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**‘I make signs’: a rhetorical analysis of Katlehong’s informal enterprises
and ‘high-end’ wall communications as
a reflection of conflicting township identities**

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To my late my late grandmother maSibeko— you may have not lived to see all my achievements, but I made it because of you and your daughter my mom, Ms Nelisiwe Sibeko. Your beliefs and prayers sustained me throughout the tough days, thank you, “You raised one stubborn man!”

Maziya,

Gembe, Mkhabela,

Mcusi omhlophe izandla nezinyawo,

Wena wenjiki emnyama yasoHlelo!

Ngiyabonga.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates vernacular typography and images, as well as ‘high-end’ graphic art advertising murals, found in Katlehong Township, South Afrika, with the aim of demonstrating how these promotional signs construct a visual rhetoric that is embedded with connotations of conflicting township identities. Vernacular ‘signages’ are deeply expressive of township experience, in terms of local people, township economy, lifestyle, and a shared language, namely *kasi lingo*. Central to this local visual culture, which is applied to promote the services of *spaza* shops, supermarkets, barber shops and salons, is the use of language, expressed as letterforms, to signify ‘oneness’. ‘High-end’ advertising murals, on the other hand, seek to ‘remake’ the township by introducing Katlehong to a global community and instilling a brand-oriented township lifestyle.

Signage of informal enterprises and ‘high-end’ wall communications in Katlehong are crafted by different creative practitioners, from different disciplines and with different skill sets; however, the application and rendering of letterforms and images all function as elements of visual rhetoric where the aim is to enhance the persuasiveness of the communications. Hence, I apply the rhetorical appeals of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* as key categories in my analytical framework. In order to explore the question of visual identity in the township, I analyse eight examples according to the rhetorical appeals made by the context, the location, the letterforms and imagery of the signs.

The visual rhetoric of township sign-making has not been thoroughly analysed as communication embedded in and influenced by the local culture and lifestyle of the township space. Consequently, my study makes an important contribution to the discourse on South Afrikan graphic design, as I am able to investigate township signages as a scholar and graphic designer who is ‘at home’ in this environment. Nevertheless, despite this dual positioning, many township residents found the formal aspects of my investigation intimidating and my study therefore also highlights some of the broader methodological challenges faced by researchers engaging with design research in peripheral spaces.

Key words: graphic design, identity, Katlehong, sign-making, typography, visual rhetoric, vernacular.

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CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

1.1 KATLEHONG AS A SPACE FOR VISUAL RESEARCH

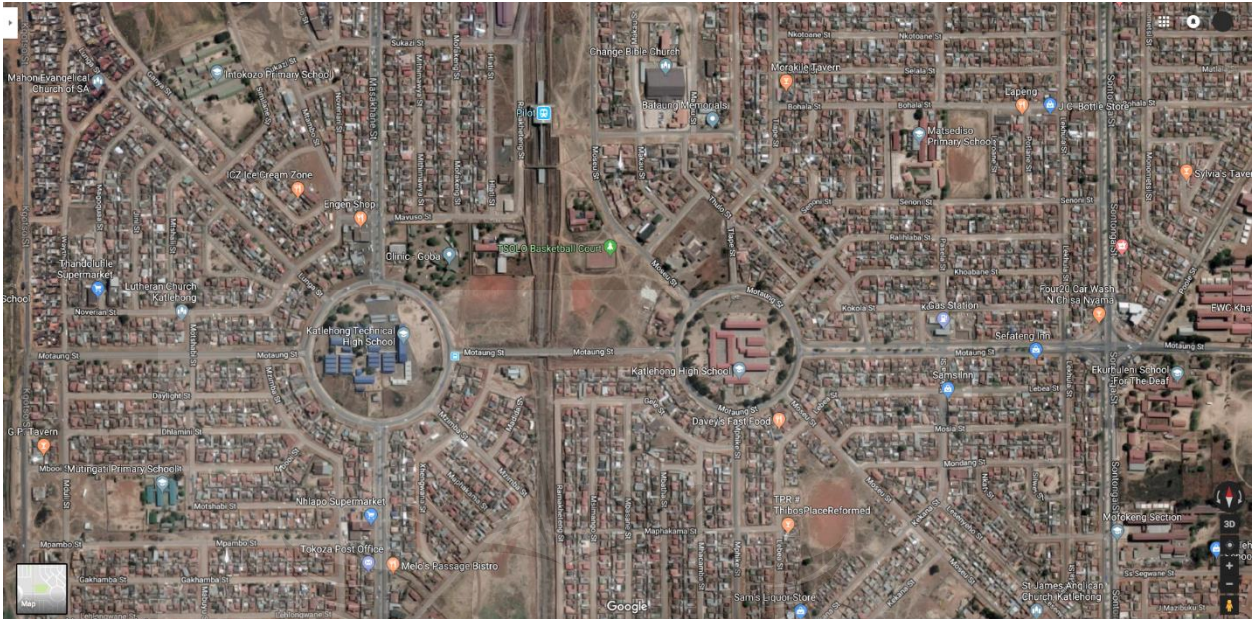


Figure 1 Satellite view of Katlehong township 2018 (Katlehong 2018).

Katlehong township is one of the spaces that was a creation of South Afrika's¹ racialised form of urbanisation inflicted upon people who are of Afrikan descent, that is, Black people. The place is located 30 kilometers east of Johannesburg, and south of Germiston. Katlehong came into existence during the period of *apartheid* in South Afrika. An archival document on Katlehong (Profile of Katlehong CCA 1 [sa]:[sp]) in the Katlehong Public Library indicates that the land was bought in 1924 by the Germiston City Council as part of the Urban Areas Act, 41. Prior to that, in the 1920s, it was a farm known as Natalspuit. The purchase was made in an attempt to address the overcrowding in Georgetown and Dukatole Locations that had been established in 1905 and 1912 respectively (Kok 1992:47). Katlehong eventually included the farms of Palmietfontein, Vlakplaats, Rooikop and Cawdor Plots as well as parts of the Palmietfontein Airport (Kok 1992: 48). However, it would be 30 years before the inhabitants of Georgetown and Dukatole would be relocated here; although the town of Katlehong was established in 1947, it was only proclaimed as a 'black' township in 1954 (Kok 1992:49; Profile of Katlehong CCA 1 [sa]:[sp]).

¹ The writing of Afrika with a 'k' is associated with pan-Afrikanism, and afro-centrism. Typographer Saki Mafundikwa (2007:ix) mentions the difference when writing Africa with a k, rather than the letter c, which is in the character and the sound of the word. In Afrikan languages, including Afrikaans, the writing of Afrika is with a 'k'.

'Katlehong' is a Sotho name that means 'to progress' (Kok 1992:49). Structurally, Katlehong is a calculated and mathematically organised space; architect Glen Mills (1989:65-66) and historian Jacob Dlamini (2009: 43) suggest that this organisational structure reflects the space as an instrument of control. The rectangular blocks, and intersecting straight lines reference the grid structures of a European, modernist design language (**Fig. 1**).

This spatial organisation has resulted in Katlehong being divided into 32 'sections'. Dlamini (2009:43) states that each section gets its name from local influential people who were from that particular section. Thus, Katlehong's sections use names that are common in Black people's surnames, such as *Skosana*, *Nhlapho* or *Mokoena Section*. I am from Skosana Section in Katlehong and have been a resident of the township since birth: my family members identify strongly with the township's history, as they were removed from the Germiston area in 1957. Almost all of my family, including my mother and her siblings, were born in Katlehong and we are still residents of Katlehong. However, Katlehong is only one of many South African townships that share its political history and establishment with other communities such as Soweto (South Western Townships) and Alexandra.



Figure 2 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), barbershop/ salon / shoe repair shop (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong, 2018.

One of the most interesting cultures of the townships of the post-apartheid South Africa is the proliferation of informal enterprises,² especially when it comes to the occupation and use of space in the township environment (**Fig. 2**). These informal enterprises have established a unique means of visually

² Informal enterprises often get labeled as such owing to their non-conforming business attitude, not having a registered trade mark and not being eligible for taxation (Rogerson 2000:673-697).

communicating their products and services and have attracted the attention of international creative practitioners such as the British photographer Simon Weller and American pop musician Solange, as well as local graphic designer Garth Walker.

One of the major signifiers of the township's identity can therefore be witnessed in the use and application of expressive typography and a personalised illustration style. These visuals play a crucial role in understanding how the community interacts and shares information about its surroundings. These images are what I view as being signs, or *signages*,³ that carry meanings about the township, and how people identify with a particular enterprise, as well as how the enterprise communicates with and appreciates the community of Katlehong. The signages are common in *spaza* shops, barber shops, hair salons and local craft shops that are housed in small backroom shacks, shipping containers, or garages. Informal enterprises such as barbershops and salons are structured in a manner that is not fixed to one place; some are in shacks and thus they become mobile signs that can be moved around the township in case the owner wants to relocate to another space.

Katlehong embraces the idea of community, which is a form of living that is deeply rooted in the spirit of sharing the very small spaces the people have inherited from apartheid. The idea of sharing in this case also involves making a living. Rental prices are not market related, as one would have them in cities; rather, the deal is made in recognition that an individual is trying to make an economic head start. Yards in Katlehong are pretty small, depending on the section, perhaps 23 by 14 meters.



³ Katja Fleischmann (2011: 83) and Schalk Venter (2012: 13) refer to "signage", but this term suggests a systematic use of universalised information design, which is the product of an industrialised Western, consumer culture. I have therefore coined the term *signages* to distinguish the practice of township sign-making — a visual grammar that signifies a history, present and future that is shared by the community and adopted by outsiders who want to belong to the township community — from *signage*.



Figure 3 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), house setting between the owners and the tenants, Katlehong, 2017.



Figure 4 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Kasi tuck shop, Katlehong, 2018.

Usually those spaces would be occupied by one or two room matchbox houses, but some residences consist of four, or more, rooms — houses we grew up calling *emabig hawusini* (big houses). In the small houses, such as the one in which I was raised, one often experiences an influx of occupants with the main house surrounded by backrooms and small shacks erected next to each other (Figs. 3 & 4).



Figure 5 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Kasi shop and signage (signage crafter unknown). *Kota* refers to a ‘quarter’ of bread stuffed with fried potatoes. This form of food is typical of South African township urban culture and lifestyle, 2018.

This culture of sharing space to make a living often involves migrant labourers, both from the rural parts of South Africa, Southern African Development Community (SADC) regions, and as far away as East Africa. People come to Gauteng to look for economic emancipation and the township is therefore often a temporary space. Some residents are not migrant labourers, but informal entrepreneurs, who contribute to the mix of people who came to Katlehong for various reasons, economic or otherwise. One yard may therefore involve the owners of the yard, the tenants — often referred to as *abaghashi* — and the owners

of a spaza or barber shop. A house may be owned by a family of *amaZulu*, for example, and they would sublet space to a Mozambican, Zimbabwean or a Xhosa person. In this interaction and sharing of space, language plays a crucial role in shaping township culture, to the extent that when we speak, we speak in a manner that can be understood by everyone — language in this sense is used as a tool of *accommodation*. As Paul Kroskrity (2000:111) argues, *identity* is “the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories”. What is of specific interest is how the informal enterprises construct messages that apply South African ethnic languages, integrated with township language (also known as *kasie*⁴ slang or *kasie lingo*) (Fig. 5).

1.2. SIGN MAKING IN KATLEHONG



Figure 6 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Alex Molefe working on a wall sign for a housing client, Katlehong, 2018 (used with permission from Alex Molefe).



Figure 7 Mkhekhe painting #CORNER RESTU...signage, Xolisa (photographer), Katlehong 2019 (used with permission from Mkhekhe).

I have selected Katlehong’s signages for analysis as I am from the township and have an intimate relationship with the space. I utilise the services offered by the enterprises and experience their advertising every day. However, I am also a practicing graphic designer, and post-graduate student, whose interest is in visuals and their relationship to personal identity, shared identity and commerce. I discovered that the people who make the signs for the informal enterprises are my neighbours, one of whom lives across the street from my home. This crafter/signage maker goes by the local name *Mkhekhe* or *Jaman*, because of his dreadlocks (Fig.7). Mkhekhe offers hand-generated sign making to all kinds of informal enterprises in Katlehong, and he signs his work with his contact details. I also came across another local crafter/signage maker who calls himself Alex (Fig. 6). While he was working and talking to me, Alex declared: “I am not an artist — I make signs!”.

⁴ From the Afrikaans word *lokasie*, meaning ‘location’.

These signs, executed by individuals who have not received formal training in advertising design, can be regarded as *vernacular* sign making. The dictionary definition of *vernacular* is a “form of a language that a particular group of speakers use *naturally*, especially in *informal* situations ... when it is *different from the standard* language” (vernacular 2018, emphasis added). However, in specialised use, the term is also applied to “architecture ... dance, music, art, etc. ... that is in a style liked or performed by *ordinary* people” (vernacular 2018, emphasis added). Steven Heller and Christene Thompson (in Venter 2012:8) define ‘vernacular typography’ as

the limited, though functional, vocabulary of sign painters, printers and other graphic arts journeymen who produce billboards, menus, phone book ads, and other such prosaic artifacts.



Figure 8 Joseph Aduro (photographer), Kaa bu Ame Hair Cut barbershop haircut (signage crafter unknown), Ghana 2018 (Celebrating Ghana’s Amazing Handpainted Barbershop Signs 2018).



Figure 9 Feisal Omar (photographer), Cigale Fast Food signage (signage crafter unknown), (Somalia's Hand Painted Storefronts 2019).

As a resident of Katlehong, I was surprised to discover that vernacular signage is not unique to South Afrikan township culture. It is a global phenomenon, and has been documented in North and South America, Europe, Israel, Japan and the Caribbean (see Woodward (sa); Fleishman 2011; Fella 2000). It also exists in other parts of Afrika, for instance, in Somalia and Ghana (see Figs. 8 & 9), where depictions of hairstyles on wooden boards have been sold as art pieces since the 1930s (Djossa 2018: [sp]).

The notion of the 'vernacular' probably entered mainstream graphic design discourse during the debate between Tibor Kalman and Joe Duffy, moderated by Steven Heller and hosted by *Print* magazine in its New York offices in 1991 (see Kennedy 2011). Kalman (in Kennedy 2011) accused Duffy of producing "deceptive" design, and contrasted Duffy's "impeccably rendered graphic style" (Kennedy 2011) with his own "identification with the vernacular". Kalman (in Kennedy 2011) summarised his attitude to the vernacular:

I respect the authority of it, I respect the simplicity of it, I respect the naturalness of it ... It's like design without all of this process and theory ... the way in the Caribbean some guy will take a black roller and write this 9-foot G-A-S on the side of a brick building ... how to think about something in a clear and uncomplex and unfiltered and uneducated way.

However, when Heller asked if Kalman would employ this 'uneducated Caribbean guy', Kalman responded: "I'd laugh him out of the room". Heller (in Kennedy 2011) then accused Kalman of being dishonest, "appropriating something from someone you wouldn't hire in a million years". The argument

moved on to other issues, but the point that was made about the appropriation of a ‘natural’ vernacular by ‘educated’ designers remains relevant to this study.

1.3 ‘OCCUPY ALL STREETS’: KEYS COMMUNICATIONS TOWNSHIP WALL MEDIA



Figure 10 Advertisement for Iwisa Maize Meal featured on Keys Communications’ client page (Our latest and greatest work [sa]).

Thus, in recent years, I have witnessed the boom of *high-end* professional airbrushed advertisements on the walls of selected Katlehong houses (**Fig. 11**). These images use township *lingo*, and are hand generated, but they advertise big brands in South Afrika that appeal to the township market. These advertisements are the product of a company called Keys Communications that prides itself as being “100% Black Owned, and 100%& [sic] Black Managed” (About Keys Communications [sa]). I have observed their work, and how they present themselves to the township and to their potential clients: they have a logo, promote their services online and claim to be “Township Media Specialists” (Defining Keys Communications [sa]) (**Figs. 11 & 12**).



Figure 11 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Keys Communication branding in Katlehong, 2018.

The company was established by an unidentified “black lady” (Defining Keys Communications [sa]:[sp]) in 2009 with a “mission to OCCUPY ALL STREETS”⁵ and it has offices in Johannesburg, South Afrika and Harare, Zimbabwe. Keys Communications applies its visuals mostly to the walls of large, brick houses situated on street corners next to main roads. An interesting factor in the battle ‘to occupy the streets’ is that Keys Communications rents these walls from home owners who do not get remunerated for barber shop or salon signages in their yards

(although they do get paid for subletting the available space to these enterprises).

An important proprietary tool employed by Keys Communications is what it calls “High Definition Airbrushing” (Defining Keys Communications [sa]), which, the company claims, is the “highest form of Township Wall Media Production Finishes”. Thus, whereas the informal enterprise style is self-authored, imaginative and personal, as well as crafted with limited resources, the high-end displays of Keys

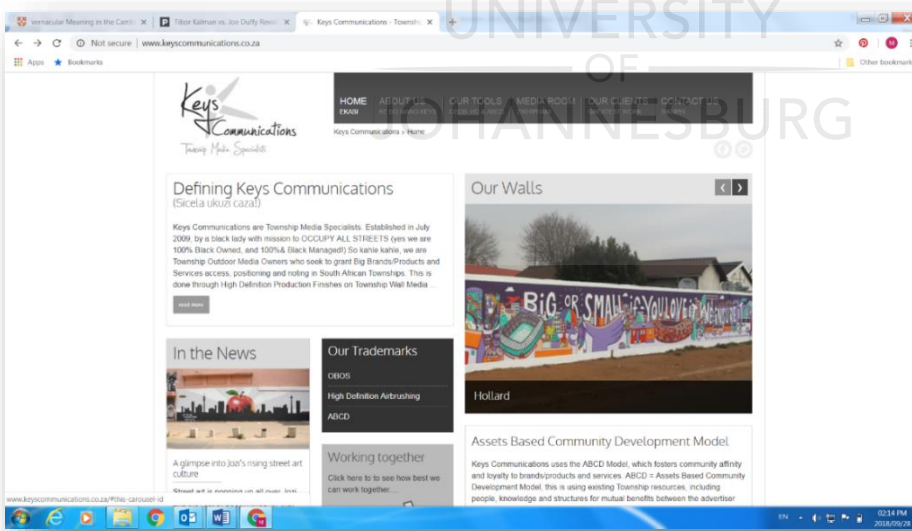


Figure 12 Keys Communications’ website home page, 2018 (Defining Keys Communications [sa]).

⁵ This slogan appears to be a reference to the *Occupy Wall Street* movement that began in New York in September 2011.

Communications follow industry directives and argue for technological advancement and highly finished, 'clean' design.

Another interesting aspect of Keys Communications that came to light during preliminary research is that the company rarely creates the designs that it contracts to implement in townships (Lunga 2018/ 5/28). It is therefore likely that the designer of the Iwisa Maize Meal wall advertisement (Fig. 7) has no connection with township culture but is only copying an 'unfiltered and uneducated' process to gain adherence from a particular audience.

1.4 INTERROGATING THE VERNACULAR

In an interview with Garth Walker, typographer Tobias Frere-Jones (2018: [sp]) refers to South Afrikan 'street type' as "a national treasure ... [that should be] protected". Walker himself is recognised as a seminal figure in terms of documenting and 'recycling' South Afrikan vernacular typography in his

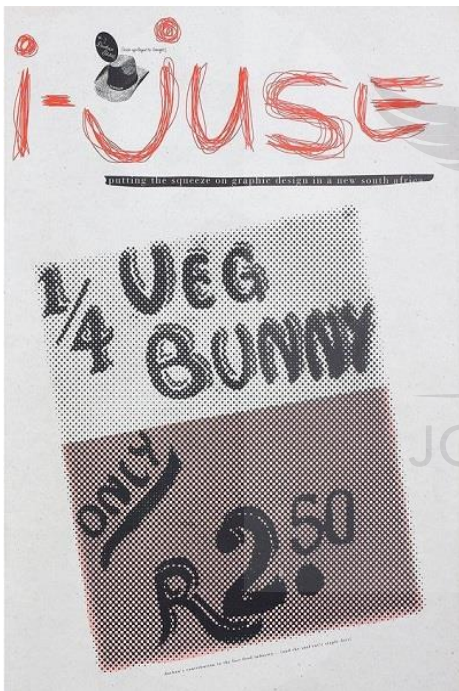


Figure 13 Garth Walker and Siobhan Gunning (designers), cover for *i-jusi* #1 (Print has an important 2017).

experimental magazine, *i-jusi* (Fig. 13) (see Willemse 2014; Venter 2012; Moys 2004). Walker's fascination with the vernacular can be likened to the work of the American typographer, Ed Fella (1938-), who photographed signs he saw on his car trips across the United States of America (USA). Rick Poyner (2020) comments that the book *Edward Fella: letters on America: photographs and lettering* (2000), with a text by Lewis Blackwell, is "a cornucopia of vernacular lettering". However, the publication celebrates Fella's own work; it does not seek to examine vernacular lettering itself.⁶

A prominent online project titled *Vernacular Typography* managed by Molly Woodward ([sa])⁷ confirms that vernacular signage is a global phenomenon, but also reveals that the signs of informal enterprises in South Afrika have not received much exposure. Woodward ([sa]) created an archive of vernacular signage, as she feels that it is being endangered by the "homogenizing influences" of corporate advertising design.

⁶ An even earlier example of the documenting of vernacular signage is the work of Walker Evans (1903-1975) who photographed hand-painted lettering in the 1930s as part of an assignment for the Farm Security Administration (Walker Evans 2020; Poyner 2020).

⁷ At the time of writing, the website, that documents a project sponsored by the New York Foundation for the Arts, tops the list of entries when the term *vernacular typography* is entered in Google's search function.

However, while Woodward's website features signage from the Americas, Europe, Israel and Japan, examples from Afrika are absent. *Spaza*-shops, that some may argue are a unique South Afrikan culture, are not featured at all.

Surprisingly little has been written on the topic of vernacular typography, beyond its influence on professional graphic designers such as Fella and Walker. One publication that comments on South Afrikan vernacular sign-making is Simon Weller's *South African township barbershops and salons* (2011), in which the photographer explores the social spaces of several South Afrikan townships. However, although Weller, with a contribution by Garth Walker, contextualises his photographs with "fascinating essays ... on the aesthetics of these hubs and their signage through interviews with the owners, customers and sign designers" (Popova [sa]), the publication is not a scholarly analysis of his subject. Schalk Venter's (2012) Master's dissertation, *The people's typography: a social semiotic account on the relationship between 'township typography' and South African mainstream cultural production* (2012), while underpinned by a scholarly framework and claiming to reflect upon 'township typography' in South Afrika, finally considers the vernacular only as it has been incorporated into South Afrikan mainstream design. Both Weller and Venter, despite their interest in 'township typography', are also 'outsiders' in the communities that they study. Weller (in Libsekal 2018) reflects:

I think local knowledge is key ... [W]hat I quickly understood was that it simply was not appropriate for a white man to walk around taking photographs in the townships.

1.5 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study is to identify and contrast the visual rhetoric employed by both informal enterprises and 'high-end' wall communications in Katlehong. I do this in order to demonstrate how these 'speakers' apply letterforms and imagery on structures in the township space and thereby construct and reflect contrasting communal identities.

My research objectives are therefore the following:

- To compile a literature review that addresses ideas about typography/ type, vernacular typography and images, culture, post-colonial identity, Afrikan identity, identity, language, South African graphic design and signage.
- Write up a background to the study of township typography and high-end wall communications that acknowledges my own engagement with signages both as a graphic designer and resident of Katlehong.
- Develop a rhetorical framework for my analysis.

- Record visual examples of vernacular signages and ‘high end’ wall communications in Katlehong
- Conduct an in-depth visual analysis that compares vernacular and ‘high-end’ approaches, by applying elements of visual rhetoric as my analytical tool.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Broad research paradigm

My study follows a qualitative research approach that John Creswell (2014:3-4) defines as

an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problem ... data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.

I undertook an investigation that required me to explore the visual rhetoric of selected images in Katlehong. I did this with the aim of providing insights about Katlehong’s culture, which in turn is reflective of ‘township identity’. My study does not seek to provide definite answers to the themes I investigate or questions I pose; the aim is to interpret the data collected in order to contribute towards the conversation about South African graphic design and visual culture.

