violent exclusion, the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis is already a failed project at least as far as its ambitions to become the catalyst for inclusive socio-economic development are concerned. It is rather these negative popular and official perceptions of migration, and

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<sup>1</sup> Located on the outskirts (north-east) of Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni is one of the three metropolitan municipalities in South Africa's Gauteng Province.

not migration per se, that are harmful to the city's socio-economic development prospects including in particular the aerotropolis project.

Second the paper shows that the lack of proactive migration management measures is a culpable blind spot or faux-pas whose already visible negative socio-economic consequences will undermine the successful implementation of the aerotropolis project. Indeed, the lack of such measures means that the city will continue to struggle to match infrastructure development with shifting population dynamics. Without adequate infrastructure, Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis will not be able to run smoothly and will not achieve its desired global competitiveness. Similarly, the lack of such measures means that integration and proper incorporation of migrant labour force will not be possible. An aerotropolis cannot function properly without a migrant labour force particularly in cities such as Ekurhuleni with serious skill shortages.

Third, the paper illustrates how negative perceptions and lack of migration policy are two mutually reinforcing challenges that the city needs to address urgently for its socio-economic development plans and the aerotropolis project in particular to succeed. Indeed, the lack of policy and negative perceptions feed off each other in a symbiotic way that makes them even more difficult to address. On one hand, lack of policy means there are limited integration opportunities, and the lack of integration fuels negative attitudes and perceptions. On the other hand, popular and official negative perceptions work against any potential cognitive shifts that would allow the promotion of proactive migrants' integration policy or measures. Indeed deep seated negative perceptions essentialize migration as inherently destructive and by doing so inhibit, consciously or otherwise, the cognitive ability of political leaders and decision makers to even conceive the idea that migration could potentially be made profitable for host societies.

In conclusion, the paper argues that understanding popular and official perceptions, the socio-political logics informing them and their consequences for socio-economic development as well as policy formulation is a first and useful step towards identifying opportunities and opening spaces for evidence-based advocacy for progressive policies and practice.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Using the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM) as a case study, this paper engages with efforts by cities and municipalities across the developing world to find favourable positions within the global economy. While many aim to attract highly skilled talent, tourists and industry, few adequately consider the other migrants economic success is likely to attract and, indeed, requires. Aerotropolis development is perhaps the most illustrative form of this blindness. Defined by Kasarda (2016:1) as “a metropolitan subregion whose infrastructure, land-use, and economy are centred on an airport,” such development represents a novel type of inland development meant to mimic the successes of Singapore, Beijing, Amsterdam, Washington DC and others. On one hand, cities have pegged their futures to attracting wealthy business and transit traffic – groups Bauman (1996) labels ‘tourists’. Indeed, an aerotropolis is premised on extracting value from the movements of people, goods and services. Yet on the other hand, its success depends on creating an environment where foreign/outside investment will feel safe and well cared for. To do this, it must attract adequate labour of different skill levels to build and maintain the infrastructure, staff factories and warehouses, and service the food and lodging industries. But it cannot do this without a pro-active approach to managing human mobility. As such, global city ambitions should always be supported by plans to promote access to services and social cohesion among all a city’s residents. As this case study shows, failure to address the needs of poor migrants – ‘vagabonds’ in Bauman’s terms – can fundamentally undermine cities’ urban development ambitions.

The paper illustrates the points above by exploring public and official perceptions towards migration and human mobility, their origins and implications for socio-economic development in EMM. It highlights the challenges facing EMM, home to the continent’s busiest airport, as it seeks to capitalise on its role as gateway to Johannesburg, South Africa, Africa and other parts of the world. Already boasting one of South Africa’s most migrant rich populations, the city’s success at attracting businesses and business traffic is only likely to draw more people to it. Yet, the paper argues, the municipality faces an acute dual challenge: negative perceptions towards low and medium skilled migrants and a lack of migration policy that threatens to derail its newly launched aerotropolis project. Meeting aerotropolis requirements is possible only if the EMM adopts an urban planning approach that places at its centre its demographic realities (of which migration and human mobility are integral parts). Otherwise the ‘Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis’ will be just an airport city that does not help the city to fulfil its mandate of an inclusive socio-economic development. Negative perceptions and lack of migration policy are two

mutually reinforcing challenges that the city needs to address urgently for its socio-economic development plans and the aerotropolis project in particular to succeed.

After a brief discussion of the methodological approach, this paper proceeds through three main sections. The first reviews EMM's socio-economic development and migration trends. The second details popular and official perceptions of human mobility and its impact on local socio-economic development. It shows that EMM generally holds negative perceptions of migration and migrants and these perceptions are likely to harm its development prospects in general and the aerotropolis project in particular. The third section discusses EMM's current policy approaches to mobility illustrating the paucity of proactive migration management measures. It concludes by revisiting and summarising the paper's main points.

## **2. APPROACH AND METHODS**

This paper draws on empirical study conducted in multiple sites in EMM from June to August 2015. The aim was to identify popular and official perceptions of migration's effects on destination communities. It identified how residents, city officials, business leaders, civil society advocates perceived questions of migration and the links between various forms of mobility and pressing socio-economic and political concerns. Moreover, it considered the socio-political logics informing those perceptions as a first step towards identifying opportunities to use empirical analysis or data to open space for improved policies and progressive practice.

The approach employed here is informed by new sociological institutionalist insights into the degree to which bureaucracies and institutions are embedded within their social-economic and political environments (see Friedland and Alford 1991). As such, they are not merely delivery mechanisms working mechanically in service of political superiors, but are actors in their own right that generate, absorb, and act on norms and ideas circulating in society at large. Institutions and organisations may help to shape these attitudes by managing (implicitly or explicitly) flows of information, incentive structures, or social environments helping to create shared myths and standard repertoires of legitimate policy responses and practices.

The study reveals the moral economies and the multiple logics at work within organizations (see Friedland and Alford, 1991; Lounsbury, 2007; for a migration related analysis, see Willen 2014). These include cultural beliefs that structure cognition and guide decision-making within the policy areas related to or affected by human mobility. These embedded logics mean that decision-makers currently focus on a limited set of issues and solutions and may involuntarily code population movement in terms that limit their receptiveness to policy alternatives (see Ocasio, 1997; Thornton, 2002; Powell, 2007). Understanding

the factors enforcing their perspectives – whatever they may be – may help to limit expectations of policy advocates and scholars as they engage in policy debate. Indeed, recognising the interests and incentives that frame discussions can point to where ‘scientific’ data may be useful, where political or bureaucratic incentives need to be realigned and where various forms of activism may unsettle the status quo in ways that open opportunities for debate.

