The Data Are Not Enough
Perspectives on Migration Data Use in Local Government

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African Centre for Migration & Society

An internationally engaged; Africa-oriented; and African-based research and teaching centre dedicated to shaping academic and policy debates on migration, development and social transformation

- Graduate degree programme with students from across Africa, North America, and Europe
- Research in 12 African countries on issues related to migration, human rights, development, governance, and social change
- Partnerships on 4 continents
- Regional reference point for public and scholarly debate and policy formation
Points for the day

- Categories, methods and presumptions blind policy makers and researchers
- Political economy of research fosters conservatism
- Bureaucratic / political incentives to ignore or abuse data
My approach:

• Not about migration or mobility, *per se*

• About data generation and use in decision making

• Organizational sociology based on 3 years of research in eight municipalities
  – Support from Moop-RPC/DFID: SA Presidency and others
  – Cooperation with South African Local Government Association (SALGA)
Research Sites in Southern Africa
Limits on learning

• Data use shaped by political incentives and considerations

• Solution driven; garbage can approach

• Pace of decision outpaces data generation and analysis
The research-policy nexus

• Limited autonomous research space – dependency relationships

• Conventional, space bound and materialist epistemologies

• Heightening imperative for policy impact decreased critique

Bringing home the bacon, Nairobi
Challenges of mobility research & engagement

• Information is difficult to obtain:
  – Multi-sited
  – Dynamic
  – Reasons for invisibility

• Movements do not match planning cycles and spatial mandates

• Research field closely tied to policy concerns

• Migration threatens socio-political community
There is a need to improve, the availability of demographic information to municipalities; improving inter-departmental data gathering and policy cohesion tools; conducting research on migration dynamics...’ (Roux 2009:7).

• Data availability a problem, but by no means the only one
  – Lack of capacity to collect
  – Narrow and limited consistency in collection and measurement
  – Lack of capacity to use
• Primary reasons for misuse are bureaucratic and political
  – No belief in the need for data
  – Anti-migration and mobility bias and naiveté
  – No budgetary support for additional needs
  – Fear of exposing or heightening shortcomings
  – Public participation

Illustrations from local govt: the political

Obsession, Senzo Shabanugu
Towards evaluating local govt preparedness

Profile of Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga
Conclusions

• Improve data collection and technocratic capacity
• Heightened understanding of data use and abuse
• Create autonomous sphere for data collection and analysis
• Enhanced focus on:
  – Budgeting process
  – Accountability mechanisms
  – Public participation
  – Incentivizes for data collection and use
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