1.6.2 Theoretical position

The broad theoretical framework that underpins this study is identity, as it is constructed by a graphic designer or painter of signs. I investigate this concept within the framework of post-coloniality and representation and draw on, as a starting point, the texts of Hall (2000, 1997), Graham and Howard (2008), Meer (2014), Wright (2004) and Bekker and Leildé (2004). Identity discourse allows me to investigate vernacular signages as a representation that reflects people’s concepts about their social landscape. Post-colonialism informs my approach, as I find that the informal enterprises signages reference South Africa’s colonial imagery and language, but this is presented within the current urban cultural climate and economic situation. It is within this context that I argue that these two types of visuals found in Katlehong could be constructing intersecting, but contrasting, identities.

1.6.3 Methods of data collection

I use both desk and field research to collect data. I conduct a literature review of both on-line and hard copy scholarly and other publications. Data for analysis was collected by taking photographs of both

the informal enterprises signages and the ‘high-end’ wall advertising executed by Keys Communications. In doing this, I have ensured that the ethical considerations related to using human participants, where applicable, are addressed (see Section 1.7).

Although I planned to conduct interviews with crafters and shop-owners, this undertaking proved to be difficult. In some cases, language was a barrier, for example when attempting to communicate with Ethiopian and Somali shopkeepers. Many participants were prepared to give verbal permission for the taking of photographs, but refused to sign informed consent forms and were fearful of interviews. The possibility of interviews disappeared entirely in August 2019 when informal enterprises in Katlehong were looted, and the owners asked to leave South Africa by the community.

I also planned to interview representatives of Keys Communications that showed initial willingness to cooperate, but, for unknown reasons, eventually ceased all communication with me. However, I was able to gather background materials online, such as examples of Keys Communications projects. Other online articles, journals and blogs that cover township informal enterprise and their forms of communications were consulted.

1.6.4 Samples for analysis

I identified two samples for analysis:

- In terms of vernacular signs, I analyse selected signage for fast food shops, salons and barbershops in Katlehong. The selection of the establishments is based on convenience, in terms of being easily accessible, and I have an intimate relationship and daily interaction with such spaces and visuals as a township resident.
- Selected examples of ‘high-end’ wall advertising of Keys Communications in Katlehong. The ‘high-end’ visuals are also convenient and purposive in terms of their proximity to my home.

1.6.5 Method of data analysis

My framework for analysis is rhetoric. Richard Buchanan (1989:92-93), in ‘Declaration by design: rhetoric, argument, and demonstration in design practice’, defines rhetoric as a process in which a “speaker discovers arguments and presents them in suitable words and gestures to persuade an audience”; rhetoric is therefore the “art of shaping society, changing the course of individuals and communities, and setting patterns for new action”. In the same way, designers, whether their products are sophisticated or mundane, have “influenced the actions of individuals and communities, changed attitudes and values, and shaped society in surprisingly fundamental ways” (Buchanan 1989:93). In other words, rhetoric and design share the same aims and processes.

In examining the concept of rhetoric, Buchanan (1989:95) considers several themes: the idea of the designer who “invites others to share” in the world that he/she is fashioning; the idea of an audience that must be persuaded to “adopt new ways”; and the idea of a “practical life” as the outcome of design. All these themes are brought together in the idea that the designer, “instead of simply making an object or thing, is actually creating a persuasive argument”. Buchanan (1989:96) identifies three ‘elements’ of a design argument, beginning with “technological reasoning” (*logos*), followed by “character” (*ethos*), and “emotion” (*pathos*).

The *logos* of a design is the way the designer “manipulates materials and processes to solve practical problems” (Buchanan 1989:96); a design is persuasive, first and foremost, if it convinces the audience that it can lead to the “accomplishment of something useful”. Within the context of Buchanan’s (1989) text, *logos* is concerned with the functionality of a physical product; however, the concept can easily be applied to signage.

Ethos refers to the idea that a design possesses visual characteristics that are reflective of its maker’s character (Buchanan 1989:101), where the ‘maker’ (or speaker) can also be a client. Part of the ‘art of design’ is the construction and control of this character. These “personal qualities” (Buchanan 1989:101) instill confidence in an audience, irrespective of the level of *logos*. The *ethos* of a product (or a shop sign) therefore determines the credibility of the design in the life of the audience, or user.

Pathos — the emotion generated by a design — is the connection between the aesthetics of design and the fine arts (Buchanan 1989:103). Buchanan (1989:103) states that

Design provides an organization of the way we feel in a direct encounter with our environment; it provides a clarifying and fulfilling experience ... although the objective [of the design] is practical and perhaps mundane.

The function of *pathos*, therefore, is to put the audience into a particular “frame of mind” so it is persuaded that a product is “emotionally desirable and valuable” (Buchanan 1989:103). Buchanan (1989:104-105) complains that some designers employ *pathos* in a “superficial and coercive way”. However, while this type of design may have little connection with the logical reasoning of *logos*, it can play an important role in the process of persuasion.

Charles Hill and Marguerite Helmers (2004:1) expand upon the concept of visual rhetoric by arguing that there is a strong relationship between images and persuasion: people are surrounded by images daily, either at “work, on the subway, in restaurants, and along the highway”. My research also draws on the daily experiences of people in Katlehong and their engagement with images such as signages and the ‘high-end’ murals. Hill and Helmers (2004:1) argue that images have played an important role in developing the relationship of the self to its surroundings:

We learn who we are as private individuals and public citizens by seeing ourselves reflected in images, and we learn who we can become by transporting ourselves into images.

To show how images shape people's opinions and beliefs, the authors analyse a photograph by Thomas E Franklin, which depicts fire-fighters raising the American flag in the aftermath of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York, 2001. By analysing this photograph, Hill and Helmers (2004:5) demonstrate the 'possible modes' of rhetorical analysis applicable to visual culture. What is of relevance to my study is that these categories of analysis are purposively selected. Franklin's image evokes Joe Rosenthal's famous photograph of the raising of the American flag at Iwo Jimo, thus the first mode of interpretation addressed by the authors is *intertextuality*, the "recognition and referencing of images from one scene to another" (Hill & Helmers 2004:5). The grouping of the three firefighters suggests the Christian Trinity, so the second mode of interpretation is symbolism; the fire-fighters are all men, so gender presents itself as a mode of interpretation; nostalgia for a 'heroic' past suggest the mode of time, while the composition of the photograph requires a discussion of hierarchy as a rhetorical device (Hill & Helmers 2004:5-9). What this approach therefore allows me to do is purposively select modes of interpretation to analyse sign-making in Katlehong: while gender is a central concern in Hills and Helmer's analysis, I place letterforms and language at the center of my study.

I have therefore tabulated my analytical framework and categories of interpretation (see **Table A**, overleaf) by intertwining Buchanan's (1989) 'elements of design' and Hill and Helmers's (2004) purposive approach in order to enlarge the categories of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* with the interpretative elements of structure, environment and location; letterforms and language; and use of imagery.

Elements of rhetoric	Categories of interpretation
Logos:	How does the design (signage) address a practical problem?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure, environment and location • Letterforms and language • Image
Ethos:	What type of character is reflected by the communication?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure, environment and location • Letterforms and language • Image
Pathos:	What is the emotional appeal of the design within the context of Katlehong residents' 'direct encounter with [their] environment'?
Table A Analytical framework	

1.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although I did not, in the end, make use of human participants as a main source of data, ethical matters did complicate my study. As pointed out in Section 1.6.3, I was given verbal permission to take photographs of properties, but the idea of signing consent forms caused alarm since the majority of owners of the informal enterprises are migrants. This difficulty impacted upon the planned scope and nature of my study. I did, however, obtain written consent to photograph the Katlehong crafters Alex Molefe and Mkekhe (see Appendix 1).

The study is not in any way harmful to the environment, to individuals or corporations. As required by the university, I have adhered to the rules of citation as outlined in the FADA Writing Guide (2019) and I have disclosed the source of all the information and images used in my study.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF MY STUDY

My study seeks to contribute to the gap in graphic design studies in the field of typography and illustration within the South African urban contemporary design culture. As a practicing graphic designer who is a Katlehong resident, I am well placed to interrogate the rhetorical strategies of local sign makers and professional advertisers as these 'speakers' attempt to persuade an audience to not just purchase services or products, but to buy into beliefs about the township's past, present and future. This study allows me to bring my own lived experiences about post-colonial African communities, and how they

reflect their identities, to a scholarly project. I am not the first to write about Katlehong's social landscape; in *Native nostalgia* (2009) Jacob Dlamini has reflected on Katlehong from his personal experience in apartheid South Afrika. Like Dlamini, my study aims to give the reader a "new sense of townships" (Dlamini 2009:23), to contribute knowledge about urban township living, and how it is a slow, self-transforming space in the contemporary post-colonial/ post-apartheid South Afrika.

To this purpose my study highlights the intersecting identities that reflect multiculturalism and hybridity in Katlehong. Charles Puttergill and Anne Leildé (2006:13) argue that identity does not exist just as a personal phenomenon, but it is shaped by *time* and *space* that one particular individual occupies. Afrikan identities are not only influenced and shaped by political history, but also by current social and economic affairs. At the center of it all is migration: as people move around, they share more than just the space — they socialise, sharing their personal identity and are influenced by their surroundings, including media representation. Nasar Meer (2014:83) suggests that the term multiculturalism can be understood as an "outgrowth" of "diversity" in any given society. Katlehong has shown, and continues to show, this 'outgrowth of diversity', from small spaces to possibly the township as an entire landscape.

In Chapter Two I consider the literature pertaining to my study in greater detail.



CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This review addresses the following key themes that underpin my study; identity, Afrikan identity, culture, space, representation, graphic design and vernacular typography.

2.2 IDENTITY, CULTURE, SPACE, AND REPRESENTATION

Stuart Hall, in his introduction to the edited volume *Representation, cultural representation and signifying practices* (1997), investigates connections between culture and representation. His intention is to reveal that the sharing of information between a group of people leads to the construction of 'identity'. The author states that 'representation' is closely linked to 'culture', because the latter is about "shared meanings" (Hall 1997:1). Hall (1997:1) presents language as the "privileged medium" in which people "'make sense of things', in which meaning is produced and exchanged". Hall's (1997) text is important to my study as I argue that the signages found in Katlehong reflect shared meanings and representation, through the application of letterforms, language, images and the sharing of space (living as part of the township community). According to Hall (1997:1-2) signs and symbols, including written words, images and even objects, are central in shaping people's understanding and interpretation of their surroundings. Thus, signs and symbols can be understood as a 'language' that "represent[s] to other people our concepts, ideas and feelings" (Hall 1997:1).

Hall's introductory chapter to *Questions of cultural identity* (Hall & du Gay 2011), 'Who needs identity?', unpacks identity as a need, an agent of power. Hall (2000:17) argues that the concept of identity should not be regarded as "essentialist, but ... [as] strategic and positional". Identity "does *not* signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change" (Hall 2000:17, emphasis in original); neither is it a "collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficially ... imposed 'selves' which a people with a shared history or ancestry hold in common" (Hall, in Hall 2000:17). Hall (2000:17) states that "identities are never unified", but rather "fragmented and fractured ... constructed across different, intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions". Because the construction of identity occurs "within, not outside discourse" (Hall 2000:17), one needs to understand identity within specific contexts, because it is produced within a certain period, and practices. In the community of Katlehong, the crafters of vernacular signages act as the voice of the informal enterprise owners, who mostly comprise immigrants. 'Language' and 'letterforms', as I argue in my study, were applied as a strategy to reflect 'oneness', yet this constructed

identity, as Hall (2000:17) points out, was to prove 'fractured' within discourses that remain antagonistic, and conflicted.

Identity proves to be an open-ended topic of discussion in terms of visual culture and representation, as it has multiple concepts that are entangled along with it. One such concept is heritage. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (2008: 1-2) bridge the gap between 'identity' and 'heritage', observing that the argument and formulation of 'identity' can no longer be simply interpreted within the "national context that has so defined it since the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century". According to Graham and Howard (2008:1) identity and heritage, as concepts, are not fixed. The authors argue that like 'identity', 'heritage' is a "social construct" (Graham & Howard 2008:2) influenced by politics, economy, and current social landscapes. What one gathers here is that heritage is less concerned with physical objects, but rather the meaning that is embedded in the object that acts as a form of representation. Graham and Howard (2008:2) mention specific 'lenses' that one can apply in viewing and understanding the concept of heritage namely, nationality, wealth, gender, personal history, and *insideness*. These 'lenses', however, may vary according to the perspective of the viewer who is reliant on the "situation of the observer within time and space" (Graham & Howard 2008:2). A certain 'heritage' might be shared with others owing to shared historical events and memories and the meanings reached then reflects identity. Citing Neville Douglas, Graham and Howard (2008:5) argue that identity is also a social construct that is influenced by politics:

[as] identity is expressed and experienced through communal membership, awareness will develop of the Other ... Recognition of Otherness will help reinforce self-identity, but may also lead to destruction, avoidance, exclusion from and distancing from groups so defined.

As such, Graham and Howard's (2008) text informs the historical, political and economic positions that underpin my study of identity in relation to the visuals crafted for the benefit of the communities of Katlehong. Nasar Meer (2014:4), in *Key concepts in race and ethnicity*, places emphasis on how *identity* is a term that is closely associated with 'being' and the 'surrounding' one occupies. Meer's (2014) study presents identity as a *chameleon* that takes any shape or form within the discourse of representation in post-colonial spaces. My study is not an investigation of the social structures of post-colonial communities, but through my analysis I seek to uncover what kind of identity the signages reveal *within* a specific social structure. Although Katlehong is a post-colonial/ apartheid space and the influence on language, images and letterform is that of Western culture, signages are nevertheless constructed as a specific response to Katlehong's informal enterprises' communication needs.

Within an Afrikan context, Michelle Wright (2004:2), in *Becoming black, creating identity in the African diaspora*, presents identity from a historical perspective, by referencing colonialism, and the institutionalisation of racism and how that defines Afrikan peoples' identity and their social landscape. Wright (2004:2) argues that "Black Africans" describe themselves through "shared histories, language, and cultural values". Wright's (2004) text informs my study in terms of how Katlehong township identity is defined through its history, migration and economy. Notably, the informal enterprises typography and imagery have been a bridge between the Afrikan migrants and Katlehong residents, specifically with reference to language.

Reflections on identity in four African cities (2006), edited by Simon Bekker and Anne Leildé, unpacks post-colonial/ apartheid identities in South Afrika, focusing on Johannesburg and Cape Town townships. The book also covers cities in other Afrikan countries such as Libreville in Gabon, and Lome which is the capital city of Togo. Bekker (2006:1) found that in South Afrika identity construction is defined from a class and nationality perspective— with language and race as additional primary defining factors of self-identity. Of interest to my study is Izak van der Merwe and Arlene David's (2006:25-44) reflection on identity in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The authors provide a complex understanding of a city, defining it as a space that does not comprise one homogenous number of people, but consists of "diverse grouping of individuals" (Van der Merve & Davids 2006:25) and has characteristics that are influenced by the "unique demographic profile of its inhabitants". In the same way, crafters of signages are individuals who are inhabitants of Katlehong, and who shape the identity of the space by generating self-taught and intuitive imagery for both economic and cultural gains.

In the same volume, Charles Puttergill and Leilde (2006:14) unpack two aspects relating to the concept of identity and its relationship to 'social representation', arguing that 'representation' is shaped by "an exchange and interaction process". The first aspect is "socio-cultural" (Puttergill & Leilde 2006:14), and it deals with the hierarchy of the everyday engagement in a group of people. The second aspect is "the interactional" and deals with the negotiation of meaning in everyday communication. Both these aspects are key functions of township signages and 'high-end' mural walls. Puttergill and Leilde (2006:12) argue that in late modernity identity construction is inspired by a number of factors such as globalisation, markets, media values and diverse ethnicities: political borders are points of references in questioning identity at all stages of "socio-political integration and differentiation" (Puttergill & Leilde 2006:12-13). Since I live in Katlehong, I witnessed the xenophobic attacks and lootings of the informal enterprises as I was conducting my research for this study; my argument for the construction of 'oneness', with regard to

informal trading spaces and township identity, was challenged and continues to be challenged by the township community.

2.3 GRAPHIC DESIGN, GRAPHIC ARTISTS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNAL IDENTITY

In *Representation of national identity in graphic design* (2011), Raghvi Khurana (2011:14) reflects on the duties of a graphic designer, stating that a designer is a “visual communicator” who resolves a problem in a manner that communicates and applies certain aesthetics as part of the solution to that problem. Khurana (2011:7) introduces his argument on identity by stating that the term can be understood as a representation of a certain individual in relation to her/his surrounding world. Khurana (2001:15-24) analyses typography and images in order to get a sense of how a specific design, such as the 1950s International Typographic Style (ITS), reflects a particular national identity. My study does not engage with national identity; however, Khurana’s (2011) text offers useful views on how graphic designers have the power to use their personal identity to influence communal identity.

Here it is important to note the difference between the function of a ‘graphic designer’ and a ‘graphic artist’ as these terms relate to my study. The design of Keys wall promotions involves trained graphic designers,⁸ but the final mural on the wall is executed by graphic artists. Jeanette Warren (2019), who has worked as both a graphic designer and a graphic artist, makes the following distinction: a graphic designer’s function is to order graphic design elements through the application of the formal principles of design in response to a client’s brief.⁹ The primary function of the graphic artist, on the other hand, is to create ‘entertaining’ illustrations (Warren 2019). According to Warren (2019), a graphic artist’s work typically involves creating graphic novels. However, this is not the case with the Keys murals. A graphic novel still has to be designed by the illustrator, but the graphic artists employed by Keys were not required to design the murals, merely to copy the letterforms, imagery and layout provided by graphic designers.

2.4. SIGNAGE, TYPOGRAPHY AND THE VERNACULAR

In *Stop, think, go, do: how graphic design and typography influence behavior*. Steven Heller and Mirko Ilic (2012:7) reflect that, “Our lives are filled with typographic and pictorial decrees and warnings designed to either regiment, protect, or otherwise condition the everyday”. The authors present an overview of typographic images located in public spaces in order to explain how their visual characteristics

⁸ As opposed to ‘crafters’ who are not employed in the mainstream graphic design industry.

⁹ The elements of design are usually regarded as line, colour, shape, space, symmetry, scale, texture and direction; the formal principles of design include balance, contrast, repetition, emphasis, movement, unit and rhythm (Darstaru 2019).

influence behaviour, arguing that it is more than just about selling a product or rendering a service, but that there is also a battle for control between the visuals and the viewer (Heller & Ilic 2012:7). Heller and Ilic (2012: 8) select well-known graphic design works and demonstrate how they are not just crafted for visual pleasure, but force the viewer to pay attention, and feel certain emotions. The authors trace this design practice to World War One and World War Two posters (Heller & Ilic 2012:8). Although they caution that not all design “mandate[s] behavioral submission or acquiescence” (Heller & Ilic 2012:8), Heller and Ilic (2012:8-9) propose methods of examining graphic design as an agent that influences behaviour, and draft the following key functions of visual communication, namely: to inform, advocate, play, caution, entertain, express, educate and transform. Several of these themes emerge in my analysis of Katlehong’s township culture, its promotional signs, and how they reflect and seek to transform communal identity.

Charlyn Dyson (2007:83) explores the negotiation of identity via language in a post-apartheid South African township and examines the ways in which language “underpins the individual and collective identities of [residents] marginalized by poverty, location and race”. Steven Heller (2014) In *Design literacy: understanding graphic design* presents a collection of texts on the field of communication, with topics of discussion that include typography, letterforms and language. Heller (2014:[sp]) argues that letters can be more than just alphabets; when one looks at the letters closely in terms of their visual form, character, and styling, they can be “agents of power and tools of the powerful ... Conversely, certain [type]faces represent those who fight power” (Heller 2014: [sp]). Heller (2014:[sp]) finds it difficult to separate type and language, and, paraphrasing Marshall McLuhan’s observation that ‘letters are like teeth’, asserts that, “typefaces are the incisors of language” (Heller 2014: [sp]).

Heller (2014:[sp]) therefore shares Khurana’s (2011:14) view on graphic visuals and their societal roles in terms of power dynamics, namely that a designer is tasked with the responsibility of determining, visually, what the community ascribes to as a collective. This line of thinking corresponds to that of Katja Fleischmann (2011:83) who points out that letterforms can have more than one interpretation based on their “stylistic features”. Fleischman (2011:83) defines typography as an “artform” that involves composing letterforms in a creative manner that conveys a message. Fleischmann (2011:83) maintains that typography has multiple lives: apart from conveying written information, vernacular letterforms in particular possess visual characteristics that challenge the formal use and application of ‘type’. The construction of *ethos* in the choice of style and rendering of letterforms in signages and high-end wall advertising is therefore an important aspect of my analysis.

As pointed out in the Background to this study, relatively few scholarly texts have surfaced that engage with and critique vernacular type and imagery. An online article by Christina Djossa (2018: [sp]) provides an overview of the hand painted signs used by barbershops in the streets of Kumasi and Accra in Ghana. Djossa (2018: [sp]), whose focus is the symbolism of hair, traces this style of painting to the 1930s, when Afrikan people taught themselves to draw and paint hairstyles on wooden boards. Djossa (2018: [sp]) highlights the fact that the painting of people and hair has deep associations with Afrikan identity and remarks that the “the head and hair are canvases for expressing ideas about wealth, power, intelligence, status and style.” In the 1990s, barbershop signs signaled that they were in touch with global trends by featuring celebrities like Will Smith, Tupac or Ludacris, sometimes with an American flag painted as backdrop. However, Djossa (2018:[sp]) comments that “unless you visit a tourist shop ... it’s harder [these days] to find these signs”.

Katya Fleischmann (2011:83-84) shares the general concern that vernacular typography is a vanishing craft. In her article, ‘Lettering and signage in the urban environment of North Queensland’s capital: tropical flair or univernacular?’,¹⁰ Fleischmann (2011:88) describes some of the techniques used in local hand lettering in order to convey the city’s tropical location, namely

bold, bulging letterforms and bright colours that provide cognitive hooks [that] often feature yellowish-white lettering framed by dark outlines representing the shadows that would be cast by the tropical sun if these two-dimensional letters were indeed three-dimensional constructions.

However, Fleischman (2011: 89) concludes that there is nothing inherently “unique” about these letterforms: Townsville’s signage references its geographical location, but it is mainly as a result of the many hours of sunshine taking its toll on the painted signage and weathering through cyclones. The fading, hand-painted signs are nevertheless a feature of the town, but Fleischman (2011:92) concludes that the implementation of corporate design strategies at a national and international level will “melt away” this craft.

In terms of South Afrikan literature on letterforms and identity, a notable text is Schalk Venter’s study, *The people’s typography: a social semiotic account on the relationship between ‘township typography’ and South African mainstream cultural production* (2012). Venter (2012:[sp]) offers a theoretical analysis of ‘township typography’ as a “complex visual dialect generated by various economic and historical factors within the South African social landscape” and demonstrates how it is “drawn into mainstream cultural production, particularly in the field of local advertising”. Venter (2012:1), who first came across the phrase ‘township typography’ on the personal website of the South African copywriter

¹⁰ *Univernacular* is a term coined by Jessica Helfand (2001:45) to refer to the conformity that results from the application of digital design on typography.

Shane Durrant, admits that “the term is a complex and loaded category”, but that, for the purposes of his analysis, it “refers broadly to letterforms created in informal settlements”, a definition that is problematic since a township is not an ‘informal settlement’.¹¹ Venter (2012:3) points out that although much has been written on typography, there appears to be an “absence of work critically engaging with the relationship between large-scale commercial and vernacular typography”, a gap that his own study sets out to fill.

Venter’s dissertation draws on the social semiotic approach of Michel Halliday, as well as Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1972) and work by Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2001). Venter (2012:2) is concerned with three areas of investigation, namely cultural production, advertising and vernacular typography. Although the aim of my research differs from Venter’s overall concern, namely the influence of the vernacular on mainstream typography, his dissertation highlights the need for scholarly research *within* communities in which the vernacular is created. For example, Venter (2012:13) bases his argument on the assumption that “extreme levels of poverty” are “central” to a formulation of ‘township typography’; however, he provides no evidence that he has engaged with the lived experiences in the spaces that produce this sign-making. In support of his interrogation of ‘township typography’, Venter provides two visual examples, only one of which has been photographed by the author himself in Kayamandi, an established township (adjacent to the historical town of Stellenbosch, in the Western Cape) that Venter, erroneously, refers to as an ‘informal settlement’. The single image that Venter provides is, however, disconnected from the community and appears to be the type of tourist’s snapshot that, as Shelley Butler (2009: 15) argues in her reflection on ‘pro-poor tourism’, comes close to voyeurism.