Given the approach outlined above, the research focused less on the actual impact of mobility than on presumptions about its effects. Taking for granted that movements that go unaddressed by policy are likely to have negative outcomes, we instead concentrated on collecting (and explaining) perspectives from officials within government and other stakeholders engaged with promoting the city. In total, primary research consisted of 37 in-depth, open-ended qualitative interviews with relevant stakeholders or role players across a range of service areas and at multiple levels including municipal officials, community leaders, non-governmental organisations, civic and community-based organisations, leaders of formal and informal trade and business associations, youth organizations and faith-based organisations. It employed customised interview guides for different sectors with specific focus on the perceived impacts of migration on: (a) impact on wages in entry level sectors; (b) estimating job creation through labour flexibility, skills and entrepreneurialism balanced by the possibility of competition due to the emergence of ‘ethnic niches’; (c) tax contributions versus resource outflows in the form of service delivery; (d) effects on local economic prospects due to resource outflows in the form of material remittances; (e) effects on health and social cohesion and values.

### **3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN EKURHULENI**

#### **3.1 Demographics**

Established in 2000, EMM, together with Johannesburg and Tshwane (Pretoria) are Gauteng Province’s three ‘metros.’ Whereas its sister cities are long established corporate and political centres, EMM has long served as a site for light industry and services to nearby mining areas. More recently, as a site bordering the country’s economic hub, it has become a destination for people from other provinces, other countries, and those priced out of the Johannesburg and Pretoria housing markets. Consequently, EMM has one of the fastest growing populations in South Africa. Indeed, the city’s ‘integrated development plan’ (IDP) from 2015/6 indicates that the municipality has an average annual population growth rate of 2.47%, compared to national average of 1.58% (Stats SA, 2014)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022014.pdf>

As a result of the dynamics described above, the 2011 census indicates that EMM had a resident population of approximately 3 178 470 people and 1 015 645 households. This equates to 6% of the country's population and 26% of province's population. Reflecting the city's remarkable growth, the 2015 population was estimated at 3 417 958 with projected growth to 3 550 492 in 2017 and 3 875 681 by 2019 (IDP2015/6). The city has an exceptionally high population density with 1,609.4 people/km<sup>2</sup> (compared to Gauteng Province at 680.6 people/km<sup>2</sup> and a national population density averaging only 42.8 people/km<sup>2</sup>) (*ibid*). The municipal governing council states that rapid population growth presents serious service delivery implications since it translates into increased demand for municipal services (*ibid*).

Migration and human mobility contribute significantly to the population growth in Ekurhuleni and other South African cities and it is not only immigrants from across the continent and beyond in search for protection and/or better economic opportunities moving into these cities (Landau *et al*, 2009). While cross-border movements may be the most visible and political controversial; domestic mobility remains the most demographically and economically important migration trend. This is visible in increasing internal population mobility and migration with high volumes of people moving within and across provinces; from rural to urban areas and more specifically to the major urban centres or metros within provinces. The city is one of those urban centres that attract significant numbers of both domestic and international migrants.

While migration is not the only contributing factor to the city's rapid population growth, the city leadership are right in pointing to its disproportionate contribution when compared to population growth elsewhere. Indeed, while the majority of the population growth is due to 'natural growth', the city is a major destination for domestic and international migrants. In 2011, 37% of the population (or 1 115 752 people) was born in another province of South Africa and 8% (252 865) was foreign-born. Between 2001 and 2011, the city received a total of 936,285 migrants, including 753 875 internal migrants and 175 345 international migrants (see Table III). This equated to an annual average of 93,629 migrants.<sup>3</sup>

*Table III: Domestic and International Migrant Numbers in Ekurhuleni: 2001-2011<sup>4</sup>*

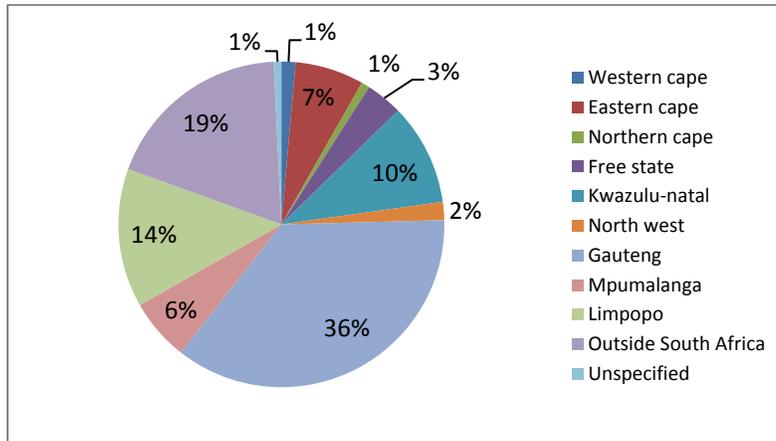
Origin	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Internal migrants	38 1645	37 2230	753 875
International migrants	10 3725	71 620	175 345
Unspecified	3 919	3 147	7 066
<b>Total</b>	<b>48 9289</b>	<b>44 6997</b>	<b>936 285</b>

<sup>3</sup> Unable to calculate the net migration into the metro because no reliable information on emigration is currently available.

<sup>4</sup> Source : Census 2011 (10% Sample)

As the figure below shows, the majority of city’s domestic migrants who moved into the city between 2001 and 2011 were from other municipalities in Gauteng (55%), followed by Limpopo (14%) and KwaZulu-Natal (10%). International migrants form 19% of 2001-2011 migration cohort.

*Figure 1: Origins of Migrants to Ekurhuleni: 2001-2011<sup>5</sup>*



In 2011, international migrants were from at least 117 countries but mainly from Zimbabwe (32% or 71,587 migrants); Mozambique (32% or 71,173 migrants), Lesotho (6% or 13,284 migrants); United Kingdom (5% or 11,065 migrants) and Malawi (4% or 9,245). The number of the rest 112 countries is below 5,000.

As one of the country’s commercial and manufacturing hubs, it is perhaps not surprising that the city’s main migration pull factors are, in addition to the usual urban attraction, the perceived available employment and economic opportunities, despite –and contributing to- the already high unemployment rates. The metro indicates that, “there is continuous influx of people moving into the municipal area, particularly the unemployed in search of job opportunities” (IDP2015/6: 27).

Ekurhuleni represents one of the South African municipalities most transformed by migration. Many of these movements are associated with an expansion of trade and professionalization surrounding sub-Saharan Africa’s busiest airport. However, others are of job-seekers or low-skilled labour who find their ways into townships and informal settlements. As discussed later, these areas have often been the site of active discrimination and violent conflict linked to people’s origins and political affiliations (Misago, 2011). Discrimination and violent exclusion in turn raise the risk to the city’s broader economic ambitions.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

## 3.2 Socio-Economic Development

### 3.2.1 General development and related challenges

EMM is a commercial and manufacturing hub of South Africa and the region. The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) refers to the municipality as the 'Africa's Workshop' (SALGA, 2012) as it has the largest concentration of industrial activity in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa (Gauteng Government, 2014). Its economy contributes about 6% to the country's Gross Domestic Product and approximately 18% to the total economic output of Gauteng province. Between 2005 and 2013, EMM registered a volatile economic development growth reaching a high of 6.1% in 2006, a slump of -2.3% in 2009 and a slow recovery to 1.5% in 2013. This volatility tracks national trends lines of 5.9% in 2006; -1.4% in 2009 and 1.8% in 2013. The city is also the transportation hub of Southern Africa due to its wide and modern network of roads, airports, rail lines, telephones, electricity grids and telecommunications. More specifically, the city is home to OR Tambo International Airport (sub-Saharan Africa's busiest airport); South Africa's largest railway hub, and a number of country's most significant highways for passengers and freight traffic.

EMM's economy is driven primarily by five economic sectors: finance and business services (21.9%); manufacturing (21.2%); community services (19.7%); trade (15.4%); and transport (10.9%). These five economic sectors collectively account for 89% of economic activity within EMM and account for most of the formal and informal employment (Ibid). It is however important to note that the municipality's dynamic economy is not able to absorb the potential workforce. Indeed, unemployment in the city currently stands at 28.8% (higher than the 25.4% national rate). EMM attributes this high unemployment rate to internal migration and the recent decline of the manufacturing sectors' contribution to the economy. High unemployment levels result in poverty (in 2013, the city had the highest number of Africans living in poverty (39,9%) among Gauteng Province's three metros<sup>6</sup>) and increases in dependence ratio with 38% of households currently receiving a social grant or listed on the municipal indigent register (IDP2015/16).

To address high levels of unemployment and poverty rates, EMM has introduced a number of economic development initiatives. These include creating an aerotropolis (discussed below), revitalizing the manufacturing sector and township economies (including SMMEs and informal trading) through the Township Enterprise Development Programme (Ibid). To address poverty and improve the living

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<sup>6</sup>Gauteng Socio-Economic Review 2015

conditions of the majority of residents, EMM also aims to improve and accelerate service delivery for example to address the existing housing backlog (Gauteng Government, 2014), offer improved access to electricity, water and sanitation, health care and education. As the City mayor argues, education and skill training is particularly needed to address skill shortages in the municipality<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, the city, “is confronted with the challenge of low skills levels (IDP2015/6:30) as 19.5% of those that are employed work in elementary occupations and, “in the entire Ekurhuleni, 9% of the adult population have no schooling” (Galago Environmental, 2014: 21).

### **3.2.2 Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis plans**

As mentioned earlier, efforts to build an aerotropolis around OR Tambo International Airport represent one of the city’s core development and poverty alleviation initiatives. An aerotropolis is an airport-led urban development (Huston, 2015). “Similar in shape to the traditional metropolis made up of a central city commercial core and its outlying commuter-linked suburbs, the aerotropolis consists of a multimodal airport-based commercial core (Airport City) and outlying corridors and clusters of aviation-linked businesses and associated residential developments that feed off of each other and their accessibility to the airport” (Kasarda, 2016:1; see also Kasarda *et al*, 2014). Huston (2015:2) notes that the ‘aerotropolis’ concept, has now evolved into a ‘glitzy development model’ increasingly adopted by mega airport surrounding cities around the world. Already, the aerotropolis approach to urban living is reshaping life in big cities around such as Beijing, Amsterdam, Dallas, Washington, DC, etc. (Kasarda *et al*, 2011).

In 2015, EMM unveiled a 30 year ‘Aerotropolis Master Plan’<sup>8</sup> that defines Aerotropolis Ekurhuleni’s planning strategy, core principles and key short-, medium- and long-term projects. In general terms, the city considers the development of the aerotropolis as a radical transformation and development agenda that will address current challenges and effect rapid socio-economic growth for all city residents. In his 2015 State of the City Address, the EMM’s mayor elaborated his vision and expectations:

It is well documented that the City of Ekurhuleni is experiencing high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality. These triple developmental challenges are the root-cause of most of the socio-economic ills that continue to ravage our communities. To address these challenges, the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis programme has been adopted as an overarching flagship programme which encapsulates other flagships such as the Digital City, Beautification of Lakes and Dams, Urban Regeneration, Development of Township

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<sup>7</sup>Councillor Mondli Gungubele (2015): Ekurhuleni 2015 State of the City Address; 25 Mar 2015.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ekurhuleni.gov.za/aerotropolis/>

Economies and the Revitalization of the Manufacturing Sector among others, to drive the radical economic development and transformation agenda of Ekurhuleni.<sup>9</sup>

At the core of the vision of the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis is the desire to build a more socio-economic prosperous city, where residents will benefit from the creation of new jobs, the expansion of social infrastructure, and an improvement in the standard of living for all. The Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis Master Planning proposes five overarching principles which serve as measures of success:

- i) Community (building strong neighbourhoods that allow people to realise their full potential);
- ii) Collaborate (streamlined and effective governance that meets or surpasses global standards);
- iii) Concentrate (dense transit-oriented development that leverages and complements existing communities);
- iv) Connect (move goods, services and people efficiently and effectively); and
- v) Compete (identify and amplify the value chains which South Africa can dominate globally).<sup>10</sup>

According to the mayor, the implementation of the aerotropolis programme in Ekurhuleni intends to balance the distribution of economic activity between the nine affluent areas and the 17 townships of Ekurhuleni. Therefore, like elsewhere, the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis will not involve simply building additional retail stores in an airport terminal or more industrial parks on the land surrounding the airport. It is about taking advantage of all the economic opportunities an airport offers and use them for a city-wide equitable socio-economic development through new infrastructure, alternative retail, employment and commercial land use that stretch far beyond the airport precinct.

#### **4. BARBARIANS AT THE GATE?: NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF MIGRATION AND THEIR IMPACT ON AEROTROPOLIS PROJECT**

There are diverging opinions within the migration and development literature on the effects of migration on destination communities. Some recognise the difficulty in assessing actual economic, social and political costs and/or contributions of migration to host communities. Many analysts—in the popular if not always the academic press—strongly link international migration with unemployment, poverty and social decay. They argue that international migrants exacerbate unemployment by taking jobs away from locals; drain host societies' material and social resources, promote social degradation while potentially inducing disease, anger and conflict (see for example Murray, 2003; May, 2000; Bhorat, 2014; Harvey,

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<sup>9</sup> Councillor Mondli Gungubele (2015): *Ekurhuleni 2015 State of the City Address*; 25 Mar 2015. <http://www.ekurhuleni.gov.za>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ekurhuleni.gov.za/aerotropolis/>

2014 and Mascie-Taylor and Lasker, 1998). Other scholars counter that negative connections between migration and socio-economic ills are more perception than reality. Instead, they posit, migration can potentially contribute positively the socio-economic life of host communities (see for example Hann, 2000 and Gelderblom *et al*, 1994 in Lehohla, 2006).

In EMM, officials and residents are firmly in the ‘migrants cause messes’ camp. With a few notable exceptions, most respondents believe that migration significantly and negatively impacts the metro’s socio-economic development and social wellbeing. Indeed residents and officials alike believe that migration, particularly international migration negatively affects the local socio-economic order and welfare. They blame migrants for most of the problems communities in different areas of the metro face accusing them, *inter alia*, of:

- i) undermining the local labour market by providing cheap labour;
- ii) providing ‘illegitimate’ competition by invading and closing local business spaces or undermining existing local businesses;
- iii) overburdening public resources through resources outflow and less investment in local economic development; and
- iv) being responsible for a broad range of social maladies including crime, conflict, violence, fraud and corruption, drug and substance abuse, disease, moral degeneration and lack of social cohesion

While these reflect accusations levied against migrants elsewhere in South Africa (and indeed elsewhere in the world - see also Misago *et al*, 2009) they remain distinctly important in a rapidly growing city whose success will depend on migrants in the short and long term if they are to benefit through the aerotropolis project. The remainder of the section details the specific charges levied against immigrants (foreign nationals) and the social fields that help to produce them.