The only other example (see Venter 2012:14) in Venter’s study is also problematic in that it is a photograph taken by John Mason, a staff member of the Corcoran Department of History at the University of Virginia, who in an on-line blog reflects upon the similarity between the “exuberant signs ... common in working-class [*sic*] areas in South Africa” (Mason 2009) and the signage documented in the 1930s by the American photographer Walker Evans (1903-1975). Mason’s blog is speculative:

I'm not sure how to account for the similarities between the American signage ... and the South African signage ... It *may simply be* that shopkeepers of limited means have few choices [and] create their own signs or turn to someone in the community to do it (Mason 2009, emphasis added).

¹¹ An established township such as Katlehong, with a good infrastructure, may also include isolated areas where individuals have been granted property rights, but where development is still in progress. This, in the township, is referred to as an ‘informal settlement’; it is not equivalent to a ‘squatter camp’, which is a place where “people squat illegally” (Rademeyer 2013). It is not clear, therefore, where Venter believes ‘township typography’ can actually be found, since he seems to rule out both the township proper, as well as squatter camps.

However, Venter (2012: 13, emphasis added) not only relies on this foreign source for local ‘facts’, but paraphrases Mason to suggest that the American scholar has stated that “shopkeepers ... *have* to create their own signage”. No mention is made of ‘turning to someone in the community to do it’ — perhaps because Venter is alien to these communities and really has no idea of the ‘practices and positions’ being performed here. Venter’s informants also appear to be alien to South Afrikan township culture: Cassidy Curtis, with whom Venter discusses ‘folk typography’, lives in San Francisco, in the USA.¹² Shane Durrant, who lives in the upmarket suburb of Illovo in Johannesburg (Shane Durrant [sa]), is a (white) copywriter who has worked for prominent advertising agencies. Durrant, in his interview with Venter (2012: 61), admits that what he calls ‘township typography’ in his blog has very little to do with actual townships, since “[m]ost of the photos [on the blog] come from city centres and CBDs”. It is not even clear, since Durrant’s blog at the time of writing cannot be accessed, that these cities are South Afrikan or that Durrant took the photographs himself.

Venter (2012:8) also “specifically” cites, as an “important source”, Heller and Thompson’s definition of ‘vernacular’ design that declares that the products of vernacular crafters are “prosaic artifacts”, where ‘prosaic’ can be taken to mean unimaginative, or uninspired (prosaic 2020). This limited understanding of vernacular sign-making does not apply to the informal enterprises in Katlehong and it is a perception that my study sets out to counter.

What Venter (2012:25) proposes, as a role for ‘township typography’, is its appeal as “‘dirt’ within the contemporary field of South African cultural production”. Venter takes this idea from the work of Mary Douglas, specifically her book *Purity and danger: an analysis of pollution and taboo* (1966). Douglas (as cited by Venter 2012:26) argues that “dirt, which is normally destructive, sometimes becomes creative”. Consequently, Venter (2012:25) develops his own concept of ‘township typography’ as “cultural dirt” and then provides examples of mainstream South Afrikan designers, such as Garth Walker and Wesley van Eeden, who draw inspiration from this ‘dirt’. While this is an interesting idea, it can also be seen to belittle the township’s visual culture as so much rubbish that apparently has sprung from nowhere. If Walker’s “inspiration” (O’Toole, in Venter 2012:27) is ‘cultural dirt’, what then ‘inspired’ the crafters to create their own visuals? Once again, Venter is dismissive of the lived experience of the township.

Despite these criticisms, within the limited discourse on South Afrikan communication design, Venter’s study is a valuable interrogation of mainstream advertising’s appropriation of the township

¹² Curtis (in Venter 2012:59) refers Venter to “pixação” in São Paulo, which is urban political graffiti where the purpose is “to protest against inequalities in Brazil’s largest cities” (Siwi 2016).

letterforms to craft a visual dialect that attempts to signify “Africaness” (Venter 2012:48). Venter’s critique draws on Robin Landa’s (in Venter 2012: 42-44) explanation of the principles of advertising design, such as “type choice, colour palette, texture, pattern, [and] compositional modes”, categories of analysis that I also address in the visual rhetoric of both signages and high-end murals. Venter (2012:54), in his conclusion, acknowledges that “there is ample room” left for further research on South African ‘township typography’, although the idea that this should be done within the framework of its incorporation into mainstream visual culture, persists.

Another South African text that should be acknowledged within the theme of vernacular sign-making is Cashandra Willemse’s *Self-authorship: Garth Walker and the production of i-jusi* in which Willemse (2014) demonstrates how the zine *i-jusi* reflects a South African graphic design sub-culture. Even though Willemse’s study does not investigate signages or informal enterprises, it engages with related themes such as ‘self-expression’ and ‘authorship’ in the absence of a corporate creative process, which includes the relationship between a graphic designer and client. In addressing the concept of ‘self-authorship’ Willemse (2014:9) traces the idea to the 1990s when it gave a new dimension to mainstream graphic design practice. Willemse (2014: ii,1) unpacks self-authorship as a creative process in which a graphic designer communicates personal aesthetics and creativity to a specific audience. Willemse investigates how self-authorship informed Garth Walker’s creativity, and how the selected visuals from his *i-jusi* zines are reflective, in Willemse’s opinion, of a South African design identity. Similar observations are made by Venter (2012) in terms of Walker’s work and its relationship to South Africa’s post-apartheid/colonial identity. Although Venter (2012:29) does not analyse Walker’s typography, he points out that Walker’s output is an example of the assimilation of ‘township typography’ by mainstream design culture.

Willemse (2014:9), quoting Steven McCarthy and Christina Melibeu de Almeida, argues that “‘higher purpose’ [is] the driving force behind most self-authored works”. Willemse (2014:10) engages with the concept of self-authorship from the perspective of educated practitioners; in this case, self-authorship does not involve a client and therefore there is usually no remuneration. Willemse’s study is useful as it explains the concept of self-authorship, but overlooks the visuals that Walker appropriates, and does not examine vernacular signage-making itself. In my study I argue that, although crafters are commissioned and paid by informal traders, ‘signages’ are independent expressions of creativity that have a ‘higher’ purpose than indicating a type of shop.

An earlier Master’s dissertation by Jeanne Moys (2004) also scrutinises Walker’s work in relation to South Africa’s design culture. In *An exploration of how professional graphic design discourse impacts on innovation: a focus on the articulation of a South African design language in i-jusi* (2004), Moys

investigates how mainstream graphic design industries have responded to the 'call' in imagining a new, inclusive, design language that is reflective of South Afrika's national identity. Moys (2004:1), like Willemse, investigates this 'call' by analysing Walker's *ijusi*. Moys (2004:1) points out that prior to South Afrika's democracy, graphic design in South Afrika subscribed to European modernism. The author traces the need for a new South Afrikan design language after the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, arguing that this political change created a need for communication that addressed South Afrika's "multicultural audience". Moys (2004:1-2) cites Jacques Lange who observes that imagining a new South Afrikan visual language has become a "quest" to produce "graphic design that [is] uniquely local whilst also being internationally competitive".

Unlike Willemse, Moys (2004:5) problematises Walker's work along with the *i-jusi* zine as a blueprint for South Afrikan visual language and identity, stating that "the publication should not be uncritically accepted as an example of 'innovation' nor should Walker be uncritically accepted as South African graphic design's 'wonder-boy'" (Moys 2004:5).¹³ Moys (2004:6) questions the search for a South African design language, arguing that there can be no "fixed vocabulary" of visual elements that can be used to signify South Afrikan-ness. Rather, Moys (2004: 120), drawing on Jorge Frascara, proposes that a "(South) African design language" should not only be based on stylistic concerns, but

also on understanding how graphic designers can develop a new graphic language or languages that are not reliant on western codes and conventions but respond to different visual literacies and cultural meaning-making processes

It is not the aim of my study to demonstrate that the signages of Katlehong construct a unique South Afrikan visual language, because they do not. Nevertheless, there is much in Moys's argument that supports my approach. Moys (2004:6-7) maintains that typical textual analysis of a South African design language as it is represented in graphic design texts is problematic in two respects. Firstly, it involves the researcher imposing his/her own reading of a South African design language and the idea of 'innovation' on the object. Secondly, methods of visual analysis (for example, the visual semiotics approach of Kress

¹³ Apart from Willemse and Venter, two other scholars praise Walker's output, namely Boitumelo Kembo (2018) and Kurt Campbell (2013). Kembo's (2018) dissertation, *Exploring African-orientated aesthetics in Garth Walker's i-jusi issues of Afrika Typografika*, investigates how a South Afrikan/ Afrikan 'postcolonial aesthetic' is reflected by the zine. Kembo (2018:1-2; 115) contends that *i-jusi's* typographic style can be considered a visual dialect that is 'decolonising' South Afrikan graphic design and that Walker's 'hand lettering' in *Afrika Typographika* is "derived from an African perspective". Campbell (2013:72;81) critiques the implementation of a bland sans-serif typeface on the South Afrikan National Coat of Arms, and argues that Afrika has its own writing systems, such as the Arabic script alphabets, that are rooted in Afrika's culture and reflective of its diversity. Campbell (2013:90), like Kembo, points to the typography of *i-jusi*, as well as the work of South Afrikan typographer Jan Erasmus, claiming that their creative approach is rooted in the indigenous writing systems that originate in Afrika/ South Afrika and therefore offer more appropriate responses to the "role of type in the national branding of South Africa" (Campbell 2013:90).

and Van Leeuwen), are based on a western visual literacy. Moys (2004:7) contends that “[t]o rely on a western-specific ‘grammar’ is inappropriate when one’s subject is ... a visual language that is not exclusively based on western graphic design conventions and influences”.

By exploring the rhetorical strategies of signages from within the lived experience as a Katlehong resident, I attempt to counter these “existing biases of graphic design research” (Moys 2004:33). Moys (2004:33-34) argues that scholarly research should acknowledge that communication is not “unidirectional”; it should account for how graphic design is given meaning by both designers and audiences. Graphic design activities should be studied in relation to social contexts; research must acknowledge that graphic design is a cultural activity and therefore socially constructed.

Moys’s (2004) study is therefore of particular interest as it addresses a question that I find to be an ongoing debate about South Afrika’s visual culture. Moys (2004:118) concludes that *i-jusi* contributors “do not fully succeed in moving beyond the parameters of professional graphic design discourse which positions [the designers] as cultural specialists and ‘vernacular’ culture as a resource produced by a naïve ‘Other’”. However, despite this critique, Moys’s focus, like that of Venter and Willemse, remains professional graphic design. My contention is, therefore, that ‘vernacular’ sign-making is a topic that is repeatedly investigated from the perspective of ‘high-end’ cultural production, and its recognition is the result of its appropriation and reduction to a style in corporate advertising.

Weller’s (2011) text is therefore an exception, and a singular reflection on the visual language of salons and barbershops found in townships across South Afrika. Weller (in Libsekal 2011) himself states that

After seeing so many barbershops in the townships I assumed there would already have been a book published on the subject. I searched online and realised there wasn’t anything out there ...

Weller (2011) captures his experience as a White, British man in post-apartheid South Afrika, travelling to Thembisa, Soweto, Khayelitsha, and other townships outside Gauteng Province. He interviews the crafters about the visual culture of South Afrika and the township visual language. The book confirms what I have observed of many of the informal enterprises, namely that they are established and managed by Afrikan migrants (Weller 2011:32-33), and that the painters of signs “didn’t look at their work as art but as marketing” (Weller, in Libsekal 2011).

However, even Weller (in Libsekal 2011) frames his experience of local, vernacular signwriting within the visual aesthetics of Garth Walker, another White, English-speaking creative practitioner:

I completely agree with [Walker’s] views on vernacular art and design – some of my favourite township art was created by people who have never been to

art school ... In my opinion this makes for really expressive, sometimes naive but almost always endearing artwork.

Venter and Weller therefore iterate Kalman's (in Kennedy 2011) 'outsider' view of the vernacular as 'expressive' and 'endearing', but nevertheless "design without ... process [...] unfiltered and uneducated".

2.5 RE-IMAGINING THE VERNACULAR

Inevitably, the engagement with township signages by visitors, mainstream designers and scholars is framed by "the politics of location" (Butler (2010:26): townships are typically regarded as "an unknown frontier" (Butler 2010: 20), the "spatial 'other'" (Edensor, Leslie, Millington & Rantisi 2010:4) of a city. Consequently, 'space' is a key consideration of my study. Butler (2010:25-26), while expressing concern about "the minefields of paternalism and voyeurism", nevertheless commends individual tourism companies that support community development projects that are "part of a larger post-apartheid project of re-imagining and remaking the townships". 'Remaking' the township is also an aim of Keys Communications and its clients, namely, to introduce Katlehong to a global community and instill a brand-oriented township lifestyle.

In the edited volume *Spaces of vernacular creativity, rethinking the cultural economy* (2010), Tim Edensor, Deborah Leslie, Steve Millington and Norma Rantisi (2010:1) offer a critique on the use of creativity for urban regeneration and economic development. In particular, they examine how "notions of a creative class construct restrictions around who, what and where is considered 'creative'". Edensor *et al* (2010:4) argue that

the creative practices associated with cultural and economic regeneration have become explicitly aligned with market-ready activities ... [and] the valorisation of particular forms of creativity, including a proclivity to promote only those cultural activities whose products are easily commodifiable (Edensor *et al* 2010:4).

The authors find this approach to be problematic, claiming that it has seen a rise in the commodification of urban spaces to match mainstream standards of aesthetics. Edensor *et al* (2010:1) call for "an understanding of vernacular and everyday landscapes of creativity", arguing that championing "alternative, marginal and quotidian" creative practices has the potential to generate a more diverse and socially inclusive discourse.

Graeme Evans (2010:19) expands upon this idea in his chapter 'Creative spaces and the art of urban living' (Edensor *et al* 2010: 19-32) in which he critiques a process whereby 'high art' in Britain has

become an instrument of urban regeneration in contrast to vernacular culture. Referring to Richard Florida's concept of the 'creative class', Evans (2010:20) problematises a situation in which 'creative industry workers' temporarily occupy areas, thereby encouraging investment of property and financial capital. The justification for regeneration draws on "universal rationales — national and global" (Evans 2010:20), where culture and creativity are being used in support of community cohesion *as well as* economic objectives. Evans (2010:20) points to the complex relationship between economic development and vernacular practices, where the latter is an "essential backdrop" for the new identity, "at least to begin with".

Although Evans (2010:20) might not include mainstream advertising in his definition of the 'creative class' that threatens vernacular culture in Britain, parallels can be drawn with my study of vernacular sign-making in Katlehong and its relationship to the 'high-end' murals produced by Keys Communications in partnership with global brands. Katlehong may not have the potential to become a major tourist destination; however, Keys's approach is that of wishing to change the township landscape through the application of mainstream graphic design thinking as exemplified by Adriana Portella in her book *Visual pollution: advertising, signage and environmental quality* (2014). As the title of the book suggests, Portella (2014:1) is concerned with the "problems"¹⁴ of commercial signs. The author, who obtained her PhD in Urban Design at Oxford Brookes University in England, declares that "in order to achieve an attractive and pleasant built environment, it is essential that commercial signs are well designed" (Portella 2014:1). To this end, Portella (2014:1) posits that "guidelines to control commercial signs [are] essential". 'Good' design is defined by "regularity, orderliness, simplicity [and] symmetry" (Portella 2014:10); 'low quality' design is equated with "disordered places".

Portella addresses the 'pollution' of historical urban centers in England and Brazil and it is likely that for this author Katlehong might present the 'low quality' of a 'disordered place'. Yet, as my study demonstrates, signages for informal enterprises exhibit principles of 'good' design mentioned by Portella. What is clear is that the visual rhetoric of township sign-making has not been investigated as communication embedded in and influenced by a local culture and lifestyle unique to the township space. One reason for the absence of such studies may be the nature of the township as an 'unknown frontier' that scholars such as Evans, Portella and even Venter are hesitant to explore: as Weller (in Libsekal 2018) concedes, it is "simply ... not appropriate for a white man to walk around taking photographs in the townships". Consequently, my study makes an important contribution as I am able to investigate township signages as both a township resident and a graphic designer.

¹⁴ Portella (2014:224) repeatedly uses the phrase 'buildings harmed by commercial signage', as if signage itself is a toxic substance.

CHAPTER THREE: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF 'SIGNAGES' IN SKOSANA AND CREDI SECTIONS IN KATLEHONG

3.1. FAST FOOD ENTERPRISES SIGNAGES

3.1.1. Example one: Senza Zonke



Figure 3.1 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Senza Zonke signage (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

- **General context of the space and the business**

Senza Zonke is a shop in Skosana Section that services the local community with its favourite breakfast in a convenient take-away style. Its most popular dish is *amagwinya*, a soft dough that is deep fried in cooking oil. The name Senza Zonke means, 'We do everything'. The shop is owned and run by a local resident, Busi, but only her peers, such as my mother and her older friends, have first name privileges. Busi's *amagwinya*, that has a reputation for being the best in the neighbourhood, sells for one rand per item and as a result Senza Zonke has many loyal customers. The shop opens in the early hours of the morning; by midday, it is closed.¹⁵

The area where the shop is located is a busy space close to the corner of Sibisi Street (locally referred to as Sixth Street) and Vile Street, where I live.¹⁶ Young and old pass by, either on their way to

¹⁵ The owner of the shop does not rely solely on the trade at Senza Zonke; sis'Busi also goes house-to-house selling eggs and that is how I was first introduced to her.

¹⁶ Owing to the grid layout of Katlehong, street names initially followed basic numbering. As roads were upgraded, official names were accorded to the streets; however, residents continue to use numbers to identify streets. In Katlehong references to geographic locations are rarely communicated by street names. 'Vile', as it appears on current maps of Katlehong, appears to be a misspelling of the original name, Vlei Street. *Vlei*, in Afrikaans means 'marsh'.

school, walking children to a 'day care', students walking to or getting off local taxis¹⁷ in order to catch connecting transport to university, or to their place of work in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria. Senza Zonke is in competition with rival breakfast shops that sell *amagwinya*, even though they are not situated at this corner. Other informal enterprises nearby include an herbalist shop called *Muthi King*,¹⁸ *Ice Block*¹⁹ shop and the *Melita Salon and Barbershop*.

The signage of Senza Zonke was repainted in July 2019, when I photographed it. Prior to this date, the structure was an unremarkable room from which food was being sold through a window. An interesting aspect, therefore, of the informal enterprises is that one can wake up and see new visuals on an existing building or completely new shops being erected anywhere that the space allows it. The new typographic visuals for Senza Zonke (**Fig. 3.1**) were painted by an unknown local crafter. What prompted me to include this signage as part of my investigation, was its application of graphic design principles and rhetorical elements of design such as hierarchy, type/ letterforms, colour and layout (**Fig. 3.1**).



Figure 3.2 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Melita hair salon and Muthi King signages next to *Senza Zonke* after *Ice Block* signage, Katlehong 2017.

¹⁷ Not every taxi rank has a name, or even has official status: this rank is merely a dusty, open space where local taxi drivers drop off and pick up fares.

¹⁸ *Muthi* is a Zulu word for herbs. Sometimes the word has connotations of wizardry in Afrikan beliefs.

¹⁹ The shop sells blocks of ice packaged in a transparent 'plastic' (i.e., a plastic bag); the shop's structure is an actual freezer. The vendor therefore must stand outside the 'shop'.



Figure 3.3 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Senza Zonke signage next other informal enterprises and a digital sticker of an Afrikan herbalist doctor, Katlehong 2019.

- **Logos— How does the rhetoric of Senza Zonke solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

Senza Zonke’s location plays an important role in terms of how the store engages with its clients as well as people that live far from this section of Katlehong.²⁰ The shop is in an ideal location for interacting with commuters living in different parts of Katlehong as well as local Skosana residents, since it is directly opposite the taxi rank in Khotso Street, next to the old dismantled *Natalspruit* hospital.²¹ Local taxis²² pass by or stop near the shop as there are robots²³ at that corner. In South Africa, a robot is not just a cautionary sign for motorists: to the people who use taxis, ‘robots’ are markers of where to disembark when travelling by taxi. The shop therefore finds itself in a space of intense action, providing early-morning commuters a convenient option to stop for a minute to buy food before going to queue for a taxi. The shop’s location is not only convenient for commuters; after the morning rush hour, sis’Busi’s customers become the inhabitants of Senza Zonke’s neighbouring houses.

²⁰ As mentioned in Chapter 1, Katlehong is divided into 32 sections and commuters do travel from one section to another by taxi or walking.

²¹ Consequently, when catching a taxi from Johannesburg to Katlehong, one would be traveling to ‘Spruit’, short for *Natalspruit*.

²² The taxi industry is very territorial. ‘Local’ taxis operate only in the Ekurhuleni region (e.g., Katlehong and Germiston) and belong to the Katlehong Taxi Association (KAPTA). Taxis that display a KAPTA sticker may only operate in very specific areas in Ekurhuleni. Taxis that travel to Johannesburg belong to the Faraday Taxi Association. KAPTA taxis therefore collect commuters locally, from various sections of Katlehong, and drop passengers off at the robot nearby Senza Zonke, from where they walk a short distance to the taxi rank where they catch connecting taxis to Johannesburg.

²³ The South African term for traffic lights.

In terms of *logos*, Senza Zonke's location solves a practical problem by being convenient in terms of proximity for almost the entire community of Katlehong. Moreover, its hours of operation align with the needs of its customers; the shop closes before 12:00 (noon) indicating that it has reached its intended targets for the day.

Other shops in this corner of Skosana, such as *Muthi King* and *Ice Block Shop*, do not compete with Senza Zonke. To right of *Muthi King* another enterprise, CHICCO'S WELDING STEEL advertises that it makes gates should people want to improve their yards (**Fig. 3.2**).²⁴ When observing this space, one gets the sense that people here are a community of entrepreneurs where clients of one enterprise are likely to interact and share the services offered at this space. Senza Zonke shop is a simple one room brick structure; its plastered surface offers a smooth, absorbent and hard-wearing surface for the application of paint.

Letterforms, language and layout



Figure 3.4 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Senza Zonke letterforms painted in their space (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

What is notable about the signage for Senza Zonke is the absence of illustrative imagery. The crafter provides factual information, such as the name of the shop and the types of food on offer: the *logos* of the signage is therefore relatively high. Moreover, this information is provided in more than one language (Zulu, Sotho and English), but using roman letterforms throughout. Unlike crafters of other shops

²⁴ I use the term yard to signify the homeliness that the township houses have, in terms of the emotional attachment that Katlehong community has in relation to the space they occupy. Either than that, people in the township refer to yards and not plots, or properties.

(e.g., Tsatsi's & Tshepis Fast Food, see **Fig. 3.11**), the crafter of Senza Zonke has laid out the information in an ordered manner, dividing the text into five compartments that interact with the physical structure of the shop's facade.

In terms of hierarchy, the name of the shop takes precedence. The letterforms indicating the shop's name are bold and clear; the colours used are white and blue. The white stands out against the grey wall, and the blue drop shadow enhances visibility, an important quality if commuters are passing by before sunrise (**Figs. 3.4 & 3.5**). To the right of the shop's name, the words 'fat cakes' announce the shop's specialty (**Figs. 3.4 & 3.7**). Although the Sotho and Zulu words for 'fat cakes' (*makwenya* and *amagwinya* respectively **Fig. 3.6**) are also inserted above the name of the shop, the English term is emphasised in terms of placement and scale (**Fig. 3.5**). Not only does the English signifier communicate with people who do not speak any Zulu or Sotho, but the term also references the original Afrikaans word *vetkoek*, that may be more familiar to older Katlehong residents.



Figure 3.5 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Senza Zonke letterforms section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.6 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), *makwenya/ amagwinya* script letterforms section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

Above the shop's name, letterforms making up the word *makwenya* have white outlines and are filled with pink and blue colour, creating the optical illusion of a gradient tone (**Fig. 3.6**). The result is that, although the Sotho word is placed above the Zulu term (*amagwinya*), the Sotho, to some extent, fades away. In contrast, the Zulu term is bolder, and the use of white, with only minimal touches of pink, make

the Zulu word stand out. Despite the prominence of the English ‘fat cakes’, Senza Zonke’s most important audience, in terms of which it constructs its argument, is Zulu-speaking.



Figure 3.7 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Fat Cakes letterforms section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

In the central section of the shop’s facade, the word “Welcome” is presented prominently in quotation marks, thus representing the voice of sis’Busi addressing her clients, as if she were inviting them into her home. (**Fig. 3.8**): this verbal communication is of a persuasive rather than factual nature.



Figure 3.8 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Welcome letterforms section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.9 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), menu letterforms section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

The fifth and last section of the communication comprises the letterforms aligned left, as bullet points, next to the smaller window. This list indicates the menu section, as the items are stacked in an orderly fashion and the shop’s window is used as a guide to align the text (**Fig. 3.9**). The use of a list increases the *logos* of the signage, since it systematically arranges information. To separate the words and

show how distinct they are as representations of different foods that one can enjoy with *amagwinya*, the crafter applied different sets of alternative colour tones of red and blue; however, all the words are capped with white, suggesting ice. Within the context of the hot climate of Afrika, a very simple visual device, perhaps subliminally, reassures customers that sis'Busi has refrigerators in her shop and that meat products are kept at a cool temperature to avoid being spoiled. The signage crafter therefore reflects the psychological understanding of words as images that can represent something else and not merely the signification of the word itself.

According to Buchanan (1985:96), *logos* draws heavily on technological reasoning that “in design is the way the designer manipulates materials and processes to solve practical problems of human activity”. What is therefore important to note, and a central concern of this study, is that in the case of Senza Zonke’s typography there is a rejection of advanced technology. The signage could have been printed professionally and pasted on, or nailed to, the wall; the crafter could also have used the tools of graffiti artists, such as stencils and aerosol spray paints. Instead, the owner commissioned a crafter who, while referencing print typography, nevertheless painted the letterforms free hand in a highly subjective style. The use of advanced technology is typically regarded as a signifier of competence and invites trust in a design. It could, therefore, be argued that the lack of advanced technology weakens the *logos* of Senza Zonke. In order to reflect upon this aspect of the signage, the style of the letterforms is discussed in greater detail in the section on *ethos*.

Imagery

Senza Zonke is unusual, in terms of the construction of the visual identities of township enterprises, in that it displays no representational images. In rhetoric, the use of examples is an important persuasive device (Helmers and Hill 2004:1-9), therefore the lack of illustration could be regarded as weakening the argument. Although one may deduce that the absence of images indicates that the crafter cannot draw or paint figures, I find that the use and styling of the letterforms, as well as the introduction of several languages, in itself solves the problem of clearly communicating information to the target audience. The idea of less being more is emphasised prominent in this typographic communication.

- **Ethos— How does Senza Zonke construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

Firstly, the structure of the shop consists of solid bricks, and is neatly painted to suggest permanency. The shop is therefore rooted in the community and will not move; its structure echoes the

homely character of the customers' own kitchens with window views of the street, where mothers look out to watch their children playing. In an environment where shops often choose to work in temporary structures made from corrugated iron sheets and reused timber (e.g., **Figs. 3.10 & 3.11**), Senza Zonke reinforces its character as a shop with a duty of serving people breakfast; moreover, customers may even get to see and to greet sis'Busi, like a 'mother', through the open window whilst she is working.



Figure 3.10 #CORNER RESTU... Mkhekhe (signage crafter), Xolisa Sibeko (photographer, photographed with permission), #CORNER RESTU... Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.11 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer) Tsatsi's & Tshepi's Fast Food uses examples of 'polony', 'amagwinya' and other foods as part of the signages visual rhetoric (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

Secondly, the shop allows Katlehong residents to plan their daily routine; they can rely on Senza Zonke to provide an affordable breakfast, in a convenient space. An important aspect of the *ethos* of the shop is therefore a sense of *trust*. The owner of Senza Zonke is part of the Katlehong community, as she was born there, and has an exact knowledge of the township food culture. As a local resident, she perhaps has little choice but to deliver a good service, because her reputation is at stake.

Thirdly, Senza Zonke is part of a shared space, with people who want to apply their knowledge and skills to generate an income, and not to rely, or wait for, formal employment. It is of interest that, in this space, Senza Zonke is the only shop that is owned and operated by a person with South African citizenship. Consequently, the *ethos* of the shop goes some way to counter the stereotypical narrative of the South African township resident that is too “damn lazy to go to look for [a] job” (Speech, in Zondi 2017)²⁵ that re-emerged in media debates during the rise of xenophobic attacks in townships in late 2019.

Fourthly, the establishment is managed by women.²⁶ This is not unusual in township culture; however, Senza Zonke makes visible and reiterates the *ethos* of women in townships who take control of their lives, thereby offering an alternative view of townships as spaces where women are merely victims of patriarchy and an unequal economic system.

Letterforms, language and layout

In the case of Senza Zonke, letterforms and language are vital in the construction of identity. The communication utilises five distinct hand rendered types of letterforms. The letterforms of the name, *Senza Zonke*, are painted in two different styles (**Fig. 3.5**). The painting of the word *Senza* in using rectangular shaped letterforms not only looks practical but emphasises that this place does what it promises; however, the letterforms *Zonke* expose a more flexible character, illustrating that the word means ‘everything’. The geometric shapes making up the word *Senza* visually reference sans serif letters commonly used in digital and print applications, as well as South African road signage, for example, Arial, Helvetica and FF Din. The letterforms painted for the word *Zonke* undergo a transition as if the crafter made an error, or changed his mind: the letter ‘Z’ starts out as a rectangular shape at the top bar and then becomes fluid, taking on the quality of scripted letterforms as it curls from the first letter to the last one. In terms of *ethos*, this could signify shifting, organic identities in Katlehong.

²⁵ See also Citizenship, Violence ... 2008 and Xenophobia in South Africa ... 2011.

²⁶ Sis’Busi employs a young, female assistant in her shop.



Figure 3.12 Spit Shine font (designer/ typographer unknown), Spit Shine font, DaFont [sa].

In rendering 'fat cakes' (Fig. 3.7) the crafter made the letterforms big and bulgy as a conceptual graphic device that emphasises the nature of the product. Of interest is how the letterforms display similar characteristics to that of a digitally designed font (Fig. 3.12) Spit Shine Regular ([sa]). The crafter used light red, thin and thick strokes at the curvature of each character to give the letters a three-dimensional appearance. Although the crafter has not employed any illustrative imagery, his construction of the letterforms signifies an enjoyment and physical satisfaction that can be associated with the nature of the deep-fried dough.

The crafter has manipulated letterforms using his own style to create a visual representation of the properties of 'amagwinya/ makwenya' at Senza Zonke, in comparison to the *amagwinya* found at other shops that commuters may pass on their way. The letterforms of *makwenya* (Fig. 3.6), with their sharp, curly ends, suggest a distinctiveness and femininity perhaps associated with the owner, who is a woman. This playfulness can also be seen in the word "Welcome" that communicates the direct speech of sis'Busi. Letterforms are therefore applied as a rhetorical device that emphasises township language as a medium with which to engage with township residents on a personal level. The blue colour of the letterforms implies friendliness and enhances trust; the personal nature of the word convinces viewers that this is their space, a home kitchen open to everyone from different walks of life in Katlehong. (Fig. 3.8). The colour blue also has its associations with water, skies (heavens), or hygiene all of which reinforces the character of homeliness.

In conjunction with the letterforms, language is used as rhetoric to display how this place both identifies with and constructs township culture. Words such as *amagwinya* do not belong to a specific ethnic group but are township terms that were created by people looking for a means to survive difficult circumstances. *Amagwinya* or *i-gwinya* is also a word that is used to comment on someone's body weight, for example, 'You look so 'fat' it seems that you are about to explode!'

Another instance where the shop uses invented words as communication devices, is in the menu section (Fig. 3.9). *Special* refers to a type of food made of processed pork and can be eaten cold or deep fried (Fig. 3.13). To the township people the name *i-special* has diverse meanings; in some cases, it is used to refer to someone who is good at, maybe, football and that person (usually male) would be called *speshel*. Senza Zonke shop could, therefore, be a 'special shop', as it is owned by a 'special' woman, a symbol of female empowerment in the community. However, the word can also signify a person that, on the surface, is a respected member of the community but leads a dangerous, criminal life.²⁷ In both cases, it suggests that the person is popular. The term therefore signifies the undercurrents and fluid identities of township culture.

On the other hand, the origins of the word *lupi* remain a mystery. This type of food is a snack packaged like polony, but in smaller servings; it turns into jelly when eating it with warm food like *amagwinya*. The township food culture and its relationship to language is complex, as it extends to media personalities: *lupi*, for example, is associated with a South African media personality, philanthropist, producer and radio host 'Lupi' Ngcayisa who uses the name @unclelupi on his social media handles (Lupi Ngcayisa [sa]:[sp]). All in all, it appears that the beloved taste of the *i-lupi* and *special* is associated with positivity about the township community.



Figure 3.13 Special polony (photographer unknown), Eskort garlic polony 2015.

²⁷ In Coloured communities, the equivalent would be *yster* (Afrikaans for *iron*).

Senza Zonke reflects Katlehong's versatility and diversity of township *lingo*; language is used as a tool to accommodate, rather than to segregate. In this case, the application of language(s) educates individuals who are foreign to this *lingo*, as it stimulates curiosity and encourages people to ask what is meant, and why. The shop owner and signage crafter reflect a local character by creating an association between the township lifestyle and food culture, and their joint relationship with language. The Senza Zonke wall functions as a 'billboard' that both reflects and constructs a community that is together in inventing words that signify its activities and daily necessities. As such, these words can be associated with the 'goodness' of the township in spite of its economic challenges.

Consequently, one can conclude that Senza Zonke demonstrates a high level of *ethos*. Although no images are displayed, this does not mean that the signage lacks aesthetic appeal. Senza Zonke's communication displays ornamentation as part of creating a welcoming, and distinct identity for the shop. Although the crafter might have little or no education on the intricacies of typography, he has managed to create a self-authored style and blended that with the township culture of food and language.

Imagery

Senza Zonke does not follow the visual identity typical of informal township enterprises; in other words, it does not utilise painted or photographed examples of the services it provides. However, in terms of rhetoric, the absence of something can be as important as its inclusion: here the text-only signage acknowledges that Katlehong residents are literate and do not require pictures to explain that this shop sells food and what type of food is served. In a broader sense, then, Senza Zonke constructs an identity for Katlehong that counters the stereotypical narrative of the 'uneducated' Afrikan citizen.

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of Senza Zonke?**

Pathos as a concept reflects the emotional appeal of the design (Buchanan 1985:103). Senza Zonke generates feelings of belonging, because the audience understands the language being used and appreciates the function of the shop and its signage in its daily routine. The crafter's feelings of attachment to the township are exposed; the enterprise, and its signage, generates feelings of pride about the ability of residents, in this case, women, to 'do it themselves'.

3.1.2. Example two: #CornerRestu...



Figure 3.14 Xolisa Sibeko (photography), # Corner Restu... top corner type signage, Mkhekhe (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.15 Xolisa Sibeko (photography), Mkhekhe painting the new #Corner Restu... signage, Mkhekhe (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019.

- **General context of the space and the business**

#CornerRestu... is a fast food shop (Fig. 3.14) some distance from where I live. It is situated on a corner at the intersection of Mabizela and Kgotsa Streets in Katlehong and specialises in making township breakfast and brunch foods like *kota*, burgers, *amagwinya*, as well as sandwiches (e.g., a 'dagwood'). The shop operates from a shack that shares a yard with other shack-type settlements. #CornerRestu... is one of two commercial enterprises in this yard; the other dwellings are residential. #CornerRestu... closes late at night; when the owners return home, they leave the shop in the hands of the yard landlord.

When I began my research in 2017, this shack was a salon called #NAILS. The shop is currently owned by three Katlehong residents (two women and a man). The crafter responsible for the visuals goes by the name *Knowledge*, but locally he is known as *Mkhekhe*, or *Jahman* (Fig. 3.15); he is a recognised signage crafter for local enterprises that include barbershops, salons, supermarkets and fast food stores.



Figure 3.16 Xolisa Sibeko (photography), Before: #NAILS digital sticker signage (designer unknown), Katlehong 2019.

I chose the #CornerRestu... to demonstrate the ever-changing landscape of informal enterprises and their 'signages' in Katlehong. What is of interest to me is how the space was reused; what was once a space of beauty and femininity, was recycled into a food shop. #CornerRestu... rents the shack next to a local *spaza-shop* called *Sharp-Sharp*²⁸ that is owned by a Malawian immigrant whom I have known since my childhood. This example offers interesting points of discussion about rented spaces in a yard at the back of a two-roomed/ matchbox house.

When #NAILS was transformed into #CornerRestu... the #NAILS polyvinyl chloride (PVC) sticker signage was removed and the board repainted with hand-rendered lettering; however, the hashtag symbol (i.e., #) was retained as part of the shop's new identity (Figs. 3.16 & 3.14 show the work in progress, the sign before, and after). As in the case of Senza Zonke, #CORNER RESTU... rejects the display of figurative imagery as an indication of what the shop sells. Instead, the crafter relied on shapes, letterforms and language. Senza Zonke and #CornerRestu... are competitors, thus the identities created by their structures and signages are of interest.

Another reason for selecting #CornerRestu... for analysis is that it is positioned in a space where two streets intersect (Fig. 3.14); in Katlehong, the materiality of a 'corner' plays an important role in

²⁸ The term is a form of greeting around townships, sometimes written as—*shap-shap*.

community sub-cultures and sociability. The term 'corner' signifies multiple meanings when used in the name of a shop: thus, not far from #CornerRestu... in Credi Section Ethiopian immigrants have opened a tuck shop called Corner Tuck Shop (Fig 3.17). However, this shop is a small grocery store that supplies branded products; no cooked food is sold.²⁹ Senza Zonke and #Corner Restu..., on the other hand, are owned by Katlehong residents and the food they sell is popular and has its origins in the township culture and history.



Figure 3.17 Xolisa Sibeko (photography), Corner Tuck Shop (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

²⁹ The owners of the Corner Tuck Shop are Muslim; consequently, typical township food — that contain pork — cannot be sold. East African cuisine also differs markedly from local, cooked food.

- **Logos— How does the rhetoric of #CornerRestu... solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

Firstly, #CORNER RESTU..., as its name implies, is placed at a street corner in the proximity of other informal enterprises like supermarkets and barbershop/ salons. The shop is not only on the route to the Lindela Train Station, but also convenient for the tenants sharing the yard with #CORNER RESTU.... Residents can walk to the store and purchase meals during the day and at night without compromising their safety.

Secondly, unlike Senza Zonke, #CORNER RESTU... is constructed from corrugated and flat iron sheets that are nailed together on an existing timber frame. Part of South Afrika's township culture and societal construction is enacted through the use of shacks. Renting a shack or a shipping container (**Fig. 3.17**) is more affordable than renting a brick building or garage space for business or residential purposes; therefore, the shack and shipping container shops outnumber those establishments that operate in brick buildings. A shack has a universal application; it can be used as a storeroom, a rental space for running a business or a temporary living space for migrant workers. Unlike the fixed, brick building of Senza Zonke, the physical structure of #CornerRestu... can be moved should the owners decide to relocate their business. What one sees here is the manipulation of materials to solve practical human activity problems (Buchanan 1985: 96); in this case, #CornerRestu... recycles a beauty salon in order to supply working class people with affordable food in close proximity to their homes.³⁰

Thirdly, the prominent recycled sign protruding at right angles from the top of #CornerRestu... (**Fig. 3.18**) increases the *logos* of the enterprise, since important factual information, namely the telephone numbers used to pre-order food, can be seen clearly, and from a distance. The shop has its doors opened to the public so that customers can see how their food is prepared (**Fig. 3.10**). Here the double doors serve a dual purpose; when open, they operate as additional 'billboards' on which information about the shop's fare is painted in three different sections created by the steel structure of the door. In a similar manner, Senza Zonke (**Fig. 3.9**) used the side edge of the window as a guide to perfect the alignment of its menu items. The structure of #CornerRestu... is therefore the "backbone" (Buchanan 1985:106-107) of understanding how the shop convinces people about the importance, convenience and desirability of the enterprise.

³⁰ #Corner Restu... sells a serving of potato chips for five rands (at the time of writing, approximately 20 pence).



Figure 3.18 Xolisa Sibeko (photography), Mkhhekhe (signage crafter), #Conrer Restu...’s top hand lettering sign replacing the digital one, Katlehong 2019.

Letterforms/ language and layout

The most prominent visual element on the stand-out sign is the black hashtag symbol (**Figs. 3.14 & 3.18**). By retaining hashtag, the shop is linked to the digital age and advances an argument for the technological sensibility of both the shop and the township. Visibility is enhanced by placing this shape on a white background. Similarly, contact numbers are black numerals that are clearly visible. This practical feature of #CORNER RESTU... enhances the *logos* of the establishment.

The word ‘CORNER’ is painted in a pink tone and has less visibility than the hash tag symbol. The ‘CORNER’ letterforms are round, big and bold with a blue tint acting as a shadow to emphasise the word. The truncated word “RESTU...” is filled with a brown tone and outlined with pink strokes that follow the curve of each character, giving it depth and more impact than ‘CORNER’. Owing to the limited space, the word *restaurant* has been abbreviated for practical reasons; however, it was important that people should be persuaded that this informal space can give them quality service worthy of a regular restaurant. To ensure that potential clients understand the reference, the crafter therefore added ellipses to imply the full word. Roman letterforms are used throughout.



Figure 3.19 Xolisa Sibeko (photography), Mkhekhe (signage crafter), #Corner Restu... Kota Menu white board, Katilehong 2019.

As with Senza Zonke, #CORNER RESTU... uses the systematic layout of information to ensure easy understanding of its menu. Painted on the left are stacked letterforms that make up the word 'chips' (Fig. 3.19), an important aspect of the shop, hence the word is emphasised and repeated throughout the menu in different characters, strokes, shapes and colours. Blue and black text is carefully arranged on a white background, to enhance visibility; a hierarchy of main headings and subheadings organise different aspects of the menu. The shop owners provide information about the product and its cost. Like Senza Zonke, #CORNER RESTU... utilises devices borrowed from print technology, for example bullet points, here indicated with three asterisks. In order to save space, and in imitation of mass-produced commercial advertising (e.g., Fig. 3.20), the crafter also presents the currency signifier ('R') in a superscript format.³¹

³¹ It is beyond the scope of this study to interrogate the historical relationship between hand crafted, print and more recently digital sign-making. Hand crafted signage pre-dates printed signage by more than a thousand years (James 2012) and the original aim of Johannes Gutenberg's moveable type design was to imitate the look and feel of hand crafted letterforms (Meggs & Purvis 2006:69-70). Over the centuries, mechanical reproduction has shifted between imitation and rejection of hand crafted visual communication, the latter best expressed in The International Typographic Style (ITS) (Meggs & Purvis 2006: 356_373). ITS ideology was subsequently undermined by the fascination, by designers such as Ed Fella, with vernacular forms following the 'digital revolution' in the late 1980s (Meggs & Purvis 2006: 488- 530). Crafters in Katilehong are, however, unaware of these historical battles over style and form and respond intuitively to influences in their immediate environment.



Figure 3.20 Shoprite layout and font styling like that of the menu board (Fig 12), (designer unknown).

Imagery

Another similarity that #CORNER RESTU... shares with Senza Zonke (Fig. 3.1) is the absence of figurative imagery and the consequent assumption of a literate audience. However, although no detailed illustrations of *kota* are displayed, the crafter has decorated the shack with coloured discs painted onto a flat, pink background. These shapes provide no factual information, nor do they have any other practical purpose; rather, this imagery serves an emotional, and suggestive, function that is discussed in the next section.

- **Ethos— How does #CORNER RESTU... construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

#CORNER RESTU... validates its existence and belonging by sharing not only its services, but also the urban lifestyle of regular township people. The shop is not merely a commercial operation; rather it is a community space that demonstrates the transformation of the township economy and the recycling of materials to enable this economy. The use of a shack reflects being part of the township's life and creating opportunities without leaving Katlehong: local identity is reinforced by mirroring the community of shacks in the adjoining yard.



Figure 3.21 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), #CORNER RESTU opened door, Katlehong 2019.

The new owners give the shop a credible character, without taking away the township essence and creativity of using available materials that reveal the possibility that Katlehong can be a space of upliftment. The openness of the shop suggests transparency and creates a sense of trust: everybody is welcome. Brick structures are rarely covered in typographic imagery; because #CORNERRESTU... operates from a shack, it has been painted on all visible sides and this is one of the distinguishing features of the shop. Thus, the crafter, Mkekhe, has applied a visual language that challenges the perception of the shack as an ‘unbearable’ township experience. Shack shops also serve to enhance a sense of nostalgia for former Katlehong residents that may now live elsewhere but return to the township as ‘tourists’ at the weekend.³² Shops such as #CORNER RESTU... are signs that the local culture is not just imagined, but a lived practice.

Letterforms, language and layout

Although no figurative imagery is used to illustrate its products, the fatness and colour of the letterforms of the word CORNER connote the succulent, fatty food, such as Vienna sausages, polony and

³² Shelley Butler (2010:20) points out the importance of the shack as a signifier of the ‘authenticity’ of the township to foreign tourists.

'special' that this shop serves. The word CORNER fills up the space just as the food fills and satisfies the customer; it also references the way a *kota* is 'squashed up' with ingredients (**Fig. 3.22**). The heavy hashtag symbol squeezed into the upper corner of the standout sign, suggests the topping found on the actual sandwich (which, in the case of *kota*, consists of the scooped out inside of the loaf of bread) (**Fig. 3.14**).



Figure 3.22 Photographer unknown, example of a *kota* sandwich (Mohlomi 2018).

Although the standout sign evokes local Afrikan township cuisine, the crafter in his choice of letterforms also promotes the shop as part of a global community in the twenty-first century. As mentioned in the discussion on *logos*, the use of the hashtag symbol acknowledges that the shop's potential customers are familiar with on-line social media platforms, such as Twitter.TM The hashtag is therefore used to signify the character of the 'corner' as a social space, but, unlike the imaginary digital space, here people get to bodily interact. However, TwitterTM as a discursive platform also engages with irony and absurdity, and by recycling the symbol of a nail salon in order to sell *kota*, the establishment also signals a self-awareness of its appropriation. However, care has also been taken to communicate a reliable, Western character: English predominates, and roman letterforms are used throughout. Standard principles of mainstream design, such as hierarchy, clarity and supportive layout, are applied.

How the communication is rendered reflects both the character of the shop and the crafter. The original #NAILS signage consisted of a printed sticker, almost certainly designed using computer technology; when the sign was replaced, the owners did not opt for a printed sign. Perhaps the shop owners were unaware of the affordability of PVC stickers.³³ However, it is also possible that an informed decision was made about digital print versus hand-crafted signage: the latter signals an 'authentic'

³³ In my experience It does not cost more than R250 (approximately £12) to print a 500mm X 500mm PVC sticker or banner

township service provider, a condition that is reinforced by employing a crafter well-known to local residents.

Although the crafter's choice of medium may be the consequence of not owning a computer, by rejecting a print medium Mkhekhe signals his belief in township craftsmanship as reflective of township aesthetics.³⁴ The use of a computer and digital printing might be regarded as foreign, and a barrier to the actual experience of witnessing the making of the sign as part of a shared, communal activity. The letterforms painted on the stand out sign (**Fig. 3.14**) express a local character; the idea is to fight competition, but to also make the shop blend in with its surroundings by using a form of advertising common in the street.

Language is another crucial rhetorical appeal. In Katlehong, there are very specific associations with 'hanging around a corner' (or *ekoneni*, as residents refer to it). Often young people bring rocks (for seating arrangements) to a corner in order to 'chill' and smoke,³⁵ and lovers meet at a corner for *umjolo* (secret dates). In general, a 'corner' is a space associated with secret activities that people partake in in the township, both old and young. By using the signifier 'CORNER' in its name, the shop demonstrates that it is a space that is part of the community.

Just like Senza Zonke (**Fig. 3.1**), #CORNER RESTU... applies language as a rhetorical device in its menu board (**Fig. 3.19**), in this case, placed on the ground. The word *kota* is neither Zulu nor Sotho, but a township appropriation of the English phrase 'quarter loaf bread' (Sibeko 2017:33-34). The use of the word *kota* therefore reflects how South African township communities invent a language that exemplifies the township's diverse ethnicity.³⁶ Other announcements use casual language such as *extraz* and *chiz* and this reconstruction of English words can be partly attributed to the limited space on the white board (**Fig. 3.19**) but also to the influence of American slang and the writing up of terms to reflect local pronunciation of a word. The effect is one of a humorous, vernacular particular to a specific sub-culture, which is part of the visual and verbal identity of #CORNERRESTU... as well as the broader construction of identity in Katlehong.

As pointed out, the truncation of the word *restaurant* has been done for practical reasons; however, the shortening of the word, with the added ellipses, also signifies an establishment where the service is fast, since, at this specific corner, people are always on the move. There are no chairs at this

³⁴ As part of my research I apply the term 'aesthetic' in reference to the function of 'signages' by placing emphasis on the materials' manipulation in creating the design (Erlhoff & Marshall 2008: 16-17).