#### **4.1 Perceptions of Migration Impact on Local Wages and Labour Market: “Immigrant cheap labour undermines the local Labour market”**

With regard to labour market for example, residents believe that immigrants change or ‘upset’ local wage structures in entry level sectors by accepting low wages or providing ‘cheap’ labour, which makes them the preferred candidates for jobs that might otherwise serve to support the local poor. Indeed, respondents (including local residents, employers, representatives of labour unions and representatives of civic and faith-based organizations) indicated that international migrants provide cheap labour as they

accept low wages compared to citizens who demand market related salaries; work long hours and do not request work-related benefits as citizens do. One respondent expressed views shared by many when he stated:

What also happens is that they work and sleep in the factories and they have no time to knock off as long as the employer needs them to work; and they get paid low wages and that is a problem because the locals work normal hours and get normal wages. Maybe it's because they struggle back in their countries and things are harder there. Also you find that even if we have the same degree, there are benefits that I will demand that the other person [international migrant] may not actually need, like a housing subsidy, medical aid, petrol allowance and then the other person is not used to that in their country so they will take the job.

Local residents believe immigrant cheap labour not only turned the labour market upside down but also gave international migrants an unfair advantage in the competition for already scarce employment opportunities. They reported that employers prefer hiring immigrants or foreign nationals whom local citizens accuse of taking or 'stealing' jobs that are rightfully theirs. One respondent complained:

Employers hire them [foreigners] because they know they are desperate and they won't complain, and they don't even have qualifications or even IDs and that affects us because they go for anything and we don't get jobs because they always just take anything. ... People are not satisfied because you find that the international migrants are hired more than people from here, because they are cheap labour. You know I have heard that it happens and I have also seen that it happens, there's a place that I know where this happens, the white guy from there doesn't hire people from here he only hires foreigners. So foreigners take the jobs because they are hired more than the locals.

For one EMM official, migrants—not only those that are highly skilled but also those seeking entry level jobs—positively contribute to the economy because they sometimes accept jobs that do not appeal to locals:

Fine, migration has its advantages and disadvantages in terms of its negative impact on service delivery for example. But on the other side, they also contribute in terms of economic participation; they are the people who are willing to take up jobs that are not paying well but are very critical in the economy of the city and the region.

Similarly, a few employers indicate that international migrants have indeed an advantage and are more likely to be hired particularly by low and middle income earners/employers because they (international migrants) demand affordable wages and are willing to work hard. Others feel that the locals' sense of rights and entitlement made some choosy, too comfortable and sometimes lazy on the job compared to international migrants who are prepared to go an extra mile even for low pay. One respondent states: "But to be quite honest, we also have the element of laziness; that is why the employers end up preferring

them; so it's unfair to blame foreigners in those cases." International migrants admit that the imperative to work made them double their effort but denied that they are taking anybody's job. One opines:

It is competition; it's not your job; you are lazy then you say they take my job; it's not possible to take someone's job. Let me give you an example, foreigners do their level best, they don't even take holidays, they work, but South Africans go on holidays, they do not take their jobs seriously, foreigners take double jobs more often and they are more dedicated compared to the citizens. Because it's not your country, you put in double effort.

While not universal, EMM residents and officials strongly believe that migration and particularly immigrants have a negative impact on the local labour market and contribute to an already growing unemployment in the city. While these views hold the status of Truth, there is little empirical support for (or against) them. However, research evidence from elsewhere suggests while immigrants in EMM are more likely to be employed (particularly in informal sector) than locals (GCRO, 2013), this is no reason to presume the effects on hosts are negative. Global evidence generally concludes that immigration offers an economic welfare gain and positively contributes to labour markets in destination societies (UNDP, 2009). It does so by increasing the supply of labour, filling the 'kill gap' and freeing up the local workforce to move to higher productivity occupations by taking up less desirable, menial jobs which local would not take but need filling for the functioning of the city. These functions, analysts argue, contribute positively to the local economy and labour markets by increasing job creation, employment and production (see for example Ortega *et al*, 2009 and UNDP, 2009). Analysts also argue that there is no evidence that migration puts a downward pressure on wages particularly in entry level sectors (Ratha *et al*, 2007). Van der Mansbrugghe, *et al* (2009 cited in Ratha *et al*, 2011:11) shows that "reducing migration will not necessarily result in higher wages for native workers in receiving countries, since lower levels of migration will also lower the relative return of capital, which in turn will put downward pressure on wages." Similarly, Hong *et al* (2015) argue and provide evidence that, by adding to the supply of labour, job creation and to the increase of consumer demand for local services, immigrants positively contribute to the local labour market particularly by contributing to the raise of local workers' real wages.

Despite the lack of tangible evidence however, the very same analysts note that it is common for the public, officials and policy makers in destination countries and communities to believe that migration is a serious economic burden, feared to lead to job losses and to bring down the wages for the locals (see for example Papademetriou *et al*, 2009 and UNDP, 2009). City residents are therefore not alone in this regard.

#### **4.2 Perceptions of Impact of Migrants' Entrepreneurialism on Job Creation: "Immigrant entrepreneurialism is illegitimate competition for local business and not job-creation"**

While some respondents perceive immigrants' heavy involvement in small and informal businesses as entrepreneurialism that creates jobs and benefits local residents (particularly the poor) (see also Black *et al*, 2009 and CGRO, 2013), most code it as 'illegitimate' competition that invades and closes the local business space or kills existing local businesses. Those perceiving immigrant entrepreneurialism as an asset argue that by small and informal businesses formation, migrants created rather than 'stole' opportunities. They indicate foreign-owned business created jobs for locals and benefitted the local poor by bringing essential products and services close and at affordable prices and renting business space in their premises.

Most respondents had little time for arguments in immigrants' favour. Respondents directly or indirectly involved in local small business were, perhaps not surprisingly, the most vocal in complaining that foreigners' involvement constitutes 'illegitimate' competition. One business owner responds when asked what she thought about foreign-owned business in the area: "They kill our business and no one can stand this. It's been a while since we were surviving with our businesses without these people, now many businesses have closed because of them. There are many people with business that are also unhappy about them." Another lamented that local businesses are unable to compete with foreign-owned businesses low prices. He states:

When a customer comes to me sometimes they may not find everything they are looking for, whereas if they go to the other foreign business they will find everything they are looking for, and then their prices are very low, you can't compete with them because they don't care much about profit. They only care about sustainability, so if you care about profit you end up with spoilt stock.