³⁵ In local language, *blomming*, from the Afrikaans word *blompot*, referring to a potted plant in the sun.

³⁶ The origins of this beloved 'suitcase sandwich' are unclear. The term *kota* is common in many Johannesburg townships. From personal experience in townships in the Vaal and some townships in Tshwane, where a number of people are Sotho, Tswana, Pedi, Tsonga or Venda, this type of sandwich is referred to as *sphatlo* (see The History of the kota, bunny chow and gatsby 2017), since the term *kota* in these communities has sexual connotations.

food shop, an interesting rhetorical device that signals that the order is filled before the customer feels the need to sit down.

Katlehong residents are well aware what a restaurant is —some people might even work in one — and customers therefore know that #CORNERRESTU... cannot really claim to be an upmarket eatery. Language is therefore applied as a mere puff to suggest how the space differs from its competitors.

Imagery

The absence of figurative imagery is a part of #CORNER RESTU...’s visual identity and argues for the uniqueness of this shop that utilises abstract shapes as part of rhetorical appeal. At the time of writing, there were no other informal enterprises in this section of Katlehong that employ pure abstract patterning as a form of promotion. The discs, as a decorative element, preceded the replacement of the #NAILS sign, suggesting their importance to the crafter’s influence and creative process. Mkhekhe randomly painted these shapes, on all three visible sides of the shack, in four different colours, namely orange, black, mustard, earthy green and blue, all floating on a pink background. The paint medium is of unknown origin, since the crafter did not work with tins or tubes of pigment, but used hand mixed paint in recycled, plastic soft drink bottles.

On a superficial level, the colorful discs lighten the mood of the shop. However, the different coloured shapes, just like the word CORNER, could be referencing food colours, such as brown bread, egg yolk, mustard sauce or green lettuce leaves. The application of abstract imagery also implies considerable creative freedom, since the owners clearly did not insist on literal representation of products and services, nor did they object to the crafter’s personal self-expression. As such, the signage takes on the quality of a mural, or artwork, even although the work is not signed.

It can therefore be argued that #CornerRestu... deliberately chooses to differ in its style from its competitors that use figurative imagery, possibly because it is overly done at every *kota* shop in Katlehong, for example Tsatsi’s & Tshepi Fast Food (**Fig. 3.11**) and Pastor.M (**Fig. 3.23**), which I discuss in the next example.

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of #CORNER RESTU...?**

Buchanan (1985: 103) states that *pathos* is sometimes regarded as the “true province of design, giving it the status of a fine art”. But, Buchanan (1985: 103) continues,

emotion is only a bridge of exchange with esthetics and the fine arts ... When emotion enters design, it is not an end in itself but a mode of persuasive communication that serves a broader argument.

As a crafter, Mkhekhe invents his own style. The visual language of #CORNER RESTU... is therefore “self-authored” (Willemsse 2014), which is one of the characteristics that defines what my concept of a ‘signages’ is. However, the crafter is not inventing a new system of communication but reinterprets the visual language with which Katlehong residents are familiar through his personal understanding of his craft.

The entire structure of the shop is a medium of communication through which the identity of, and citizen pride, of Katlehong is both constructed and reinforced. For this reason, Mkhekhe finds it unnecessary to ‘sign’ his work; he can rely on word of mouth to generate commissions.

3.1.3. Example three: Pastor. M Fast Food



Figure 3.23 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Pastor .M Fast Food, 3K Signs (signage crafter(s)), Katlehong 2019.



Diagram A diagram showing the location of Pastor. M, Senza Zonke and other neighbouring informal enterprises.

- **General context of the space and the business**

PASTOR.M is a small kitchen shop located in a shack facing Kgotso Street, in Skosana Section (**Figs. 3.23**). The shop is situated in a busy main road in a fenced-off yard not far from my home, near the taxi rank and close to Senza Zonke alongside other informal enterprises (see **Diagram A**). The shop sells food to taxi drivers and tenants renting rooms in the yard, including the Somali owner of the Romeo supermarket (**Fig. 3.24**) who operates from a rented garage.³⁷ PASTOR.M sells takeaway foods such as *kota* and home-cooked *meals* (referred to as *plate*). It is not clear who owns and/or manages the shop; the shop is often closed, and does not keep regular hours such as Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU... Therefore, in this yard there are two informal enterprises; one sells groceries and the other a fast food service. In contrast to #CORNER RESTU... PASTOR.M occupies the only shack in a yard lined with brick rooms that are rented out.



Figure 3.24 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), ROMEO TUCK SHOP (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019/20.

³⁷ By 2020, the supermarket was no longer operational as it was destroyed during the November/ December 2019 foreign owned shop lootings.



Figure 3.25 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Pastor. M signage signed by with examples of the products, 3K-Signs (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019.

Another characteristic that sets PASTOR.M apart from Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU... is that it displays examples of products and services offered by the shop. Unlike the crafters at Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU..., the crafter of PASTOR.M's promotional boards signed his work with an alias, namely 3K Signs (**Fig. 3.25**).

- **Logos— How does the rhetoric of PASTOR.M solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

As with Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU... the PASTOR.M shop is located close to its target audience, making it a convenient space to visit at any time, **Diagram A**). Like #CORNER RESTU... the shop uses a simple, corrugated iron structure, but PASTOR.M has a section of extended shelter, providing shade to customers in hot weather and protecting them when it rains: this alone is a good reason to order food here. However, unlike Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU..., PASTOR.M is set behind a tall, well-constructed white steel fence that borders the yard: the fence is part of the shop. Although a section of the fence has been removed to enable interaction with customers, the presence of the fence, while providing security for the owners, excludes the community from interacting freely with the enterprise. The practice of using rocks as seating outside or near shops is clearly visible at PASTOR.M (**Fig. 3.30**), where a brick functions as a step-up at the shop window to enable shorter customers to reach the fold-out counter.

Letterforms, language and layout

At PASTOR.M textual signage has been enhanced with figurative imagery. The crafter has also employed a greater diversity, in terms of lettering styles and layout, than is apparent at Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU.... The shack is turned into a flamboyant billboard, reaching out to people through image and text that adorn the shop; as such, it is often difficult to separate a discussion of letterforms from a consideration of the imagery.



Figure 3.26 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Pastor. M blue and red letterforms and examples on the hidden side of the shop, 3K Signs (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.27 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Pastor. M front letterforms section in front, 4K Signs (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019.

Dominating the signage on the front of the shop, to the left of the service hatch, is the name PASTOR.M, painted in an arch in red on a solid black background with a white outline to enhance visibility (**Fig. 3.27**). These rounded letterforms are contrasted by the blue and white “FAST FOOD” below.

Together, the red and blue letterforms operate as a “logotype” (Morr 2019). Underneath the logotype the crafter has listed products and services available at the store, namely “chips • plates • burger • kota • refreshments” (Fig. 3.27). As is the case at Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU..., bullet points are utilised to arrange and separate information. To the left, below an illustration of the item, the word *kota* is painted in red with a white outline to enhance visibility; to the right, the word *burger* is rendered in a vegetable green above an illustration of what appears to be a sandwich. To the right of the serving hatch, the crafter has indicated with simple white lettering that the shop sells *pops, corns, ice cream* and *cup*. Overall, the dramatic black, white and red signage is eye-catching and compelling.



Figure 3.28 Xolisa sibeko (photographer), Pastor. M letterforms on the left side, 3K Signs (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019/20.



Figure 3.29 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), PASTOR.M left side letterforms and examples, 3K Signs (signage crafter), Katlehong 2019/20.

On the left facade of the shop, a similar technique is applied on one of three separate sections; in the central block, the name of the shop is repeated in white and red letterforms that are squashed

together on a black background above a striking white circle displaying images of food (**Fig. 3.25 & 3.28**). To the left, in a white block, the word *coldrinks* aligns with the diagonal placement of an illustration of a soft drink bottle (**Fig. 3.29**). Below the bottle, and next to an illustration of baked goods, light blue scripted letterforms announce that the shop sells *baked cakes*. The words ‘baked cakes’ are repeated in a colloquial form of Zulu — *ama-khekhe abhakiwe* — and placed above and below the illustration, but are noticeably smaller, and slightly darker, than the English version. Except for the term *kota*, *ama-khekhe abhakiwe* is the only non-English phrase used on the entire shack. Although it can be argued that the translation is made for the benefit of township residents that are unfamiliar with English, it is more likely that the Zulu phrases are added to reassure customers that the owners identify with the local culture. To the right of the black section, a yellow block features the words *fast food* in red with a white outline, again sporting a white ‘ice cap’. The phrase arches across a white circle containing illustrations of a *kota* and a container of chips (**Fig. 3.29**).

On the right façade, which is obscured by a neighbour’s wall (**Fig. 3.26**), the words *kota*, *plat* (without an ‘e’) and *chips* are painted in large, light blue letters. In the very far corner, and almost invisible from the street, the logotype of the shop is repeated in a faded pink. These letterforms have all been rendered with less care than the other sections and are randomly placed. However, the accompanying images of food are immense, compensating for the rather mundane lettering style. In terms of *logos*, customers can be in no doubt what PASTOR.M is and what it sells: the name is repeated three times, as are the types of foodstuffs that are sold.

Imagery

In notable contrast to Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU... the signage of PASTOR.M displays an abundance of visual details of the services and products provided at the shop. The images are simplified, yet carefully rendered to distinguish between the serving of a roast chicken and a plate of chicken pieces, a chicken drumstick and a T-bone steak, and ice cream in a cone and ice cream in a cup. The graphic quality of the illustrations is enhanced by the application of solid outlines that separate the item from its background. Most of the illustrations are accompanied by a caption, so that the signage takes on an educational function: even a visitor to Katlehong, who has no knowledge of a *kota*, will have a good idea of what this term means when viewing PASTOR.M communication.

- **Ethos— How does PASTOR.M construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

The structure of PASTOR.M mimics a residential house and therefore conveys a homely mood, which is enhanced by the red chimney protruding from the roof, and a cactus plant, neatly tended, in front of the shop (**Fig. 3.29**). PASTOR.M therefore sets out to persuade its audience that the shop is not different from their diverse, humble homes in terms of food services. The red chimney evokes memories of cooking with coal stoves in the township before electricity was introduced.



Figure 3.30 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Pastor. M shade and plant outside the shop, Katlehong 2019/20.

The white steel fence topped with spikes acts as a signifier that the shop sets itself apart from the street; it belongs to the home in the yard. Here the *ethos* is markedly different from that created by the structure at #CORNER RESTU... and even Senza Zonke. However, PASTOR.M compensates for this barrier by providing shelter from the weather for those walking long distances, even when the shop itself is closed.

Letterforms, language and layout

As pointed out in the section on *logos*, most of the letterforms at PASTOR.M have been drawn with care, and therefore convey a character of professionalism and product quality. The use of a sans-serif style throughout, suggests an informal mood, yet the dramatic use of black, red and white also convey passion and seriousness of intent.

Two concerns of customers are that food should be both hot and fresh. To signify hot food, (**Fig. 3.27**) PASTOR.M and *kota* are rendered in red; in order to persuade customers that food is also fresh, the phrase *fast food* is rendered in blue and the word *burger* rendered in green. Both *fast food* and *burger* are capped with what appears to be ice, in order to reassure customers that PASTOR.M uses refrigerators,

even though (unlike #CORNER RESTU...) these appliances cannot be seen. However, the passionate red used to paint the name of the shop, together with the black background, also suggests an ecclesiastical *ethos*, which is intensified by the name itself, namely PASTOR.M (discussed in greater detail below).

Owing to lighter background colours, letterforms on the sides of the shack appear more playful. The crafter clearly enjoyed the process of developing a visual conversation with the viewer by experimenting with different layouts, colours and letterforms. For example, the thick, curly lettering of *baked cakes* is styled in a manner that seeks to communicate the fresh, homemade (and, arguably, womanly) nature of baked products sold at PASTOR.M (Fig. 3.29). How the letterforms are rendered communicate not only the image of the shop, but they reflect the character of 3K Signs as a local signage creative: the crafter presents himself as being both skilled in image rendering and an expert in hand lettering.

Lastly, what is noteworthy is that the crafter signs his work (Fig. 3.25). The use of the pseudonym 3K indicates that the crafter (or perhaps a group of crafters) takes pride in the signage as a business practice and wishes to advertise the person(s) responsible for the work. This is not a mere 'prosaic artifact' as suggested by Fleischmann (2011) and Venter (2012). Signing the shop's visuals is also an idea associated with fine art, in terms of how an artist claims a style and manner or working.



Figure 3.31 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), scrap yard and car workshop signage crafted by 3K-SIGNS, Katlehong 2018.

Both the shop and the crafter therefore signal that this is not an amateur undertaking but a professional enterprise: in fact, 3K Signs has been responsible for several signages at informal enterprises in Katlehong (see, for example, Fig. 3.31). A contact number for 3K Signs is always provided; however,

although this factual information may signal the solution to the problem of someone wishing to contact the crafter(s), the numbers are all inactive and therefore deepens the mystery of 3K Signs.

In terms of language, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the shop is its name: PASTOR.M is an English phrase, and perhaps alludes to Muriithi Wanjau, who is a senior pastor of the Mavuno Church in Kenya, and goes by the title of 'Pastor M' on his Facebook™ page.³⁸ Wanjau is a bestselling author and motivational speaker, and has published a book on leadership, including aspects of entrepreneurship.³⁹ What the exact connection is to Wanjau, remains unclear; however, one could speculate that the owner, who may have encountered the pastor or his writing at some point, wished to acknowledge his mentor in the name of this shop. The link to a Kenyan church may also explain why the shop tries to appear local by including Zulu words in its signage. Whatever the case may be, PASTOR.M declares itself as an ordained leader of the 'congregation' of Katlehong. The function of a pastor is to lead his flock; thus, the shop presents itself not only as a leader in the making of fast food, but also as an example of Christian precepts, homeliness and family values.

On another, more entertaining, level, the phrase *cold drink*, in South Africa is associated with paying a bribe; when asking for a favour, one would give thanks with a *cold drink* which is presented as cash. I do not think the crafter misspelled the word *coldrink*; rather he drew it purposively to reflect the township's local language.

Imagery

As pointed out, PASTOR.M, unlike Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU ..., utilises figurative imagery to persuade its audience of the diversity and quality of its service. The illustrations of the food are simplified, but clear, in communicating what items the shop sells. However, the crafter of the communication applies images in his own, subjective style and knowledge of the foods, applying graphics that are minimal in terms of their iconographic look and feel but that nevertheless inform people what, for example, *i-kota* or *plate* is. Here it is important to point out that Katlehong residents have a choice of eateries, ranging from international, branded convenience food franchises such as KFC™ and MacDonald's™ to pubs that provide local fare in a restaurant setting. However, enterprises such as PASTOR.M, by not utilising sophisticated photography or printed banners to visualise their meals, signal that the experience at this food shop is, firstly, more affordable than at a branded outlet, but also that here one is offered an experience of township culture that cannot be duplicated at KFC™ or McDonald's™.

³⁸ See https://www.facebook.com/pg/PastorMavuno/about/?ref=page_internal.

³⁹ *Seasons: stages of a leader's life* (2019).

Although the vernacular nature of signage at Senza Zonke, #CORNER RESTU... and PASTOR.M might connote poverty to some, it in fact speaks of township aesthetics as a mechanism of promoting local community businesses in Katlehong and inventive communication design craftsmanship.

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of PASTOR.M?**

Pathos is closely linked to *ethos*: the appeal of PASTOR.M is enhanced by its location and the shelter it offers the public in extreme weather. The abundance of images portraying delicious food heightens the probability that individuals will be persuaded to stop and purchase a meal; the illustrations also reassure Katlehong residents that they have, living amongst them, a professional sign maker. The signage crafter, in turn, feels proud of his signage, which is why he puts his signature to the work. The implication of a spiritual association might be an encouragement of attendance of Christian churches by the youth of Katlehong. Overall, the personalised nature of the visuals constructs a sense of a unique, township experience.



3.2. BARBERSHOP AND HAIR SALON 'SIGNAGES': BARBER SHOP AND EKASI BEAUTY HAIR SALON



Figure 3.32 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Barber Shop signage, at the time of writing the shop was located in Skosana Section, (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

- **Context and background of BARBER SHOP and EKASI BEAUTY HAIR SALON**

The signage of barbershops/ salons are the most prolific visuals found in Katlehong; those operating from shacks outnumber barbershops and salons operating in garages. Consequently, as Weller (2011) and Venter (2012) point out, the typographic imagery of South African barbershops and salons have grabbed the attention of international and local artists, as they are perceived to be the heart of townships, reflecting a South African visual culture that is perceived to be authentic and reflective of African graphic identity.

BARBER SHOP (**Fig. 3.32**) is an enterprise owned and operated by a Mozambican national whom I have known since my childhood. He is associated with my first memory of receiving a haircut. BARBER SHOP provides a service for both young and older men in Katlehong. Since a shack can be easily dismantled into four separate panels and transported, with its roof, in a pick-up van, this small space has been moved around the township on several occasions over the past three years. In 2016, the shop was situated at Maphanga Section (**Fig. 3.33**), next to a small shoe repair shop and painted a warm, custard yellow. From

there it was moved to Credi Section in a yard at Mabizela Street (see **Diagram B**), where it was repainted green, and the illustrations enhanced (**Figs. 3.34 & 3.35**). At Mabizela Street, the shop shared the yard with a shipping container tuck-shop owned by Ethiopians. The third and final move saw the green shack being dismantled and re-erected at a yard in Skosana Section, facing the location of its original site in Maphanga Section (see **Diagram B**).

As to what prompted the moves, I do not know; however, in its current location the barbershop has expanded its client base by being close to several tenants, unlike previous sites where the shop was in a private yard where no rooms were rented out. My analysis focuses on the current site in Kgotso Street (**Fig.3.36**) where the shack shop was once more repainted to a chalky, pink colour.



Diagram B Barbershop movements around Katlehong in three different sections



Figure 3.33 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Barber Shop signage at Mapahanga Section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2016/17.



Figure 3.34 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Barber Shop signage at Credi Section (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2018.



Figure 3.35 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Barber Shop signage at Credi Section re painted (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2018.



Figure 3.36 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Barber Shop's repainted letterforms on top in blue (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

Another barbershop that was recently moved to Skosana Section is KHAMBULA HAIR SALON, now named EKASI BEAUTY HAIR SALON (Figs. 3.37 & 3.38). The shop is in Vile Street, near my home and #CORNER RESTU, and owned by a Mozambican national (who is much younger than the owner of BARBERSHOP). In an informal conversation, the owner stated that he bought the blue shack with its visuals from an unnamed person who ran KHAMBULA HAIR SALON in another section of Katlehong. The shack was then moved to the corner of Mabizela and Vile Street and the repainting of the name to EKASI BEAUTY HAIR SALON⁴⁰ took place in August 2019 (Fig. 3.38).



Figure 3.37 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Khambula Hair Salon (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

⁴⁰ Hereafter referred to as EKASI BEAUTY.

The crafters of both 'signages' at BARBERSHOP and EKASI BEAUTY are unknown. I have chosen to discuss these two enterprise visuals together, because they utilise a similar style of figurative imagery, which may suggest that one crafter was responsible for both sets of signages, or that several crafters are mimicking a popular visual style associated with barbershops and salons in Katlehong. Weller (2011), in his survey of South Afrikan barbershop graphics, does not document this style, which suggests that it may be typical of barber shops and salons in Katlehong.



Figure 3.38 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Ekasi Beauty Hair Salon (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong July 28, 2019.

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- **Logos — How does the rhetoric of BARBERSHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY HAIR SALON solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure



Figure 3.39 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), BarberShop signage (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

BARBER SHOP (**Fig. 3.39**) is located on a main road, thus the enterprise is part of the local taxi subculture with people boarding or alighting from public transport. EKASI-BEAUTY is in a yard with tenants renting backrooms and this enables the salon to attract tenants as their regular customers. Just like the previous examples of #CORNER RESTU... and PASTOR.M, BARBER SHOP operates its business from inside a flat sheet iron structure, with corrugated roofing, that can be disassembled and reassembled with ease. No additional materials were purchased during the move and transformation of the shop. Here the shack signifies ownership; the simplicity of the structure allows for mobility should there be a reason or an opportunity to move. The recycling of materials is also eco-friendly. The structure of BARBER SHOP, like #CORNER RESTU..., is very open (**Fig. 3.39**). BARBER SHOP is currently situated on a main road, next to the pavement where people disembark from taxis, and potential customers are therefore able to witness clients getting their hair cut, while others sit on chairs waiting their turn. Consequently, the shop serves as an interactive 'billboard' of sorts.

Just like #CORNER RESTU... the inside of the double doors of BARBER SHOP have provided a space for the crafter to paint letterforms and illustrations that promote the shop's services. This was the case even before the move to Skosana Section. The flat iron sheets that make up the walls of the shop is an excellent medium to paint and reuse; this reflects the both the multiple applications of shacks and how

they can be objects of beauty, whilst also being a spaces that raise awareness about the possibilities of new businesses in this section of Katlehong. What is of interest is that after the move to Kgotso Street, the vibrant green shack was carefully repainted in a chalky pink colour. As a consequence, the visibility of the name of the shop, placed above the door, appears to have been reduced (**Fig. 3.39**).

EKASI BEAUTY (**Fig. 3.38**) was moved with ease without tainting the artwork and placed at a corner house in a yard with a shipping container that operates as a tuck-shop. These two beauty service shops signal that they define Katlehong as their space, hence they can move around with ease. In turn, the community of Katlehong bears testimony that it welcomes these shops and that residents are free to move in and out.



Diagram C Location of 'BarberShop' and Ekasi-Beauty Hair Salon 'signages'.

The shops are not that far apart (refer to **Diagram C**). However, one notable difference in their visual rhetoric is that before EKASI BEAUTY replaced KHAMBULA, the barbershop/ salon used to light up at night with blue light emitting diodes (LED). The owner of the shop applied the latest technology as a means of making his shop appear up to date. On a practical level, the blue lighting makes the signage more visible to the night life of Katlehong.



Figure 3.40 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Khambula Hair Salon (before the name change), Katlehong 2018



Figure 3.41 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), 'BarberShop' window section with "CUT" letterforms (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

Letterforms, language, and layout

The BARBER SHOP's current character is communicated through the application of mixed letterforms that began when the shop moved to a different location. Large, bold, blue, sans-serif upper case letterforms announce the name of the shop in the space above the door, with green paint, left over from the earlier identity, popping out between the letters (see the now chalk-like painted shop, **Figs. 3.36**

& 3.39). Above the window facing Kgotso Street (Fig. 3.3) red letters spell out BARBER SHOP on a faded pink background. Although the word BARBER is big and bold, the word 'shop' could not fit in the available space, so the crafter reduced the size of the letterforms and placed them at an angle.

What is surprising is that at Credi Section at Mabizela Street, the same text was painted on a white background and therefore was brighter and more eye-catching, whereas currently the appearance of the letterforms appears to have decayed (Fig. 3.35). To the right of the window, on the panel facing Kgotso Street, the word CUT has been painted in black with an orange outline, but still retains some of the green background from the earlier version (Figs. 3.32 & 3.41). Below and to the right of CUT, almost on the edge of the corner of the shack, the crafter has placed an ampersand painted in black (Fig. 3.41). In Credi Section, when the double doors were opened (Fig. 3.35) the signage read CUT & CHISKOP; however, in the new location in Kgotso Street, the door cannot open to the outside since it would obstruct the movement of the people in the yard; it has to be folded back against the inside wall. Consequently, the communication is no longer as clear as it was at Mapanga and Credi Section yards.



Figure 3.42 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), the old green 'Barber Shop' opened door policy displaying typographic imagery inside the door, Katlehong 2019.

However, the signage on the right-hand door has not been changed; the orange and green backgrounds have been kept intact. On the upper panel, the Zulu words *siyagunda* (we cut) *lapha* (in this place) clearly communicates the service provided. On the lower panel, the message on the front wall has been repeated in full, namely CHISKOP &~ CUT (Fig. 3.42). A *chiskop*, as illustrated on the right-hand door

panel, is the complete removal of all hair from the scalp; a *cut* (as illustrated on the panel facing the street) trims the hair but does not remove it entirely. It is of interest that earlier versions of BARBER SHOP did not display any Zulu phrases (Figs 3.33 & 3.34). However, as time went on the signage crafter introduced Zulu as seen on the right side of the door (Fig. 3.42), and this was kept when the shop was repainted after its relocation. As with the use of Zulu phrases on other township signage, this device could be seen to have a practical function for residents who may struggle to read English or that the language is not that common amongst the township residents, but it is more likely that their inclusion serves as a signifier of *ethos*.

The new letterforms of EKASI-BEAUTY (Fig. 3.38) are simple, bold white sans-serif letterforms painted on a blue background; consequently, visibility is enhanced. Some of the letterforms have been invigorated with pink detailing, which was introduced after the change in ownership. Unlike BARBER SHOP, EKASI-BEAUTY offers services to both men and women, indicated both by the figurative images and the letterforms. The word RELAXER communicates that the shop can straighten ethnic hair; the letterforms are given a sharp, pointed end to connote the look of what 'relaxed' hair should look like. Men can get a *chiskop*.

Next to the illustration of the *chiskop* cut, the crafter has painted the words *LEGEND Barber*. This is a new addition to the signage and is an intertextual reference to an up-market, nationwide barbershop franchise, The Legendary Barber (Fig. 3.43), originally launched by Sheldon Tatchell and a partner in 2011 in a supermarket in Eldorado Park.⁴¹ Tatchell has become a role model for black entrepreneurs:⁴² what The Legendary Barber signifies to the owners of township enterprises, is that 'if he can do it, so can I'.⁴³ By associating itself with this successful enterprise, EKASI-BEAUTY positions itself as Katlehong's quality service provider.

⁴¹ A so-called 'coloured' township adjacent to Soweto.

⁴² See <https://careeradvice.careers24.com/career-advice/work-life/meet-sheldon-tatchell-owner-of-legends-barber-20171204>

⁴³ It is of interest that an on-line documentary of Tatchell's story (see <https://www.2oceansvibe.com/2019/06/19/from-side-hustle-to-success-the-story-of-legends-barbershop/>) has, as its introductory visuals, images of vernacular barbershop signage, although the Legends Barbershop brand itself distances itself from this type of rhetoric (Fig, 32).



Figure 3.43 The Legendary Barber logo (designer unknown), The legendary Barber 2019.



Figure 3.44 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), before and after 'signages' of *Ekasi-Beauty Hair Salon* (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

Like #CORNER RESTU...’s stand-out sign, EKASI-BEAUTY intensifies its visual rhetoric by placing a free-standing, double-sided board outside the yard next to the gate. Here the text was changed as well (**Fig. 3.44**). The new owner had the letterforms KHAMBULA painted over with a dark blue paint and replaced the name with white letterforms reading EKASI-BEAUTY. The rendering of Hair Salon, written in pink with a white outline, remains unchanged, although a new contact number has been added. Functionality is expressed by the recycling of not just the structure of the shop, but also the information,

to reassure customers that the services are the same, but improved — the business now offers *beauty*, and beauty unique to the township (*ekasi*).

Images

Both BARBERSHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY display stylised figurative imagery illustrating the nature of the services offered by these enterprises; thus, customers are given visual clues what a *chiskop*, normal cut, or *relaxer* means. However, as exact as examples of what a Katlehong customer with a *chiskop* or *cut* would look like, the illustrations arguably fall a bit short of the mark. Photography would have provided much higher *logos*, and the use of this imagery therefore appears to serve a function of *ethos*, rather than objective information design. In order to strengthen its *logos*, BARBER SHOP also uses figurative imagery to inform potential customers that it uses modern electronic equipment in its practice, and EKASI-BEAUTY uses illustrations to convey that it offers services to both genders.

- **Ethos — How does the rhetoric of BARBERSHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY HAIR SALON construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

What is important to note is how the function of these enterprises reflect the migratory status of their owners. The free movement of these shops around Katlehong is perhaps symbolic of a migrant's identity, being constantly in search of economic opportunities outside of home. The comfort zones of the owners of these informal enterprises have been compromised and a new identity is adopted. Unlike solid, fixed structures such as SENZA ZONKE, both EKASI-BEAUTY and BARBER SHOP can relocate with ease since the signage does not have to be completely reconstructed at every move. A sense of power is experienced as the shop owners have purchased these small shacks and they can come and go as they please.

An interesting observation is that barbershops and hair salons in Katlehong are mostly owned and managed by immigrants.⁴⁴ Yet, despite the transitory nature of the shacks, the use of this typical township structure reflects belonging, and serves to erase the status of 'foreigner', thus allowing the owner to participate in a shared, local identity. Notably, in August and September 2019 neither EKASI-BEAUTY nor BARBER SHOP were affected by xenophobic attacks and other foreign owned enterprises like PASTOR.M, although they closed doors for a while.

⁴⁴ The dependency of local township residents on the barbering services of migrants is humorously pointed out by the comedian Skhumba Hlophe (Skumba talks about post xenophobia 2019).

Nevertheless, the *ethos* of BARBER SHOP is different to that of EKASI-BEAUTY. The latter is neatly painted in a striking blue and the LED lighting signals a technological *ethos* that is lacking in BARBER SHOP. At night EKASI BEAUTY becomes a special 'corner'; the LED light gives the shop a trendy, youthful feel, because young people in Katlehong identify with LED lights and often have them in their rooms.⁴⁵ EKASI-BEAUTY sometimes stays open until late, and always plays popular music from a laptop connected to a system of speakers.

BARBER SHOP, on the other hand, has been repainted in many different colours at different stages of its existence, and this history is suggested by the layers visible on the structure. In Kgotso Street, the shop has exchanged its bright green identity for a pale pink that could connote a loss of strength, or youth. Pink is often used to signify femininity, but the association may not be relevant at this male-only establishment run by a middle-aged man. Unlike the younger owner of EKASI-BEAUTY, the owner of BARBER SHOP plays the Munghana Lonene Radio Station while he works,⁴⁶ and locks up his shop early to go home to his family. Although I believe that the new BARBER SHOP design at Kgotso Street is not as appealing as it was when it was painted green (see before and after of BARBER SHOP **Figs. 3.42 & 3.39**), the repeated renovations appear to be part of the shop's migration culture: it must be repainted to show how adaptive the owner's identity is.

Letterforms, language, and layout

At the root of the BARBER SHOP visual identity is the desire to make the shop visible and entertaining with hand-crafted lettering that represents the local lifestyle and its association with the barbershop culture (**Fig. 3.39**). Above the double door, large blue hand-painted letterforms, outlined with orange, signify that this shop provides men with a service to get themselves groomed in township style, in a space shared by local men.

Next to the ampersand symbol on the right-hand panel facing the street, the crafter has inserted what is known as a *tilde* in Western writing systems (**Fig. 3.41**). This symbol is used to signify the continuation of information to another section, which, in the case of BARBER SHOP, is painted on the adjoining door (only visible, in the present location, when one is inside the shack) (**Fig. 3.35**). By applying the tilde to a three-dimensional structure, the crafter has assigned a new meaning to the device. On one level, the use of these symbols demonstrates the crafter's knowledge of sophisticated typographic forms, which he transfers to the identity of the shop; on another level, the use of the sign makes an unconscious

⁴⁵ Some local taxis also use these lights when transporting young people to or from a party.

⁴⁶ The language spoken on this station is Xitsonga that overlaps with Shangaan, which is largely spoken in Mozambique.

but ironic statement about Western typographic conventions and their legacy in a post-colonial, township community.

EKASI-BEAUTY (Fig. 3.38) utilises several styles of letterform to communicate its services. The bold sans-serif characters of KHAMBULA have been replaced with more elegant, organic letterforms that, while they are still bold and striking, are also able to signify feminine beauty, even though the present shop is both owned and operated by a man. The addition of small, pink detailing in the letterforms strengthens the shop's appeal to female customers. This re-styling indicates a change in identity and ownership. In its present form, the crafting of the word EKASI-BEAUTY invokes a sense of appreciation for the aesthetics of hand lettering created specifically for a service provider. However, the phrase HAIR SALON retains the solid, geometric quality that communicates that the shop also offers male grooming. Two different crafters might therefore be responsible for the creation of the typographic visuals for EKASI-BEAUTY signage. The striking use of white and blue signage on the shack suggests an efficient and hygienic establishment that sets itself apart from its dusty, brown township surroundings. Consequently, EKASI-BEAUTY can perhaps be a *transitional* space between vernacular township signage and high-end wall advertising in Katlehong.

The owner of BARBER SHOP is Mozambican, but the signage of his shop does not reflect a Mozambican identity. BARBER SHOP is situated in a space with people who could be Sotho, Pedi, Zulu, Xhosa, or Tsonga-speaking; language is thus a powerful tool to encompass Katlehong's diversity, as well as provide evidence for the relevance and legitimacy of the shop in the local community. BARBER SHOP applies local language mixed with English as part of the shop's visual rhetoric. The Zulu words *Siyagunda Lapha* are written in black on the bright orange panel that draws the most attention when customers approach the shack (the English name, BARBERSHOP, is less eye-catching). On the green panel, below, words describing the two types of styling advertised on the wall facing the road, are repeated, namely CHISKOP &~CUT.

Chiskop is an interesting term: it is not English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho or Xhosa. Rather, this word has originated as a result of South Afrika's diverse ethnicity. *Chiskop* (sometimes written as *chizkop*) comprises two words, one, perhaps, borrowed from Afrikaans (i.e., *kop*, meaning 'head') and the other, perhaps, from English (i.e., cheese). *Chiskop* describes a service that is so good that one's head will be perfectly shaved to a point whereby it feels as smooth as a moulded cheese. However, the word is very similar to the mildly derogatory term for a person of Dutch origin, namely *kaaskop*, which was used in

South Africa alongside other slang signifiers for ethnic groups (Kaaskop ... 2020).⁴⁷ More recently, an on-line guide to slang words in South Africa lumps *kaaskop*, *chiskop*, *chizkop*, and *cheesehead*⁴⁸ together as South African terms for “a bald person, particularly one with a shaved head” (South African ‘English’ ... 2014). As the result of the popularity of the term to describe a hairstyle, the reference to alien Dutch immigrants has fallen away. However, how the term itself migrated from its origins to township *lingo* remains unknown.

Whatever its origins, the word *chiskop* now has deep township roots and it has become closely associated with a *kwaito* music group of the 1990s that called itself Chiskop⁴⁹. Kwaito is a South African genre of township music that emerged in the early 1990s. It is a mix of different types of rhythms from the 1920s and 1950s and took shape in Gauteng townships at the time that Nelson Mandela took office as the first democratically elected president of South Africa (Kwaito 2019). Kwaito has therefore been called the music that defines the generation who came of age after apartheid.

The word *kwaito* (like *chiskop* itself) references Afrikaans in its appropriation of the term *kwaai*, which, literally, translates as “angry” (A history of Kwaito music [sa]), but also signifies intensity, that is, “you’re really happening; you’re really hot” (Mkhize, in Klose 2002; Steingö 2005). *Kwaito* can therefore be understood as the ‘angry’-voice of the township. The Chiskop group had their heads shaved bald as part of their act, hence both the group’s name and the haircut signified a strong allegiance to the township barbershop culture, which, in turn, strengthens its own *ethos* by its association with *kwaito* whenever the word *chiskop* is used as part of barbershop rhetoric.

The term *chiskop* is also used by EKASI-BEAUTY as it is a common service offered in barbershops; however, EKASI-BEAUTY goes further than BARBER SHOP in assimilating township status. The word *kasi* or *kasie* is, once again, derived from an Afrikaans word *lokasie* meaning ‘location’. The term emerged during apartheid’s spatial planning of South Afrika and was rooted in deep ethnic segregation, where people were located not only in terms of colour, but also according to ethnicity. For example, in Katlehong, Mokoena Section was reserved for Sotho, and Mandela Section for Xhosa-speaking residents. However, as people claimed their space and embraced diversity as they shared common struggles, the word *kasi* came to signify pride in the township. Here the crafter uses language to claim a specific

⁴⁷ The word *kaaskop* itself is Dutch, and is typically used in contemporary Netherlands by people in Belgium and Flanders to refer to their blonde neighbours in the North (see <https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/dutch-kaaskop.359214/>). The word suggests a person that behaves in a particularly stubborn manner. Although still regarded as a mildly offensive word in the Netherlands, it has more recently been taken up by the Northerly Dutch themselves to signal a proud regional identity (see <https://www.facebook.com/kaaskopgroningen/>).

⁴⁸ Cheesehead is also a nickname in the USA for a person from Wisconsin or for a fan of the Green Bay Packers National Football League franchise (Cheesehead 2019).

⁴⁹ A South African musical group that comprised Mandoza (late), Mdu, Genela BTZ and Sbu (Mhlungu 2016: [Sa]).

township identity for the shop and makes it clear that this is an *ekasi*⁵⁰ shop, run by a ‘*kasi* man for the *kasi* people’.

What distinguishes the two enterprises in terms of language is that BARBER SHOP uses Zulu language to promote its services, whereas EKASI-BEAUTY overtly claims its space as belonging to Katlehong applying township’s mixed language invoking a sense of pride about Katlehong. In addition, the shop is named after the Ekurhuleni community radio station called Kasi FM and the station prides itself in being a Kasi station for Kasi people (Programming information 2020:[sp]). A rhetoric shared by EKASI BEAUTY in terms claiming not just Katlehong as a space but, taking upon the status and attitude that comes with the name *ekasi(e)* to show that this shop belongs here in Katlehong. However, as discussed in the section on *logos*, EKASI BEAUTY also references the Legend Barber franchise as part of its verbal rhetoric. This is not just a matter of copying the brand, but rather being inspired by and emulating its character, which is not, one could argue, entirely *kasi* (Fig. 3.28). Clients are aware that this is not a Legend Barber outlet, but young people who identify with the success story of Sheldon Tatchell, are likely to respond to this aspirational *ethos* offered by EKASI-BEAUTY.

Imagery

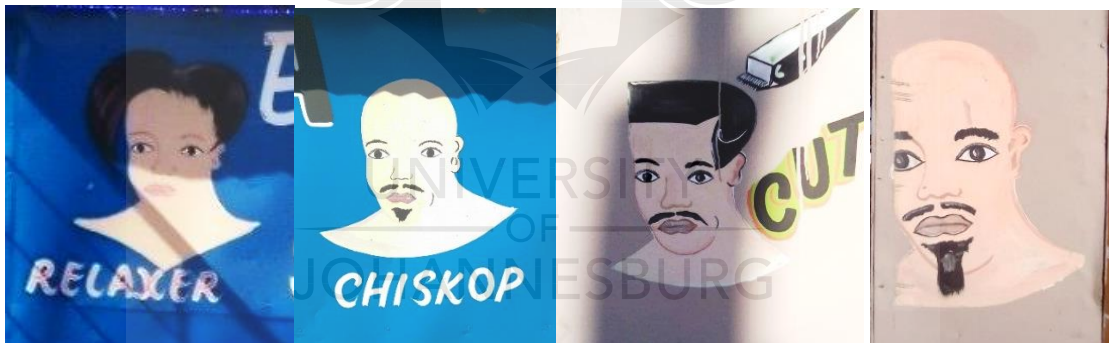


Figure 3.45 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), examples of illustrations used by both *Ekasi Beauty* and *Barber Shop* Katlehong 2019.

Arguably the most striking feature of both BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY is the application of almost identical, stylised human portraits on both shops (Fig. 3.45). Where women are depicted, the crafter has omitted the facial hair and lightened the eyebrows and lips. Whereas male portraits end in a half-moon shape, female portraits terminate in a v-shape, but the template for the illustrations remain the same. As pointed out in the section on *logos*, these images serve a practical function; however, as exact models of the results of a *chiskop* or *relaxer*, the portraits do not provide highly realistic details. This

⁵⁰ The subtle meaning ‘e’ as a prefix in *ekasi* is not easily explained, except to suggest that the ‘e’ approaches the definite article ‘the’ in English.

is partly owing to the stylisation and schematic rendering of the portraits, which may reflect the crafters' limited illustration skills, but it is more likely the result of an existing convention of barbershop illustration that deliberately rejects photographic realism, in favour of expressive imagery.

However, what is curious about these illustrations is that they depict the shops' target audience with very light pink, almost white, skin tones. Other barbershop and salon artists generally try to indicate the darker skin tones of their clients (cf. Weller 2011). Rarely, where only an outline is used, an illustrated face may appear white on a white background (e.g., Weller 2011:23); however, the crafter(s) of the BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY portraits have purposively filled in the outline of the portraits with light pigment. Neither is this portrait style restricted to BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY; it can be seen in other locations in Katlehong, for example HAPPY HAIR SALON (Fig. 3.46) and even CELI'S HAIR SALON in Moleleki Section (Fig. 3.47), which is a 20-minute drive by taxi from Skosana Section. Consequently, this template for rendering the ideal person takes on the quality of an icon in the contemporary graphic design sense of a logo of an individual crafter, or a signifier of a regional style of signage crafters in Katlehong. However, the severely stylised rendering, the large, exaggerated eyes and its repetition, with small variations, in diverse locations, also suggests the Christian religious icon, early icons of Middle Egypt (Fig. 3.48).



Figure 3.46 Xolisa (photographer), Happy Salon signage with a feminine example added, (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2017/19.



Figure 3.47 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), *Celi's Hair Salon* imagery iconographic style I took while in a taxi (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong Moleleki Ext 1 2019.



Figure 3.48 Portrait of Jesus, (detail) (artist unknown) Minas, sixth-century icon from Bawit in Middle Egypt, currently at Louvre; one of the oldest known icons in existence [sa].

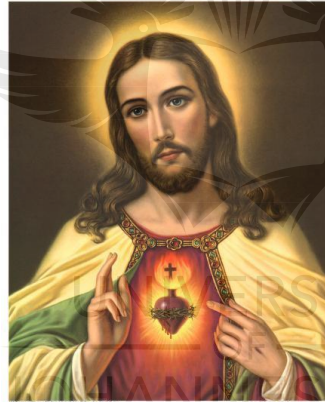


Figure 3.49 The Sacred Heart of Jesus (artist unknown), colour print [sa].



Figure 3.50 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), 'Barber Shop' window section with "CUT" letterforms (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.51 Detail of votive figure of a male worshiper from Tell Asmar (2750-2600 BCE) (The Mesopotamian cultures [sa]).

In my experience, many older households in Katlehong display Christian iconography, mass-produced colour prints depicting Jesus (where the Saviour is depicted as a Caucasian with a pale pink skin tone) (**Fig. 3.49**). Lacking other references to portrait painting, it may be that the originator of the BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY icon took as his (or her) exemplar these religious prints. The disproportionately large eyes are also reminiscent of Mesopotamian religious sculpture (**Fig. 3.51**), where “naturalism has been deliberately avoided” (Seawright 1988:36). Helen Seawright (1988:34) points out that this rejection of natural forms is “the [Mesopotamian] artist’s way of expressing the spiritual essence of the human face”. In reference to Mesopotamian sculpture, The Metropolitan Museum of Art notes that “[w]ide eyes demonstrate attentiveness to the gods” (Eye idol 2019:[sp]). What or who these gods may be in twenty-first century Katlehong remains unknown. However, the pale figures of BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY could be a deliberate challenge to the idea of conventional portraiture. The repetition of these icons reflects the crafter’s attitude, which is one of self-taught self-reliance and unconventionality. The portraits have become a type of meme that instructs, but also entertains and can be regarded as a distinctive feature of this urban space. Shops marked by these illustrations signify the idea of township authenticity and entrepreneurship.

Despite the simplicity of these images, Katlehong residents accept this township aesthetic as a representation of *kasi* beauty. The icons signal not just grooming shops, but communal spaces of entertainment. Although it is not the aim of this study to explore issues of gender in township signages in any detail, it is worth noting that EKASI-BEAUTY affords equal status to both sexes, to the point where the underlying template for identity is sexless and gender can be creatively constructed by clients at the salon.

Unlike the crafter of PASTOR. M (**Figs. 3.23-3.29**) who signed his work with an alias to mark the style as his own, neither BARBER SHOP nor EKASI-BEAUTY (or HAPPY HAIR SALON and CELI’s) feature an identifying signature.

Consequently, the crafter could be one person wishing to remain anonymous, or a group of crafters that, in the manner of a secret society, have agreed to use the icon, not only as a symbol for Katlehong identity but also as a signifier of their belief in their ability and the value of their daily practice. An agreement seems to have been reached that barbershops and salons in Katlehong are identified with

this specific icon; the template can be easily copied, even by an inexperienced designer, and as more enterprises are erected, the meme, and therefore a particular township identity, can be spread.



Figure 3.52 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), BARBER SHOP's Image of skull above BARBER SHOP door, (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 3.53 Orlando Pirates Football Club logo (designer unknown) (Orlando Pirates... [sp]).

Another image that is worthy of note is the rendering of a skull above the BARBER SHOP door (**Fig. 3.52**). This black and white shape has been part of the shop at every move and retouched at each repainting of the shack. Before the shop was repainted green, the skull was accompanied by a date, namely 1937 (**Figs. 3.34 – 3.36**). Both the skull and the date are intertextual references to a popular South Afrikan football club, Orlando Pirates (Sibeko 2017: 29-33). As much as there are footballing teams in Mozambique, the Mozambican owner of the space chooses to identify with a South Afrikan sports culture and shows his allegiance by painting the iconic logo as part of the visual identity of his shop.

Although South Afrikan football has female supporters, it remains a predominantly male arena. BARBER SHOP therefore signals that it is a 'gentleman's space' where matters of football can be discussed, argued and celebrated in a strictly male environment. No explicit sign or rule prohibits women from participating in the conversation, yet women choose not to: even mothers dropping off young boys to have their hair cut, do not wait at the premises. In this sense, BARBER SHOP perpetuates older, patriarchal values, whereas EKASI-BEAUTY signals a shift to a more gender-neutral narrative.

- **Pathos — What is the emotional appeal of BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY?**

Self-expression is the key feature that defines the visual communication that promotes these shops and is the emotional appeal of both BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY. Their uniqueness comes with how the mobility of the structure encompasses the care for the letterforms and images, and in turn how the images are kept as symbolic identifiers unique to this type of business. The township shack, which is often regarded as a symbol of poverty and dirt, is made into an object of beauty.

The letterform crafting evokes Willemse's (2014) concept of self-authorship, although here the creative outputs are not those of a professional, trained graphic designer such as Garth Walker. The

crafter uses her/ his subjective understanding of writing and fuses that with her/ his creativity in crafting lettering to communicate the shops' services. By restyling the letterforms of KHAMBULA to EKASI-BEAUTY the crafter reveals an understanding of aesthetics and how it has relevance not only to the enterprise and its clients, but some personal attachment to the signage crafter as well.



3.3. SUPERMARKET/ TUCK SHOP SIGNAGES: THANDABANTU AND SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET



Diagram D Diagram showing the location of THANDABANTU and SIMUNYE supermarkets and other enterprises nearby.

- **Context and background of the examples**

Supermarket signages make up the last section of my analysis of *signages*. Informal supermarkets in South Afrika are recognised as being unique urban spaces that have managed to generate an economy for the marginalised people living in townships. Munir Jeeva (2017:[sa]) states that enterprises such as *spazas*⁵¹ or tuck-shops and supermarkets are the backbone of South Afrika’s “township economy”. Jeeva (2017:[sa]) argues that such enterprises make up the most visible and vivid backdrop to the “vibrancy of township life” (Jeeva 2017:[sa]).

As in Section 3.2, I reflect on and compare two enterprises with regard to their promotional image and type, namely THANDABANTU and SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET. The reason that I combine this discussion is that there is a change taking place in Katlehong supermarket signage owing to the influence of South Afrikan brands. In my childhood, most of these enterprises were owned and run by local families in their front yards, either in a shack or a brick room. The shops were named for family surnames, which enhanced the popularity of the shop and the family name. However, in the past few years that profile has changed:

⁵¹ *Spaza* is township slang for an ‘imitation’ of a real shop; the Zulu verb *isiphazamisa* also means ‘hindrance’ or ‘annoyance’, possibly referring to the way in which these shops were viewed by larger retail outlets (Jeeva 2017:[sa]).

although the *spaza* shop is often seen as something quintessentially South African, Jeeva (2017:[sa]) notes that “the majority of these shops are [now] owned and operated by immigrant traders and foreign nationals”. Thus, Katlehong supermarkets, nowadays, are mostly managed by Ethiopians and Pakistani nationals, who have adopted the local visual language to promote their shops, services and products.



Figure 3.54 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), THANDABANTU supermarket (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2017.



Figure 3.55 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), THANDABANTU supermarket Albany bread visuals (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2017.