Some respondents went even further and expressed fears that at the current rate and if no regulations are put in place, foreigners will soon take over the local business and economy. One of them for instance states:

Look at this, in 10 years to come, they can be running the whole business, if they are not within the proper channels, they can run the whole economy, I believe they are not part of any business chamber, that is what is causing conflict, if they could register and attend meetings there, then we won't have that problem, because for example, there are people who are on the queue for business space, they don't get business space, these guys just come in and get business space...

Respondents believe that these strong feelings against foreign nationals and their businesses have often resulted in violent attacks against foreign national in many areas of EMM. The respondent just cited notes he is not surprised by conflict in the community: "... these people are attacked because they are taking locals out of business. Because obviously there will be a conflict, I cannot sell bread at R6 and then you

come and sell yours at R3:50, you are taking me out of business, obvious after ten years or five years, you will be out of business automatically.”

Respondents aggrieved that foreigners or international migrants were killing local business indicate they would like relevant authorities to eliminate the ‘illegitimate’ competition by sending foreigners back to their countries of origins or ensuring that foreign traders are part of local business regulatory bodies. In the words of one local business owner, “These people need to go back to their places; we never said we are struggling to do our businesses; we were not suffering like this when they were not here.”

#### **4.3 Perception of Migration Impact on Local Development and Public Resources: *“Immigrants are a heavy and unaffordable burden to the local resource base”***

Official documents reveal EMM leadership’s beliefs that migration presents more challenges than opportunities to the metro and its residents. Indeed, without offering any specific supporting evidence, the metro’s current Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (IDP2015/6: 30) indicates that,

the municipality faces its own unique set of challenges compared to other metros. It is particularly confronted with an increasing inflow of migrants that place a strain on its infrastructure and the city’s ability to provide services. The number of households in Ekurhuleni has also grown at a rate that outpaces that of the national one, implying even greater challenges for service delivery by the metro.

City officials understand that most migrants are attracted by perceptions of better livelihoods. Yet they argue migrants’ expectations are typically not met resulting in even more unemployment, sprawling informal settlements, and heightened burdens on municipal social services. The informal settlements seriously strains infrastructure by adding to service provision backlogs be it in terms of housing, electricity, water and sanitation, education, health care and social assistance (IDP2015/16). Even if not specific to the city, the Gauteng City Region Observatory (GCRO) (2013) found that both internal and international migrants to the province are more likely to live in informal settlements than people born in the province. Such findings support the officials’ understanding in this regard but belie the causal mechanism. Is it migration or lack of planning that produces this outcome?

Like EMM officials, local residents believe that the burden migration puts on public resources far outweighs contribution to the local resource base and economic development in terms immigrants’ tax, VAT and service fees. They recognise that immigrants contribute to the local and national resource base through i) direct tax for those working in the formal sector, ii) value added tax (VAT) for those involved in formal and informal labour market and informal business, and iii) paying for services like most local

citizens. However, most believe immigrants place undue burdens or strains on public resources, strains that far exceed the contributions they make.

Recognising the prevalence of remittance sending behaviour, local residents also argue that most immigrant earnings are invested in the countries or communities of origin. These outflows result in less local investment and further degradation of infrastructure and social services. When asked whether immigrants contribute to the local resource base, one respondent responded:

Maybe a little bit as they are also buying food to eat, but when they leave, most leave with the things they buy. These people don't bank; they keep the money with them so that they leave with it when they go. When they are here they keep their money while using our resources; some do not even pay for the resources they use and others register for free services when they keep money to take home when they leave.

Another echoed similar sentiments, saying that hosting immigrants, especially international migrants, was problematic because they really do not contribute to the local economic development due to resource outflow:

Yes that is one big disadvantage; it may end up collapsing our own economy, that's the sad part of it. They come in, especially those with businesses; they take their profit outside the country...It is other countries that develop using our resources. There is no balance between what they spend here through for example buying stock from wholesalers, paying rent and all that they buy and what they send out. There is more loss than benefit.

According to one EMM official, informal businesses for both locals and foreigners are not taxed but informal traders contribute to the local resource base by paying VAT. Despite this contribution, however, he believes that migrants (both domestic and international) generally overburdened local public resources. Consequently the metro was chasing a moving target in terms of service delivery:

In terms of challenges, we are chasing moving targets. For example if we talk about housing, the numbers change daily as people flock in; when a person comes here they apply for RDP houses and add to housing backlog. Migration has its advantages and disadvantages but in term of service delivery we are chasing a moving target.

Another respondent believes that migration, both domestic and international, contributes to overpopulation that leads to all sorts of problems particularly the depletion of public resources and degradation of infrastructure:

I feel that there is almost a huge amount for both internal and external migrants coming to Ekurhuleni and lead to the challenge of overpopulation which affects services. Look at infrastructure for example. We now have blocked toilets which are overloaded; electricity cannot now light for everyone; the clinics have no capacity to handle all the people who are sick and require public assistance, even the quality of the service deteriorates; it even burdens the public servants working in those areas; they are so many issues that result.

EMM officials also indicate that migration puts a serious strain not only on housing but also on all other public services including water and sanitation, health services and social grants. One official indicated that migration is a heavy burden on the municipal budget because it increases the demand for social grants. Another similarly reports that mass migration, as experienced in EMM, dictates a regular upgrade of all services: "It's a challenge to the whole service delivery system and not only housing. For example, because the sewerage system is designed for a particular number of people, as the population increases we are risking it, so it dictates that more infrastructure is put in place to handle the pressure."

Regarding health services, respondents, particularly ordinary residents reported that migration had a detrimental effect particularly because foreigners using and abusing local clinics lead to medication shortages. One stated:

These people are now too many. But I have seen something done especially in clinics to control them. Before we used to go to clinics and get no medication at all, but now it is much better since they ask for IDs. Before, they [foreigners] used to go to the clinics everyday collecting medication, then in December they go back to their countries and sell that medication; that is why we used to have such medication shortages. But now it's not possible anymore. Now when I am sick, I am able to get medication."

In summary, local residents clearly perceive that the burden migration puts on public resources far outweighs the contribution it makes to the local and national resource base and economic development. They strongly believe that resources outflows result in less local investment and degradation of local infrastructure and public resource base. Indeed, the fiscal impact of immigration depends on the costs and contributions of immigrants to the welfare system of the host communities (Ratha *et al*, 2011). While the data do not exist either to confirm or challenge these perceptions, a few points are worth keeping in mind. First, while international migrants generally have limited access to welfare systems and free public services (Papademitriou, *et al*, 2009), Ekurhuleni service provision systems may indeed be feeling pressure from the considerable and increasing number of domestic migrants, the majority of whom are unemployed and are entitled to basic services like other qualifying local residents. Second, whether these immigrants try or manage to access such resources remains unclear.

#### **4.4. Perceptions of Migration Impact on Social Cohesion and Values: *"Migration Held Responsible for Local Social Maladies"***

Although mobility and heightening diversity can add dynamism and strength to communities' social and economic life, they also raise the spectre of competition, conflict and other social ills (see for example Jackson, 2013 and Ratha, *et al*, 2011). The latter fears are reflected by local residents who hold

international migration and immigrants responsible for most of social maladies communities across the city face. These including crime, violence, disease, drug and substance abuse, fraud and corruption, moral degeneration and generalised lack of social cohesion.

Starting with South Africa's national affliction and perennial obsession: crime, one respondent states: "Not from our provinces, crime comes from outside. Like when you do drug awareness you'll find that the people who are selling the drugs are Malawians, Nigerians etc. They just found someone from Malawi who is cooking these drugs. The problems come from these ones that we don't know where they come from not these from the locals." When asked to support her opinions, she responded that she had first-hand experience as a resident. "We see these things, we live here", she said. Another expresses similar views:

Look here everyone knows the Nigerians get the bad name you know; I know a few Nigerians that are amazing people and against crime but unfortunately by these flats here we have Nigerians and they are known to be drug lords and they exploit people; they rent out rooms and put 20 people in one room and there are also drug lords and also the pimps because they got prostitutes working for them.

A local community leader believes that immigrants' involvement in crime is inevitable particularly because when they cannot find employment, crime becomes their livelihood strategy.

It's because everybody is coming here, and when they get here and can't get jobs, crime becomes as a survival strategy because at the end of the day not everybody gets a job. Yes there are those who come and have the means of living, but some of them when they can't survive, crime becomes one of the things they will think they will survive on.

Scholars note that, as in EMM, host communities across the world regularly raise crime and security concerns suggesting that immigrants are disproportionately more involved in crime than natives even though there is no empirical evidence to support such a claim (Ratha *et al*, 2011).

For other respondents, the presence of immigrants negatively affects local values and lifestyle. One argues: "I think it's because of the negligence of where they come from; because even the driving on our roads has changed, they are very reckless but I'm not saying it's only them but you must see the way they drive; they don't obey the rules so they bring that here. So there are a lot of frustrations and there is too many of them and they impact our lifestyles."

Local residents generally believe that issues of crime and poverty usually associated with the presence of foreign nationals result in conflict and violent discrimination particularly against those perceived to be outsiders. For one respondent, the relationship between economic hardships and xenophobic violence is clear: "These are not my perceptions; there is a very strong relationship between the attacks and the existence of foreigners. The rise of xenophobic attacks takes place during economic

strife, because people link poverty and the presence of other nationals, the point being to chase them away.” Another agrees believing that addressing social cohesion concerns requires strong community leadership that puts human rights first,

It’s very problematic; we have a long way to address such discrimination. As long as you are a South African and anything goes wrong, you think of foreigners, that is why we need community leaders who are strong enough to see a human first before any other identity and keep on addressing these challenges with the community members.

Whether informed by myth or reality, EMM residents’ perceptions sit incongruently with arguments made elsewhere about migration’s positive social impact on host communities. Whether it is economic benefit or the creation of multi-ethnic societies (Ratha *et al*, 2011), EMM residents and officials are not believers. They adhere more closely to the concerns raised by UNDP (2009) that significant inflows of immigrants can indeed pose social cohesion and integration challenges that, *if unaddressed by policy*, can indeed cause social tensions and increased criminality (see also Ratha *et al*, 2011). The question this raises, then, is what is the city doing to ensure that migration – which they cannot stop – will not prevent it from achieving its economic goals?

#### **4.5 Potential Impacts of Perceptions on Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis Plans**

This paper’s intention is not to prove or disprove the perceptions described above. Rather, it highlights that perceptions themselves have real consequences for socio-economic development as they shape popular behaviours and policy responses. In examining the ‘Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis’ project, negative perceptions are not just benign or harmless individual feelings; but have the potential to and indeed often translate into active discrimination, marginalization and violent exclusion of target groups.

Within EMM, perceptions have already translated into widespread and virulent resentment towards foreign nationals. As elsewhere, local interest groups have often mobilised these perceptions and resentment for xenophobic violence on many occasions and in many areas of the metro (Misago, 2011). Xenophobic violence in the city was most intense in 2008 when violent attacks on foreign nationals erupted in many locations and resulted in foreigners’ deaths, mass displacement, looting and destruction of foreign-owned properties and businesses. The locations most affected by violence against foreign nationals include Tembisa, Olifantsofontein, Tokoza, Vosloorus, Katlehong, KwaThema, Duduza, Reiger Park, Actonville, Wadeville, Marathon, Makause, Dukathole, Jerusalem, Muvhango and Ramaphosa from where the images of the burning man made the news headlines across the world (Monson *et al*, 2011). Xenophobic violence has continued ever since as no effective preventive measures have been put in place either at national or metro level (Misago *et al*, 2015). For example, last year (2015), xenophobic violence

erupted in many metro areas including Actonville, Wadeville, Tokoza and Germiston<sup>11</sup> and at the time of writing this paper (March 2016), violent attacks on foreign nationals had just erupted again in Katlehong (Mogale, 2016).

Negative perceptions and violent exclusion have a number of profoundly negative developmental, socio-political and economic effects. These extend beyond targeted groups and may be harmful to the security, social stability and socio-economic development prospects of all city residents. First, they undermine the possibility of a sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development by inhibiting the migration potential positive contribution to the city's development; limiting opportunities for long-term investment, job creation and poverty reduction through immigrant businesses in the city and worsening inter-group relations to the extent that social and economic cooperation between foreign and local residents at the community level is greatly reduced. For example, immigrants' lack of investment in local economy and resources outflows could logically be explained by (at least partially in addition to the obvious imperative to support families back home) the prevailing hostility and lack of sense of belonging. Immigrants cannot be expected to invest in societies where they are not sure they will live long enough to enjoy the benefits of their investments; when there are always calls and threats for their eviction and where their livelihood activities are constantly destroyed by violent attacks. It is therefore logical to argue that negative perceptions and resulting exclusion, rather than remittance imperatives, are the main reason immigrants would not want to invest in the local economy because good returns on investments would actually put immigrants in better position to support families back home.

Second, negative perceptions and violent exclusion undermine effective governance and rule of law which are necessary for stability and socio-economic prosperity. When perpetrators of xenophobic violence practise vigilante forms of justice when they attack, expel or threat to expel those they consider as 'non-belonging' to the city, this fundamentally undermines the state and city's authority, the rule of law as well as institutional trust. Lack of effective governance means that not all the city's residents can receive equal rights protections without which certain individuals and groups will struggle to realise their full potential in terms of socio-economic development. Further, lack of effective governance and institutional trust also means perpetuation of violent exclusion (and its resulting negative effects on socio-economic development as just discussed). Indeed, research shows the absence of institutional trust, embodied in the perceived absence, indifference or illegitimacy of local government, to be an important contextual factor in whether or not xenophobic violence occurs in a specific area (Misago *et al*, 2009).

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<sup>11</sup> Unpublished ACMS xenophobic violence incidents database.

With threats to rule of law and stability, efforts to attract long-term investments and achieve sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development in the metro are less likely to succeed.