THANDABANTU is a small convenience grocery store in Skosana Section that sells branded products manufactured by Unilever and Tiger Brands; it is owned and run by Ethiopian nationals. The enterprise is located close to my home and situated a few houses away from Senza Zonke (Fig. 3.1) and PASTOR.M (Fig. 3.14). THANDABANTU supermarket is situated in a yard facing the local taxi rank on

Kgotso Street (**Diagram D**). In 2019 THANDABANTU underwent a visual transformation; until 2018, the store applied typical township vernacular imagery (**Fig. 3.54**); at the time of writing, it applies imagery associated with Albany Bakeries' branding visuals such as the brand's colour, logo and airbrushed images (**Fig. 3.55**). This evidence of the application of stenciled letterforms and airbrushing made it clear that there are other signage crafters competing with the likes of Mkhekhe, Alex, 3K SIGNS and the anonymous crafters of BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY. I was made aware of this situation when, by chance, I encountered a group of men painting the new THANDABANTU signage.



Figure 3.56 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), SIMUNYE supermarket operates in what appears to be a garage (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

The second enterprise is called SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET (**Fig. 3.56**)⁵² and it is situated at Credi Section in Vile Street in Skosana section (**Diagram D**) and is also owned and operated by Ethiopian nationals. Despite a display of Ethiopian flags inside the shops, the supermarkets both apply isiZulu names for their shops, although their letterforms are rendered differently to signal how distinct they are from each other. Unlike THANDABANTU, SIMUNYE has retained the local typographic style employed by *spaza*-shops or tuck-shops. This visual language often includes flamboyant hand-painted letterforms; in addition, the shop is decorated with stylised images of the brands the shop sells.

What drew my attention to these two enterprises was their intertextual reference to South Afrika's media and Afrikan stories from a time when South Afrika was transitioning to democracy. The names that are used for the shops evoke a sense of nostalgia, which I find to be a rhetorical appeal that promotes the image of the shop as being owned by people who are aware of South Afrika's history. The stores present different arguments about township aesthetics: one has retained what is known; the

⁵² Hereafter referred to as SIMUNYE.

crafters(s) of the other supermarket's visuals explore new techniques that transform the local visual language of letterforms and images for informal enterprises in Katlehong.

- **Logos — How does the rhetoric of THANDABANTU and SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

THANDABANTU (Figs. 3.54 & 3.55) is in a yard adjacent to Kgsotso Street, facing the busy taxi rank. The supermarket shares the yard with the family that owns the property as well as the tenants who rent the back rooms from the owners. Since these circumstances are very similar to the preceding examples of informal enterprises, it should be clear that for informal enterprises in Katlehong the idea is to be as close to one's customers as possible. Moreover, in addition to people living in the yard, THANDABANTU is exposed to people from all parts of Katlehong who find this taxi rank convenient; consequently, this shop becomes a go to space owing to that it opens in the early hours of the morning to cater for taxi commuters.

SIMUNYE (Fig. 3.56), on the other hand, is located further from the main township activity in a yard in Credi Section. It encounters Katlehong's diverse population, but not on the same scale as THANDABANTU. Instead, its clients are mostly local regulars: residents in the yard and pupils on their way to school. SIMUNYE is therefore a more *neighbourly* shop than THANDABANTU. However, both shops are open early in the morning, although THANDABANTU might open even earlier than SIMUNYE in order to cater for taxi drivers, but both close *after* ten o' clock at night. For local people, this solves the problem of access at inconvenient times, for example, workers who knock off late and must purchase household necessities. By contrast, supermarkets in Katlehong owned by South Afrikans close much earlier, and therefore sacrifice potential customers to their non-South Afrikan competitors.⁵³

Unlike spazas or tuck-shops operating from shacks and shipping containers, both THANDABANTU and SIMUNYE are fixed, brick constructions, meaning that the shops have settled in their yards and intend to do so for a long time. The façade of SIMUNYE displays an unusual and uneven shade of turquoise as background colour, rendered in a painterly and personal style. At THANDABANTU the rather grubby white façade, featuring charming illustrations of popular products, has been obliterated and replaced by a uniform flat, dark red (Figs. 54 & 55). The obvious reason for the choice of red is that it is the corporate colour of Albany Bakeries (a subsidiary of Tiger Brands that, one assumes, has sponsored the repainting),

⁵³ Whereas local shop owners have family responsibilities and homes elsewhere, immigrant traders tend to, literally, live in their shops. The owners are therefore able to open the store to anyone, at all hours of the night.

but the colour also serves a practical purpose in that it is less likely to show dirt than a white wall. The logos of the store is enhanced in that it now appears to be more hygienic than in the past.

Letterforms, language, and layout



Figure 3.57 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), SIMUNYE letterforms in front (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019/20.

Onto the blue-green façade and side wall of SIMUNYE, the signage crafter has applied free-hand drawn letterforms (**Figs. 3.58**). On the wall facing the street (that is Vile street), the words SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET comprise uppercase letterforms styled in a sentence case format. The organic, white letterforms on the front of the shop are unusual; they have sharp, curly features that lend the words an interesting kinetic quality. However, although individual letters have been enhanced with fine blue and red lines, the effect of this decoration is to diminish, not enhance, visibility.



Figure 3.58 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), SIMUNYE supermarket with the MASHESHA signage board in red paint (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

A white board is plugged to the left of the shop's entrance, promoting MASHESHA BUILDING & SUPPLY (**Fig. 3.58**). Although building supplies are not part of the shop's services, the uneven but charming, hand-rendered red letterforms create an eye-catching juxtaposition with the turquoise background. The red lettering is echoed in the red detailing of the product illustrations, creating a sense

of visual cohesion on the facade. The overall effect of the signage on the front of the shop is one of delicate painterliness, which suggests that the *logos* here is relatively low.



Figure 3.59 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET red letterforms (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

In striking contrast, on the right-side wall of the shop, the crafter painted the name of the supermarket, as well as information about its services, in large, bold, bright red sans-serif lettering (Fig. 3.59). The letterforms are clearly visible from a distance. The crafter created a useful hierarchy of information: SIMUNYE is the largest and most important word, followed by SUPERMARKET, which is also upper case, but italicised. •AIR TIME and •GROCERY are smaller in size, and placed at the bottom of the layout, but have been enlivened with a white outline. Similarly, to Senza Zonke and #CORNER RESTU, the crafter has used bullet points to indicate a list of benefits that cannot be visualised by way of illustration. As on the façade, the colour red is repeated in the detailing of the products illustrated on the wall, resulting in a sense of cohesion and order.



Figure 3.60 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Corner Tuck Shop (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

In the revamped THANDABANTU signage (**Fig. 3.60**), the large, loosely rendered blue SUPER MARKET text, that had been painted on what appears to be the original serving hatch of the shop (now permanently closed), has been replaced with a smaller, very precise rendering of the shop's name, accompanied by the logo of Albany Bakeries and the whole framed with a neat, white outline. The crafters have used the rectangular feature on the wall to align and accentuate the branding device.

The words THANDABANTU SUPER MARKET have been reversed out of a flat, white ribbon shape that attracts the eye and emphasises the name of the enterprise (**Fig. 3.60**). The letterforms are rendered in a clean, crisp sans-serif, signaling that the shop itself, as well as its merchandise, is of high quality. Small white letterforms placed above the ribbon shape inform potential customers that THANDABANTU has 'FRESH ALBANY BREAD DELIVERED' to this enterprise — a practical reason to shop at the store.

The perfectly aligned letterforms are evidence of the application of technical crafting tools such as stencils and an airbrush. The same can be said for the sponsor's logo as it is painted with considerable accuracy in order to communicate the quality of Albany products and persuade the Katlehong community that THANDABANTU is a shop that sells genuine brands.⁵⁴ The professional-looking typography signals that this township store has been recognised by Albany Bakeries as a superior enterprise with which the sponsor chooses to be associated.

However, in this process the 'speaker' is no longer THANDABANTU, but Albany Bakeries: to reiterate its authority the crafters, who would have been commissioned by Tiger Brands not the

⁵⁴ Recently, there have been concerns about the authenticity of branded products sold in township businesses, and in shops owned by immigrant traders. See, for example, Campaign set to get fake goods off spaza shop shelves (2018).

supermarket, have repeated the Albany logotype, larger than the word THANDABANTU itself, below the supermarket's name. In total, the word 'Albany' appears ten times on the shop front.

Images

On its façade and side wall, SIMUNYE displays several painted illustrations of popular, branded products sold by the store, for example, Nola mayonnaise, Cremora (a powdered milk product), Pride Maize meal and Coke (Fig. 3.57-3.59). Information about the products sold at this shop serve a practical purpose by reminding customers that their daily necessities are available right next door. One brand, Colgate Toothpaste, is also represented by a printed, photographic advertisement displayed to the left of the door (next to a painted illustration of the same product). Together with the hand painted sign for MASHESHA BUILDING & SUPPLY, the overall effect is an eclectic, yet appealing whole. However, although the brands are immediately recognisable, the attractive but naïve renderings contribute less *logos* to the establishment than the illustrations applied at its competitor, THANDABANTU.



Figure 3.61 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), THANDABANTU image style (signages crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

THANDABANTU, as part of its new identity, has abandoned the personal and untutored illustration style seen on SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET in favour of accomplished, technologically assisted renderings that argue for the First World efficiency of both the brand and the store. In particular, the illustrations of Albany products (depicted to the left of the door), approach photographic realism and add considerably to the *logos* of the enterprise.

The rendering of a young woman about to bite into a sandwich is less polished than the illustrations of the bread products, but still technically more accomplished than the portraits displayed on BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY. The scale, placement and styling of the model aligns this supermarket shopfront with mainstream billboard advertising design, another allusion to 'advanced' (Western)

technological skill. There has been a decided shift from personal expression to objective, commercial visualisation.

- **Ethos — How does the rhetoric of SIMUNYE SUPERMARKET and THANDA BANTU construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

Unlike *spazas* or tuck-shops that tend to migrate around Katlehong, both THANDABANTU and SIMUNYE supermarket are fixed, brick constructions, meaning that the shops have settled in their yards and intend to do so for a long time; permanence and long-term commitment to the community was therefore, until recently, an important aspect of both shops' *ethos*. Both stores benefited from and welcomed the diversity of the township, but, as observed elsewhere, SIMUNYE was perhaps the more *neighbourly* of the two enterprises.

However, feelings of neighbourliness suddenly disappeared in August and September 2019 when both shops were looted by members of the Katlehong community; subsequent to these attacks, both THANDABANTU and SIMUNYE have been closed and the apparent *ethos* of stability has been reversed. The very nature of these structures, that signaled the permanence of foreign nationals in Katlehong, seems to have made the stores targets of criminal acts. However, the signages remain intact and still make up part of the local visual culture and aesthetics in Skosana and Credi section house looks.

Letterforms, language and layout

The white, red and blue letterforms painted on the façade of SIMUNYE portray a lively and original, slightly oriental, character (Figs. 3.57-3.59). The personal lettering style connotes a self-taught crafter and engages with a visual dialect that resonates with the township and the tradition of making of personalised and expressive 'signages'. The letterforms on the side wall suggests the crafter's versatility in applying two different typographic styles, for different purposes: the large red text is crafted solely for visibility. The shop's signage signals that the enterprise and its owners remain loyal to a specific local visual culture associated with the aesthetics of Katlehong township supermarkets and *spaza* shops.

The word SIMUNYE is [isi]Zulu, meaning 'we are one', which, in the wake of the August/September 2019 violence, appears to be somewhat ironic. The choice of name suggests the voice of the Ethiopian trader, trying to blend in the store with its new surroundings.⁵⁵ The word *simunye* is not only literal, but also intertextual — reminding one of the Afrikan spirit of *ubuntu*, but also bringing back

⁵⁵ In my experience, as a permanent resident of Katlehong, these supermarkets are only owned and managed by men.

memories of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) SABC 1 television channel, relaunched in 1996 with the slogan *Simunye, we are one!* *Simunye* came into being at a time when South Afrika was transitioning into a non-racialised state and positioned itself as “the canvas upon which the stories of black South Africa could be portrayed” (Mabula 2017). Although the owners of the shop do not speak Zulu or township lingo, and probably had little or no idea of what *Simunye*, and its relevance to South Afrika's past, may have been, the *ethos* created by the signage crafter on behalf of his Ethiopian clients is that of promoting oneness amongst Afrikans in Katlehong.



Figure 3.62 THANDBANTU shop and sign Bob Riley (director), Harry Hofmeyer (scriptwriter) and Jan Scholtz (producer), *Kwakhala Nyonini*, c 1992 (screenshot by author)(Kwakhala Nyonini) [sa].

The Ethiopian owners of THANDBANTU, similarly, drew on the emotive intertextual references of the phrase *thanda bantu*, which means ‘love people’ and can be understood here as referring to a person, or persons, who enjoy serving their community. However, THANDBANTU also references popular local culture, namely a South African television comedy/drama series, *Kwakhala Nyonini*,⁵⁶ that was broadcast on SABC 1 in the early 1990s when the country was in a transitional period of social and political change. In the series, the character ‘THANDBANTU’ is an elderly man who owns a rural supermarket, named THANDBANTU, in Kwa-Zulu Natal (**Fig. 3.62**); in the local community he is referred to as *uThanda Bantu/ kwa-Thanda Bantu* (the space). The series was, and remains, immensely popular amongst Zulu-speaking South Afrikans, and it has been re-broadcast several times. By appropriating the name of the fictional shop, the Ethiopian owners created a simulacrum of the television series in the

⁵⁶ A Zulu proverb meaning, ‘What went wrong?’.

material space of Katlehong: the owners and their customers became part of what was perceived to be a grass-roots expression of authentic Zulu culture.⁵⁷

However, when the shop was repainted, the new crafters of THANDABANTU'S signage replaced the original, irregular hand-crafted letterforms with precise, stenciled sans-serif lettering and the name of the shop became subservient to the Albany Bakeries brand. In terms of *ethos*, the shop gained an entirely new character, namely one of skilled First World efficiency, but the reference to the beloved, if somewhat shabby, Thanda Bantu character, and his 'authentic' Zulu shop has, perhaps, been lost (see **Fig. 3.63**).



Figure 3.63 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), *Thanda Bantu* letterforms repainted into a simple sans serif (signage crafter unknown), Katlehong 2019.

Imagery

SIMUNYE (**Fig. 3.57-3.59**) is rooted in the tradition of local visual language. A multitude of schematic illustrations of popular branded products are sprinkled across the upper walls of the shop. What is important to note is that SIMUNYE utilises the illustrations not so much as advertising for specific brands, but as a form of decorative patterning that demands one's attention with its colourful hand rendered imagery. The crafter has, perhaps after some consultation with the shop owner, made his/her own choice of items to illustrate based upon personal knowledge of the township's best-loved brands.⁵⁸ The wall painting thus, functions as a signifier of a collective township *ethos*; here the brands are not merely presented as a way to clean teeth or clothes, but rather as instruments of identity construction in the service of the community. Illustrations are set out at equal distances from one another, and the sizes of the products have been adjusted so that no brand dominates. Notably, three competing brands of

⁵⁷ Even though the director and scriptwriter were English, Zulu 'cultural advisors' were employed by the crew.

⁵⁸ Strictly speaking, this usage is illegal, since by law one may not reproduce the trademark or packaging of a company, person or brand without the permission of the copyright owner. However, this flaunting of the law is part of the *ethos* of township informal enterprises.

maize meal are displayed: although, in practical terms, the shop is communicating that it carries stock of all three brands, the more salient message is that maize meal itself is an important signifier of collective Afrikan identity.



Figure 3.64 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), THANDA BANTU with Albany logo below on the left, Katlehong 2017.

Consequently, the connotation of the SIMUNYE illustrations transcends the banal advertising message: like the portraits applied at BARBER SHOP and EKASI-BEAUTY, the images take on the character of icons that signify an abstract dimension of township belonging.

THANDABANTU does the opposite. Before the supermarket was repainted, it constructed a very similar, if more rundown, identity to SIMUNYE and it is possible that the same crafter painted the product illustrations at both shops.⁵⁹ After THANDABANTU's visual transformation, the only brand that appears on the supermarket's façade is that of Albany Bakeries: all other visual communication has been removed, including small community notices and promotions (Fig. 3.64). The earlier, slightly misshapen, but visually appealing, Albany logo (Fig. 3.64) has been replaced with several exact airbrushed renditions of the official Albany brand device, as well as highly skilled renderings of the products themselves. Here the illustrations do not serve the community; instead the community is required to serve Albany Bakeries by relinquishing all other brands, as well as, it could be argued, township identity itself. The almost magical visualisation of an array of beloved brands, where these brands are creatively interpreted by the crafter and his/her audience, is replaced with a characterless corporate message.

⁵⁹ Compare the renderings of White Star maize meal packaging at SIMUNYE and the former THANDABANTU (Fig. 3.63).



Figure 3.65 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Albany bread painted inside a yellow heart shape, Katlehong 2019.

However, for some township residents this may be the preferred *ethos*. The crafters of the THANDABANTU renovation have, probably in answer to their brief, depicted the ideal consumer of Albany Bakeries products, namely an enthusiastic young woman of colour with ‘relaxed’ hair, elegant pink fingernails and a revealing, bright yellow dress (Fig. 3.66). This stylish young person might welcome the gradual fading of a vernacular township identity and be eager to replace it with the antiseptic monoculture of international branding rhetoric. Consequently, although the new THANDABANTU may be characterless, it offers a powerful *ethos*, namely that of blandness itself.



Figure 3.66 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Thanda Bantu supermarket Albany bread visuals, Katlehong 2017.

THANDABANTU's new image signals a cleaning up of informal township enterprises, a trend that is already visible in the visual rhetoric of EKASI-BEAUTY. However, THANDABANTU does not entirely abandon an Afrikan identity (it does, for example, retain its name), but provides a space of transition between a nostalgic vernacular and slick corporate sophistication. Although they are both owned by Ethiopian nationals, SIMUNYE and THANDABANTU reflect different identities. The shops' exteriors offer the community a choice: either to continue to be part of a local culture and support a shop that uses a familiar visual language or support a supermarket that has reinvented its identity by visually affiliating with a big, corporate brand, (Figs. 3.65-3.66).

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of SIMUNYE and THANDABANTU?**

The signage crafter of SIMUNYE follows his/ her own, personal laws and understanding as to what constitutes an effective communication within a township context; consequently, the emotional value of the signage for Katlehong residents is a sense of pride in the rejection of a mainstream, corporate culture, including that of formal graphic design training. The emotional value of THANDABANTU, while still providing an authentic township shopping experience, is its transitional nature: it remains part of the township but acknowledges the allure of the alternative. Younger township residents who work in corporate environments but still feel a strong attachment to the township, can resolve their conflict of identity when shopping at THANDABANTU: they are able to remain true to their roots while at the same time aligning themselves with a new, 'cleaner' global identity. This trend of sanitising the township is most evident in the wall advertising of Keys Communications and is discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: A NEW TREND — KEYS COMMUNICATIONS’S ‘HIGH-END’ WALLS

4.1. INTRODUCTION: ONE WALL, THREE ‘SPEECHES’



Diagram E Photographer unknown, Location of the yard in Maphanga section (satellite image) (Katlehong 2020).

On the corner of Kgotso and Dladla Streets in Maphanga Section in Katlehong, the perimeter wall of one house has been used to display several Keys Communications advertisements in the form of hand-painted ‘billboards’. From 2018 to (and including) 2020, this security wall, which is situated on a main road, was used by Keys to advertise three different brands, namely Cadbury’s CHIXO soft chocolate, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Med-Lemon and South African Breweries (SAB) Black Label beer.



Figure 4.1 Xolisa (photographer), Keys Communication logo marking the empty wall (designer unknown), Katlehong 2018/19.

Of note is that, before the advertisements appeared, the wall was first painted white and ‘tagged’ (Fig. 4.1) with the Keys’s company logo and contact information. Tagging, or *graffiti*, involves marking a wall with a symbol repeatedly to identify a space as belonging to a certain group or an individual (Curry & Decker [sa]). Usually the term *graffiti* is viewed as an act of rebellion, making it illegal. However, in this case there was consent given to the company to mark the wall as its ‘territory’, an indication to local signage makers that the owners of this yard are in partnership with Keys, and that the space is off-limits to other crafters. The wall has therefore been ‘occupied’ by the formal advertising sector.



Figure 4.2 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Alex Molefe’s before and after wall signage, Katlehong 2019.

In contrast to the preceding examples analysed in this study (where the signages are all presented on coloured backgrounds), the Keys ‘tag’ was placed on a wall that was deliberately painted white, perhaps signifying a new beginning. The tag appeared before 2018 and remained as such for at least a

year. The company's black logo on the long white wall therefore announces a break with the tradition of colourful and cluttered township signages and the company declared, first and foremost, that it was setting itself apart from the surrounding visual culture.

It is not known why the white wall with the black tag remained there for so long before the CHIXO promotion was added, but it is important to note that the use of township walls as an outdoor communication medium is common in this area. Other houses had their walls painted by local crafters, such as Alex Molefe, and display colourful typographic messages promoting local services such as funeral directors, local day care centers and houses to rent or buy (Fig. 4.2). Local people are therefore exposed to, and identify with, the style and form of these messages. When the Keys wall changed from plain white to promote mainstream brands, it could not produce visual communications that were too unfamiliar, because the rationale for Keys's approach is its understanding of the culture of hand-painted township signages. On the other hand, mainstream brands affiliated to international corporations would be reluctant to have their brand messages undermined by the subjective nature of 'authentic' vernacular sign making and the murals, discussed below, therefore *appear* to blend in but in fact argue for an entirely different township identity.

4.2 EXAMPLE ONE: CADBURY CHIXO SOFT CHOCOLATE MURAL

- General context of the CHIXO mural



Figure 4.3 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Keys Communications (project commissioners), Cadbury CHIXO chocolate wall, Katlehong Maphanga Section, 2018.



Figure 4.4 Plato Communications (designers), Detail of Cadbury Chixo chocolate wall 2018.

In July 2018, Cadbury South Africa launched a new ‘soft chocolate’ product, namely CHIXO (Verhoog 2018). Cadbury is a brand icon of Mondelez International⁶⁰ and its products are popular in South Afrika. The branding for CHIXO (Fig. 4.4) was created by Plato Communications, originally founded by Susan Krause in 2007 as the in-house public relations department for Cadbury (later Mondelez). Since 2011, Plato has won several Prism Awards,⁶¹ including best public relations company in 2015, and currently describes itself as “a boutique PR agency that offers strategic & creative Public Relations, Brand Activation and media solutions to a variety of clients” (Plato Communications 2020); Mondelez remains a premier client.⁶²

Plato, on behalf of Mondelez, would therefore have contracted Keys to execute the Plato CHIXO promotional design on this particular wall in Katlehong (Figs. 4.3 & 4.4). Apart from the client, Mondelez, being a global corporate giant and the consultancy an award-winning entity employing trained experts in marketing and design, the CHIXO mural reveals that it was traced from a vector image, in other words, a two-dimensional computer graphic created on a raster display that can be uploaded to online databases for other designers to download (Vector graphics 2020). In mainstream design, high-quality typography is typically stored as vector graphics, and as such is scalable to any size. In terms of transferring the design to the wall, the painter of the billboard could resize the image infinitely without losing quality. The differences between the uneven vernacular signages and the identity constructed on the wall at the corner of Kgotsso and Dladla Streets are therefore considerable, but both sets of signs can be examined in terms of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*.

⁶⁰ In 2010, Kraft Foods acquired the United Kingdom-based Cadbury, creating a “global powerhouse in snacks” (Mondelez South Africa [sa]). The division of Kraft would split off to become Mondelez in 2012. Brands owned by Mondelez include Cote d’Or, Oreo and Toblerone.

⁶¹ Africa’s “most sought after” (Welcome to the PRISM Awards 2020) public relations and communication awards.

⁶² Prior to founding Plato, Krause was an account director at Ogilvy & Mather South Africa and ran the consumer division working on fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) accounts, including South African Breweries (Susan Krause 2020).

- **Logos — How does the rhetoric of CHIXO chocolate mural solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

The practical problem that Plato and Keys were required to solve is how to announce a new product to a township audience, specifically children and parents. The high definition, hand-rendered CHIXO mural was painted on a brick wall. In the township, this type of structure is referred to as *stop-nonsense* owing to its strength, durability and ability to discourage crime. Using a wall located on a busy corner is logical in terms of creating awareness, since motorists pass by frequently; the site is also close to both Samson Primary School and Fumana Comprehensive School. Moreover, the corner is used by taxis for picking up people or dropping them off. When approaching this spot in a taxi, one might shout “*Shot-Left/Right!*” alerting the taxi driver that, at this house with the CHIXO mural, one wishes to disembark. Therefore, the CHIXO wall becomes a township marker — a practical tool in a communication system that is part of the daily, local language used by commuters in Katlehong.