Negative perceptions and violent immigrants' exclusion may be even more harmful to the 'Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis' project for a number of specific but interrelated reasons. First, a hostile and unstable environment is unlikely to attract global foreign investments on which the aerotropolis development model is premised. Indeed, an aerotropolis is a space where the global (foreign corporations and investment, foreign labour, tourists and travellers) meets the local (Kasarda, 2013) and for that encounter to happen and be mutually beneficial, there is need for a safe, conducive and welcoming environment. EMM Mayor, in his call for communities to unite against xenophobia in April 2015, acknowledged that violence against foreign nationals was a threat to the country's and city's economy stating that "... the ongoing violence is not good for the economy of the country because no investor would want to settle in an unstable environment. At the end of the day we are threatening the future of our country and its people."

Second, to be successful, an aerotropolis requires a safe and conducive environment not only for wealthy investors, highly skilled talent, rich tourists and transit traffic- groups that Bauman (1996) labels 'tourists'- but also for other types of migrants including the poor and medium- and low-skilled jobseekers ('vagabonds' in Bauman's terms) such economic ambitions will inevitable attract. 'Vagabonds' will be needed to make those investments viable business operations particularly in EMM where skill shortages are significant (see earlier discussion). Current failures to address the socio-economic and protection needs of poor and semi-skilled migrants who will be needed to staff aerotropolis businesses such as tourism and transport industries, restaurants, foreign shops, conference and entertainment centres; and/or of those willing to take up menial and undesirable jobs for locals will be a significant challenge to the successful implementation of the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis project, the same way it currently is for ongoing socio-economic development efforts in the city.

Third, without concrete plans to address prevailing negative attitudes and related violent exclusion, the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis is already a failed project at least as far as its core principles are concerned. Indeed, as indicated earlier, the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis project is informed by five overarching principles that form the criteria of its success. Two of these principle are i) '*Community*' (or building strong neighbourhoods that allow all city residents to realise their full potential); and ii) '*Collaborate*' (streamlined and effective governance that meets or surpasses global standards). As discussed above, negative perceptions and related violence already undermine these two principles. The fact that the master plan does not outline concrete plans to address those issues means the Ekurhuleni

Aerotropolis will not succeed or will at least not be the catalyst for inclusive socio-economic development it hopes to be.

In sum, as raw materials for marginalisation and violent exclusion, Ekurhuleni residents' and officials' perceptions of the impact of migration on the local socio-economic order and welfare are harmful to the city's socio-economic development prospects in general and to the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis project in particular.

## **5. CULPABLE BLIND SPOT: LACK OF MIGRATION POLICY**

The second challenge the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis project faces is the lack of migration policy or lack of context-specific proactive measures to manage migration and human mobility in ways that maximize their benefits while minimizing their costs. The lack of these proactive migration management measures is a culpable blind spot or faux-pas whose already visible negative consequences will undermine the successful implementation of the aerotropolis project.

### **5.1 EMM Policy Approaches to Migration and Human Mobility**

South Africa's politics, economy and society have been shaped by elaborate controls and restrictions on human mobility. In the post-Apartheid era however, South Africa's previously forbidden cities became primary destinations for migrants from around the country, across the continent, and beyond. As Landau, *et al* (2011:14) note: "Overturning the restrictions of the past, South Africa's approach to internal migration in the post-apartheid period has guaranteed freedom of movement to all. Domestic migrants are allowed to access economies, enjoy critical social and financial services, and live anywhere without fear of violence and abuse – although, of course, such access is not always realised in practice." In other words, South African citizens are now free to choose wherever they want to live in the country and the local government (or municipalities) is constitutionally mandated to provide them with basic services regardless of their origins or length of stay in new places.

While the regulation and control of international migration (through national migration and asylum legislation) is a competence of national government (particularly the Department of Home Affairs), the local government mandate in this regard remains the same: providing basic service to all residents regardless of their origin or nationality. "Municipalities in South Africa are constitutionally assigned a primary role of providing basic services to communities, regardless of race, gender and origin" (Ibid:7). In addition to specific legislation that guarantees specific rights to different types of international migrants, the country's constitution protects many fundamental rights regardless of immigration status. This means

that even undocumented migrants are entitled to basic protections including rights to due legal process, life-saving medical care, and basic labour protections (Ibid).

Despite their developmental mandate and their seemingly obvious responsibility in responding to human mobility, municipalities in South Africa have often not shown particular enthusiasm in developing approaches that would potentially address -or minimize the effects of- migration-related challenges while maximizing its contribution. This reluctance partially stems from a belief among many policy makers (local and national), that immigration and migration are exclusively matters of national policy concern. As Landau, *et al* (2011:7) note:

Rather than take a proactive approach that plans for mobility in all of its forms, South African local authorities have typically been unable to address challenges related to migration, including inter-group conflict, economic marginalisation, and the inability to access suitable services. Yet failing to meet the very real challenges of domestic and international migration creates the risk of increasing conflict, violence, poverty and social exclusion in ways that negatively affect all urban residents.

It is against this background that EMM, like almost all other municipalities in the country (although the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality has at least attempted to develop its own 'Policy of Integration of Migrants'), has not adopted any specific measures not only to address what it perceives to be the negative consequences of migration but also and perhaps most importantly to maximize the potential developmental impacts of mobility. This is a critical and costly blind spot as municipalities cannot fulfil their developmental mandate without adopting proactive and specific measures to understand and manage human mobility.

Whether regulated by international treaties and national policy frameworks, migration is ultimately a local government matter. Migration and human movements are highly spatialised and their effects are felt at municipality, local government and community level. People move from one specific place to another, either within a municipality or into another municipality within or across countries. As such, local governments have significant roles to play to effectively manage migration. If migration is to help counter poverty in sending and receiving communities, local governments at both ends of the migration process need to proactively respond to human mobility. Migrants live in municipalities and it is up to the municipal authority to devise means of insuring their incorporation.

Investigation into city officials' understanding of the role the municipality plays or should play in managing migration and human mobility in light of real or perceived migration-related challenges reveals a shared belief that managing migration and human mobility are national government competence and the only thing local government can do is to deal with their effects through adaptive service provision and

socio-economic development programmes. One official for example understands that the management of migration and human mobility belongs to the policy making sphere of national government although other stakeholders including local government have a role to play in dealing with its effects. He responds when asked about the responsibility of the municipality with regard to human mobility:

Human mobility is at national government sphere; so is policy making. The effects of migration however require the local government, business or the private sector, community organisations and community leaders for peace making and social cohesion building within communities for example. At municipal level, it is only the effects of migration that are felt and that is what we are trying to deal with, it is not necessary about the movement of people, but to create a better livelihoods for those in need.

Another official similarly notes that migration is the responsibility of national government and EMM does not have policies to manage migration. In his words:

I think that is the function of national government but maybe what we can do as municipalities is just to collaborate with relevant national government departments such as Home Affairs. We have to work together but I think that is the responsibility of the national government. In the municipality, there are no policies that target migration, but we would respond to migration effects like increased demand for housing challenges.

For one official, even if EMM does not have migration specific policies and programmes, urbanization-related programmes always include strategies to address migration-related challenges:

Programmes may not be specifically about migration; but migration is reflected in urbanisation programmes and strategies. One of the key things is that urbanisation programmes translate how we ready ourselves for the process of migration as a municipality. It's not about keeping people out but it's about how, as they get into the municipality, we properly prepare to provide them with services.

## **5.2 Lack of Migration Policy and its Implications for the Aerotropolis Project**

Lack of proactive migration management measures already has visible negative effects on the city's development efforts. As indicated earlier, city officials admit that migration poses a serious challenge to its development and service delivery efforts and they are constantly 'chasing moving targets'. I argue that 'chasing moving targets' is a direct result of lack forward looking planning that would address already known migration-related challenges. In-migration is not a new phenomenon. Moreover, it will continue and most certainly increase its related challenges. EMM officials complain that migration contributes to growing unemployment and poverty, sprawl of informal settlements, depletion of infrastructure and shortages of public and welfare services. The question is why the metro government does not see the

imperative to make any significant efforts to devise policy approaches or at least proactive measures to address those challenges.

The lack of such proactive measures may have even more serious implications for the aerotropolis project. Already, by admitting that it is experiencing high levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality, the city acknowledges that its socio-economic development programmes have not been able to meet the demands of its growing citizenry. And this is precisely because issues related to migration and human mobility (which contribute in no small measure to the city's rapid population growth) continue to be given short shrift in urban planning processes and decision making. In EMM, like in most cities across the developing world, socio-demographic change is outpacing institutional change or the pace of local governance adaptability (Dogan *et al*, 1988; see also Kilcullen *et al*, 2015). But this does not have to be the case; "there is no reason why institutional change should not accompany socio-demographic change" (Ibid: 7).

Lack of proactive migration management measures means that the city will continue to struggle to match infrastructure development with shifting population dynamics. Aerotropolis requires adequate infrastructure to facilitate its smooth running and its desired global competitiveness. Similarly, the lack of such measures means that integration and proper incorporation of migrant labour force will not be possible. As discussed, aerotropolis cannot function properly without a migrant labour force particularly in cities such as Ekurhuleni with serious skill shortages. Finally, the lack of such measures and the resulting lack of migrants' integration lead to migrants' marginalisation which in turn perpetuates negative perceptions that, as discussed earlier, work against inclusive socio-economic development and pose a serious challenge to the aerotropolis project.

This means that, in a way, the lack of policy and negative perceptions are mutually reinforcing and feed off each other in a symbiotic way that makes them even more difficult to address. On one hand, lack of policy means there are limited integration opportunities, and the lack of integration fuels negative attitudes and perceptions. On the other hand, popular and official negative perceptions work against any potential cognitive shifts that would allow the promotion of proactive migrants' integration policy or measures. Indeed deep seated negative perceptions essentialize migration as inherently destructive and by doing so inhibit, consciously or otherwise, the cognitive ability to even conceive the idea that migration could potentially be made profitable for host societies. Similarly, the 'dark side of democracy' (Mann, 2005) dictates that even political leaders or decisions makers who do not share negative popular perceptions become wary of proposing measures that could be interpreted as opposing the views of the electorate.

Institutions respond to ideas, norms and values circulating in societies but also institutions shape these attitudes by creating (implicitly or explicitly) incentive structures or social environments helping to create shared myths and standard repertoires of legitimate policy responses and practices. As Ocasio (1997) notes, these moral economies and the multiple logics at work within institutions and the citizenry structure cognition and guide policy and decision-making in ways that often code (often involuntarily) population movement in terms that limit decision makers' receptiveness to policy alternatives. While it may prove difficult however, these two challenges are serious popular and institutional cognitive blocks the city needs to urgently address for its aerotropolis project is to succeed.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This paper argues that EMM, one of South Africa's cities most transformed by migration and human mobility, faces a dual challenge (of negative perceptions and lack of migration policy) that threatens to derail the city's aerotropolis project the same way it has undermined its past and current socio-economic development plans and programmes.

Whether informed by myth or realities, popular and official negative perceptions of migration and its impact on local economic development and social welfare threaten to undermine the successful implementation of the aerotropolis project in a number of ways: i) by leading to discrimination and violent exclusion, these perceptions create a hostile and unstable environment not attractive to foreign investment and human resources an aerotropolis requires to succeed; and ii) with no concrete plans to address these negative perceptions and related violent exclusion, the Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis is already a failed project at least as far as its ambitions to become the catalyst for inclusive socio-economic development are concerned. It is rather these negative popular and official perceptions of migration, and not migration per se, that are harmful to the city's socio-economic development prospects including in particular the aerotropolis project.

The lack of migration policy or at least of context-specific and proactive migration management measures is a culpable blind spot whose already visible negative consequences will undermine the successful implementation of the city's aerotropolis project. Indeed, the lack of such measures means that the city will continue to struggle to match infrastructure development with shifting population dynamics. Without adequate infrastructure, Ekurhuleni Aerotropolis will not be able to run smoothly and will not achieve its desired global competitiveness. Similarly, the lack of such measures means that integration and proper incorporation of migrant labour force will not be possible. An aerotropolis cannot function

properly without a migrant labour force particularly in cities such as Ekurhuleni with serious skill shortages.

Negative perceptions and lack of migration policy are two mutually reinforcing challenges that the city needs to address urgently for its socio-economic development plans and the aerotropolis project in particular to succeed. An aerotropolis is a city precisely built around the idea of benefiting from the movement of people, goods and services and its success will depend on creating a safe environment that attracts foreign/outside investment; has or attracts enough supply of labour of different skill levels and is able to address infrastructure development challenges migration and human mobility may cause. All this is possible only if the city adopts an urban planning approach that places at its centre its demographic realities (of which migration and human mobility are integral parts). Otherwise its 'aerotropolis' will be just an airport city that does not help the city to fulfil its constitutional mandate of an inclusive socio-economic development. For its aerotropolis project to succeed, the city needs to overcome these popular and institutional cognitive blocks.

The paper considers that understanding popular and official perceptions, the socio-political logics informing them and their consequences for socio-economic development as well as policy formulation is a first and useful step towards identifying opportunities and opening spaces for evidence-based advocacy for progressive policies and practice.

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## About the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium

**Migrating out of Poverty** is a research programme consortium (RPC) funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). It focuses on the relationship between migration and poverty – especially migration within countries and regions - and is located in five regions across Asia and Africa. The main goal of **Migrating out of Poverty** is to provide robust evidence on the drivers and impacts of migration in order to contribute to improving policies affecting the lives and well-being of impoverished migrants, their communities and countries, through a programme of innovative research, capacity building and policy engagement. The RPC will also conduct analysis in order to understand the migration policy process in developing regions and will supplement the world renowned migration databases at the University of Sussex with data on internal migration.

The **Migrating out of Poverty** consortium is coordinated by the University of Sussex, and led by CEO Professor L. Alan Winters with Dr Priya Deshingkar as the Research Director. Core partners are: the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) in Bangladesh; the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS) at the University of Ghana; the Asia Research Institute (ARI) at the National University of Singapore; the African Centre for Migration & Society (ACMS) at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa; and the African Migration and Development Policy Centre (AMADPOC) in Kenya.

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