Since the CHIXO mural was later overpainted, a similarity between the signages and Keys ‘high-end’ murals are that both reuse the structure (cf. BARBER SHOP, Fig. 3.31).

Letterforms, language, and layout



Figure 4.5 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), CHIXO mixed letterforms and re-alignment of the slogan letterforms, Keys Communications (project commissioners), Katlehong 2019.

The billboard offers factual information: CHIXO is manufactured by Cadbury; it is a ‘new’ product; it is a ‘soft’ chocolate, and it comes in four flavours. The familiar logotype of Cadbury is prominently displayed; there is no mention of Mondelēz, an unfamiliar entity. Hierarchy of the text assists the audience to read the message correctly: the most prominent word in terms of colour and placement, bright yellow

on red in the top right-hand corner, is 'new'. The dark blue CHIXO, set against a light blue background, emphasised with a brown and white outline, make the name of the product easy to read (Fig. 4.5).



Figure 4.6 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), CHIXO soft chocolate high-quality image rendering, Keys Communications (project commissioners), Katlehong 2018/19.

Imagery

The CHIXO advertisement uses intense, primary colours that enhance visibility and increase the impact of the message in a busy urban environment. Another important feature that adds to the *logos* of the CHIXO communication is the high-quality product rendering that, from a distance, appears to be photographic, therefore enhancing believability in the brand. Four CHIXO chocolate bars are painted with high realism and scaled up, as if they are about to jump off the wall (Fig. 4.6). Each chocolate is given a colour signifying an activity, namely yellow (listening to music), red (playing a musical instrument), green (football), and blue (school activities). The packaging therefore provides suggestions as to how one can enjoy the snack.

In addition, four elongated, brown cartoon characters reference the soft chocolate in the packaging. The characters are lively and enact the four activities: one plays an electric guitar, the others are carrying phones, books, playing with a football or listening to music. The use of cartoon characters solves the problem of communicating to children in a visual language with which they resonate and activities in which they are likely to engage. The visual rhetoric persuades the target audience that purchasing this product will result in *fun*.

- **Ethos — How does the rhetoric of CHIXO chocolate mural construct character?**



Figure 4.7 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), corner house CHIXO wall, Keys Communications (project commissioners) 2018.

Location/ environment and structure

Despite the fact that Cadbury / Mondelez need to control the nature of their brand communications, Plato chose to activate the CHIXO brand on a domestic wall in Katlehong. The location of the CHIXO mural, therefore, notwithstanding its computer-generated vector graphics, takes on some of the *ethos* of this ‘authentic’ township location. As mentioned previously, corners are important social spaces in the township. CHIXO thus inhabits the intimate space of township commuters and pedestrians, who can, if they wish, physically interact with the image. The brand therefore signals an *identification* with township life.

Letterforms, language, and layout

As pointed out in Section 4.1, the use of a vector design made it easy for the graphic artist⁶³ to copy the exact design provided by Plato. Apart from the Cadbury and CHIXO logotypes, the mural also displays a script-like novelty font used for both the tagline THE FUN FILLED CHOCOLATE and NEW. Although playfulness has been achieved in both the CHIXO logotype and choice of font, they are, nevertheless, vector graphics and accurately reproduced in terms of brand guidelines. Hand-lettering is simulated, but not to the point that it can be mistaken for an unschooled vernacular. To emphasise this distinction — being in the township but not quite part of it — the graphic artist has retained a neat, white border around the mural that separates the brand message from the township environment.

⁶³ Although I witnessed several signage crafters working on their walls, and found that these individuals were always males, I never witnessed any graphic artists executing murals on behalf of Keys Communications. I therefore cannot assume the gender of these practitioners.

Images

A notable contrast between the illustrations of high-end billboards and signages is that the latter are simple yet result from personal experience and freedom of expression to show that the crafter identifies with the store as both a consumer and sign maker from the township. On the other hand, Keys Communication's CHIXO billboard originated as a design in a professional consultancy *outside* the township. The high-end visual is a flattened, reproducible image that a graphic artist was able to paint on the wall without losing any detail.

This is not to say that the designers at Plato, while limited to the requirements of Cadbury/Mondelēz, did not have a measure of choice when designing the mural, but the graphic artist transferring the design onto the wall was simply following a template. Thus, the cartoon characters suggest the *ethos* of 'fun', but they do not reflect township identity (despite being brown with, apparently, 'dreadlocks'). The graphic artists did not have any hand in the creation of the characters, but just undertook the task of painting both packaging and characters as provided by Plato. The skill required here was not to engage with township identity, but to reproduce the identity of an international corporation: the voice of the brand versus the voice of the township.

However, despite the generic quality of the characters, the realistic features of the CHIXO mural, in comparison with, for example, SIMUNYE (Fig 3.58 & 3.59), signifies technical skill and cultural sophistication, which qualities are transferred to the product and, ultimately, the user. In contrast, the execution of SIMUNYE signage implies a lack of education in the arts. What is also of interest is that the CHIXO mural utilises primary colours in contrast to the 'mixed' colouring of the vernacular signages where white is often added to the base colour, resulting in a faded appearance (e.g., BARBER SHOP, Fig. 3.32). It is expensive to apply a pure colour; if a crafter is short of funds, adding white makes the colour go further. Therefore, even in the choice of colour, the global corporation signals its economic superiority over a local, informal enterprises.

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of CHIXO wall?**

'Art' as rhetoric is expressed here by means of conventional mainstream graphic design ideation and representation. Perhaps the intended emotional appeal was that of a new brand that identifies with the people that walk here daily, and that this snack bar understands them. However, the purpose of the message is lost: the graphic artist, because of his skill, ensured that the generic content created by the graphic designer was retained (Fig. 4.2). Consequently, CHIXO's emotional appeal is that of a standard advertising campaign and the communication is rooted in product benefits. Although it is functional, and

aesthetically engaging, the ‘fun-filled’ rhetoric seems to have been ineffectual since CHIXO (in my experience) was never available in local supermarkets or spazas in Katlehong.

Lastly, it is of interest that Keys re-tagged the wall (**Fig. 4.7**), a strong indication that the company creates the type of visuals that not only advertise brands, but also ‘clean’ township walls, one yard at a time. Keys appears to be signaling that ‘high-definition’ visuals are desirable and, moreover, by being placed at a corner, play a role in instructing local people what the standards of signage in the township could, and should, be.



4.3. EXAMPLE TWO: MED-LEMON MUSCLE MAN CAMPAIGN MURAL



Figure 4.8 Xolisa Sbieko (photographer), Med-Lemon mural, Keys Communications (designer), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 4.9 Med-Lemon box (photographer unknown), (Med-Lemon 2020).

- **General context of the Med-Lemon mural**

Between the months of July and August 2019, the CHIXO mural was replaced with an advertisement for Med-Lemon (Fig. 4.8) that was part of the brand's ongoing Muscle Man campaign launched by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK),⁶⁴ that owns the Med-Lemon brand. The product is sold in a box that contains 18 small (8g) sachets of flavoured, powdered flu remedy. This medication can be bought in local spaza shops and is consumed with boiling water (Fig. 4.9).

Med-Lemon has a history of engaging outdoor advertising, and the idea of the product as a 'muscle man' is well established. For example, in 2010 an innovative, three-dimensional building wrap was created

⁶⁴ GSK is a British multinational corporation and is the tenth largest pharmaceutical company in the world (GlaxoSmithKline 2020). It is of interest that in 2012 GSK pleaded guilty in the largest health-care fraud case to date in the USA, which may be the reason that the GSK logo, unlike Cadbury, is downplayed in Med-Lemon branding (Ingram 2012).

and placed in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, near the Nelson Mandela Bridge (Hot new marketing campaign for Med-Lemon 2010). The wrap featured Med-Lemon's signature character holding a 'steaming' mug of Med-Lemon (**Fig. 4.10**). According to Luvuyo Ngoma (in Hot new marketing campaign for Med-Lemon 2010), Senior Brand Manager at GSK, the high-profile wrap "formed part of a far wider 360° marketing campaign masterminded by GSK in conjunction with partner agencies, Nota Bene and Grey Worldwide SA" (**Fig. 4.10**).⁶⁵ In 2014, the Med-Lemon 'Muscle Man' was recognised for its impactful social media presence on Twitter™ (Successful Twitter campaign with Med-Lemon Muscle Man 2014) (**Fig. 4.11**), a campaign conceptualized by the Cape Town-based agency, 140 BBDO.



Figure 4.10 Photographer unknown, Med-Lemon building wrap campaign (Medlemon 2010).

The Keys mural in Katlehong followed later (**Fig. 4.8**), but, as was the case with CHIXO, a media planning agency would have contracted Keys to implement the Med-Lemon design on township walls as part of GSK's ongoing 'masterminded' campaign.⁶⁶ Consequently, according to the Keys Facebook™ page (**Fig. 4.10**), identical murals were painted in more than one location (possibly outside Katlehong). This duplication was, once again, enabled using vector images supplied by agency-based graphic designers. Unlike the newcomer, CHIXO, Med-Lemon is a well-established and popular product in townships and this may account for the overpainting of CHIXO with the Med-Lemon mural.

⁶⁵ Grey is the advertising network of the Grey Group that ranks amongst the largest global communications companies, with headquarters in New York City (Grey About Us 2020). Nota Bene is a media planning agency in South Africa (Nota Bene Media Planning Agency 2020).

⁶⁶ It is unclear which advertising agency held the Med-Lemon account in July 2019. In March 2018, 140BBDO, was absorbed into Net#work BBDO, in Johannesburg (Manson 2018).



Figure 4.11 140 BBDO (designers), Med-Lemon twitter post, 2014 (Successful Twitter campaign with Med-Lemon Muscle Man 2014).



Figure 4.12 Photographer unknown, Med-Lemon mural (Keys Communications Township Media Specialist 2019).

- **Logos — How does the rhetoric of MED-LEMON mural solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

Since the Med-Lemon mural was painted over the CHIXO advertisement, it, firstly, solved a practical problem of re-using an existing advertising space. What was, however, notable about this mural was its timing: it was painted during the winter season, when people are known to fall ill with colds and flu. The corner placement was a perfect space to remind commuters and pupils of the product benefits as they hurried past (**Fig. 4.13**). Impact is enhanced by the application of bright, primary colours that capture the attention of a moving audience. Township corner sites had already been linked to the brand: a 2015 GSK television advertisement for Med-Lemon includes a scene depicting a Med-Lemon branded corner spaza shop where the Med-Lemon Muscle Man is signaling that he is ready to catch a taxi (**Fig. 4.14**).



Figure 4.13 Xolisa Sibeko (photographer), Med-Lemon Muscle Man mural, Keys Communication (project commissioners), Katlehong 2019.



Figure 4.14 MED-LEMON 'Muscle Man' television commercial (designers unknown), (Med-Lemon South Africa Sep 2015).

An important aspect of the Med-Lemon mural was that once the wall had been used again by Keys, it signalled that township residents could now expect that this space would feature more high-definition communications about their favourite brands.



Figure 4.15 Xolisa (photographer), Med-Lemon letterforms, Keys Communications (project commissioners), Katlehong 2019.

Letterforms language, and layout

The Med-Lemon wall (**Fig. 4.15**) projects relatively high *logos* because it offers a practical solution to a common problem. It displays two texts that communicate the benefits of the product in a mixture of two languages: Zulu and English. On the left, the text reads, MED-LEMON FIGHTS 9 COLD & FLU SYMPTOMS FAST; on the right, TRUST UDOKOTELA WENDLELA (approximately, Trust this doctor in all your journeys). The appeal to the logic of the target audience is that people passing this corner *are* on a journey, either catching or disembarking from a taxi, or going to or returning from school. Because the product is provided in small sachets, it can easily be taken on ‘all your journeys’ — a doctor in the commuter’s pocket.

In terms of hierarchy, bold white sans-serif letters with a broken red outline emphasise that the product FIGHTS cold and flu symptoms *on behalf of* township inhabitants. The word FAST, in red against a green background, is read simultaneously with FIGHTS, so that the promise is, MED-LEMON FIGHTS FAST. The adversary, namely colds and flu, is rendered in blue, and therefore recessive, although the number of symptoms is enlarged for clarity. The use of a mathematical number, and the direct association with the colour blue with cold, enhances the *logos* of the visual argument. In addition, the product packaging is shown in realistic detail so that the consumer can recognise it at the point of sale.

The layout of this section utilises three conventional devices that signal speed and power and that reinforce the main message: the text is placed at a positive right angle, and the letterforms themselves are italicised. The word FAST is given the illusion of being in motion by slightly blurring the letters and inserting ‘speed lines’ in front of the F (**Fig. 4.16**).



Figure 4.16 Xolisa (photographer), Med-Lemon FAST letterforms with speed lines, Keys Communications (project commissioners), Katlehong 2019.

The message on the right, firstly, uses bold, red sans-serif placed against a plain lemon-green background so that visibility is ensured. Secondly, the text itself references two important concepts that further increases *logos*, namely TRUST and UDOKOTELA, where the ‘doctor’ is the product itself. The appeal here is to encourage a logical and scientific response to illness: moreover, by referring to a ‘doctor’ (and not a traditional healer, such as *isangoma* or *inyanga*), the advertisement references the *logos* of Western medicine.

Imagery

The illustration (repeatedly exactly at other locations) depicts the torso of a bright red muscular figure throwing a punch at the words FIGHTS 9 COLD & FLU SYMPTOMS (Fig. 4.15). The image provides information by demonstrating the product’s action using a visual simile. The red muscular figure is a simple, but powerful, rhetorical device that communicates the idea that this product has superpowers.

- **Ethos — How does the rhetoric of MED-LEMON mural construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

The location of the Med-Lemon billboard generates a similar, but not entirely identical, *ethos* as the CHIXO mural. GSK choose to take advantage of the ‘authentic’ township experience as part of its ‘360° marketing campaign’. However, unlike CHIXO, the Med-Lemon message refers overtly to the relevance of the corner site as a social space in Katlehong. Although the design was created in a mainstream advertising agency outside the township, more care was taken to research and acknowledge township culture.

Consequently, the *ethos* of the Med-Lemon wall, while referencing other, more technologically impressive Med-Lemon advertising, nevertheless reflects an intrinsic aspect of township character. The designers also used the physical structure as an intrinsic element of the creative concept: through skillful illustration, the figure appears to be bursting through a solid brick wall, emphasising the power of the medication. However, as was the case with CHIXO, the entire design is separated from the township environment with a neat, white frame that isolates the GSK global brand: Med-Lemon is from the township, but not *ghetto*.

Letterforms language, and layout

Letterforms used on the Med-Lemon wall are solid, bold and plain, mostly rendered in red and yellow. In the headline on the right, TRUST UDOKOTELA WENDLELA (**Fig. 4.15**), a standard sans-serif font has been selected that, unlike the ‘fun-filled’ *ethos* of CHIXO, communicates a business-like character. The colour red connotes danger, perhaps of illness, but in this case also signifies the hot nature of the medication. However, red also conveys masculinity, which echoes the muscled male torso.

As is the case with CHIXO, the letterforms are not personalised; the graphic artists who painted the mural had a blueprint of the design. The letterforms signal a corporate *ethos* and have to convey this character consistently across many different platforms, not just this local identity.



Figure 4.17 Flash Poster DC comics Cover Wall Decoration High Quality 16x20, (Superior Poster 2020).

However, the main brand message to the left of the wall — MED-LEMON FIGHTS FAST — constructs a more energised and entertaining character that references comic-style letterforms associated with superheroes saving vulnerable citizens (usually American). The style and layout of the lettering, as well as the actual words (FIGHTS FAST), evoke the typography on the covers of, for example, The Flash comic series, (**Fig. 4.17**). Consequently, Med-Lemon is associating itself with the aesthetics of American popular culture.



Figure 4.18 Designer unknown, Med-Lemon Muscle Man mural, [sa] (Our Latest and Great Work).

As noted earlier, the mixed language aspect of the communication acknowledges Katlehong as a community of multiple ethnicities. Although the default letterforms cannot be changed, the combination of Zulu and English *is* specific to the township, and perhaps even to Katlehong in particular, since the mixing of languages is absent from other available examples of Med-Lemon advertising (e.g., **Figs. 4.11 & 4.18**). By using township *lingo*, the advertisement is in line with Keys strategy as presented on its website; this is what Keys prides itself on as a company that ‘belongs’ to the township. The *ethos* of language as a rhetorical device convinces the viewer that this brand understands that the community of Katlehong speaks in a certain way, and therefore reassures the target audience that the product can be trusted because it speaks the township language.

Images

In the same way that the product benefits of CHIXO are communicated through cartoon characters, the Med-Lemon billboard displays an illustration of the torso of a bright red, muscled, but headless, figure that smashes through the words ‘FIGHTS 9 COLD & FLU SYMPTOMS’. The pack design takes on a human form that relies on the consumers’ knowledge of American superheroes. The Flash, for example, possesses ‘super speed’ and thinks extremely fast (Flash (comics) 2020).⁶⁷ In conjunction with the energetic, comic-style letterforms, the character that is constructed here is entertaining, but also a fighter.

⁶⁷ In 2014 The Flash story was relaunched as an American superhero television series (The Flash (2014 TV series) 2020). In the 2014 Twitter™ campaign, the Med-Lemon Muscle Man references World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) fighting.

Unlike the highly stylised CHIXO cartoon characters, the Med-Lemon figure is a more realistic representation of a human, although it remains ambiguous regarding gender and race. The absence of a head, and the red body colour, obscures a specific ethnic group. The character is referred to as the Med-Lemon ‘Muscle Man’, but in the 2015 television commercial of this name, a female version of the body-building superhero makes a brief appearance, wearing a yellow bikini top (Med Lemon ‘Muscle Man’ TV Commercial 2015). Nevertheless, the television commercial presents the main protagonist as black and male. In general, therefore, the *ethos* of the billboard can be said to be masculine, which may suggest that the ‘speech’, here, is aimed at men.

In summary, the Med-Lemon mural constructs an identity that, on the one hand, draws on traditional township sociability (such as commuting and masculinity) and, on the other hand, acknowledges the influences of global marketing, Western medicine and American popular culture.

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of the Med-Lemon wall?**

What this Keys Communications mural demonstrates is that international brands play an important role in the construction of the daily experiences in townships such as Katlehong. Here the emotional appeal is that Katlehong can be transformed to compete with mainstream media spaces. The Med-Lemon mural is the product of a professional collaboration with Keys that places its tag prominently to the right of the mural — this time, dramatically, on a black background with the logo reversed out in white (**Fig. 4.13**). As was the case with CHIXO, Keys reminds township residents that this is Keys Communications territory. It adds its stamp of approval to ‘high end’ wall advertising, offering the Med-Lemon mural as a signifier of a changing township culture.

4.4. EXAMPLE THREE: CARLING BLACK LABEL CHAMPION MURAL



Figure 4.19 Photographer unknown, Black Label mural in Katlehong, CBL KATLEHONG ONLY POF 2019 (CBL KATLEHONG ONLY POF 2019).

- **General context of the mural**

At the same time that the Med-Lemon mural replaced CHIXO, Keys was instrumental in the painting of the Carling Black Label Champion Reward mural in its signature black, white and red brand colours (**Fig. 4.19**). The Black Label mural appears on the same wall as Med-Lemon, but further along the road, and its timing comes as no surprise. During July, the annual pre-season Carling Black Label Cup takes place. This one-day football festival, established in 2011, involves two legendary Soweto football clubs, namely Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates (Black Label Cup 2019; Sparkling History of the Black Label Cup 2018). The event, according to Carling Black Label General Manager Andrea Quaye (in KickOff 2011) was “workshopped” by South African Breweries (SAB), the advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather and representatives from Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs. The cup is unusual in that fans have the opportunity to put together a team of their choice. They are also able to affect a live substitution on game-day. Although not its principal sponsor, Carling Black Label is the ‘sleeve sponsor’ of Orlando Pirates, which has made it an important part of this South African sporting sub-culture.⁶⁸

The origins of Carling Black Label lie in Canada; SAB introduced the brand to South Africa in 1966 (Origins 2020).⁶⁹ Originally, ‘The Carling Man’ was epitomised by blue-collar workers; currently, the brand claims to reflect “the nuances of modern South African men” (Cultural spirit 2020), such as entrepreneurs, community builders and sportsmen. Although the mural does not communicate anything about the Black Label Cup itself, the association with the event is inevitable: whichever team won was the ‘champion’ and the reward for winning was a beverage consumed by ‘champion’ men. Confirming its ‘champion’ status, Carling Black Label has also won numerous international awards.⁷⁰

- **Logos — How does the Black Label Champion mural solve a practical problem?**

Location/ environment and structure

The practical problem that the Black Label billboard is required to solve is how to announce specific information about a product to a township audience, in this case probably (adult) men. Unlike

⁶⁸ The brand has also been at the epicenter concerning gender-based violence with its #NOEXCUSE campaign (Soccer Song For Change 2019; Carling Black Label 2020).

⁶⁹ Although SAB, because of its name, appears to be a locally-owned brewery, its parent company, Castle Brewery, had listed on the London Stock Exchange as early as 1898. The group was renamed SAB in 1955. Currently, SAB is a direct subsidiary of Anheuser-Busch InBev SA/NV, a Belgian brewing company (South African Breweries 2020). On its official website SAB downplays its Belgian ownership, claiming that “South Africa is our home” (Our story 2020) <http://www.sab.co.za/the-sab-story> For a scholarly history of SAB, see Anne Mager (2010).

⁷⁰ According to the official SAB website, Carling Black Label has twice won the World’s Best Bottled Lager competition and overall won a total of 29 awards, including the Monde International Awards (Grand Gold), IBD Africa (2nd Place) and International Taste and Quality Institute (3 Star Gold). It has consistently been voted the most popular lager in South Africa (Halls 2018). <http://www.realbeerrevolution.co.za/black-label/>

CHIXO and Med-Lemon, the Black Label mural is not placed on a corner, but some way from it; nevertheless, commuters pass by frequently and the billboard becomes yet another township marker.

Although the advertisers could have utilised mainstream outdoor media (such as scaffolded billboards or printed banners) the choice of the wall solves the communication problem in a practical and eco-friendly way. It is a permanent, yet reusable, fixture and therefore reduces wastage and vandalism: Keys highlights this advantage to prospective clients on its website.

The painted mural has been executed using the ‘high-definition’ airbrushing technique that is Keys’s trademark. The result is the highly persuasive ‘technological’ appeal of a hand-generated creation that is crafted to a level that it appears as if it was applied by a machine to the wall (**Fig. 4.19**). The technical excellence of the mural offers a logical connection to a ‘champion’. What is more, the graphic artist has used the pitted texture of the wall to enhance the appearance of a three-dimensional product, thereby further increasing the rhetorical appeal of technical skill.

Letterforms, language, and layout

This wall is mainly typographic and provides factual information to the target audience; it therefore has quite high *logos*. Big, bold red and white text on the left reads ‘CHAMPION REWARD, CHAMPION PRICE’ (**Fig. 4.19**); on the right, an enormous numeral 15 announces the recommended selling price in rand of a 750ml unit of beer.

In comparison to the CHIXO and Med-Lemon texts, the condensed sans-serif letterforms of the Black Label wall are large, plain and functional, making for excellent legibility. It is perhaps the most impactful of the three examples, but is arguably the least ‘flamboyant’ of all the wall paintings examined in this study. Again, a standard font has been used and the task of the graphic artist has been to render it on the wall exactly as it is seen in other applications (e.g., **Fig. 4.20**). This consistency with other campaign elements associated with digital media heightens the *logos* of the wall.



Figure 4.20 Designer unknown, Carling Black Label web banner, 2015 (Carling Black Label [sa]).

The overall neatness and logical organisation of the layout adds to the *logos*. Reading from left to right, the argument is broken down into three sections. The eye is drawn from the word *champion* on the left across to the illustration of a trophy on the enlarged beer label on the right. Factual information is isolated and emphasised in a rectangle and the less important information scaled down in size, creating a strict hierarchy that makes the message clear and easy to grasp.

Imagery



Figure 4.21 Photographer unknown, Black Label mural in Katlehong, CBL KATLEHONG ONLY POF 2019 (CBL KATLEHONG ONLY POF 2019).

The level of skill exhibited in the product illustration is impressive and far exceeds that of Med-Lemon, and even CHIXO.⁷¹ The image is so realistically rendered that the bottle appears to be three-dimensional (**Fig. 4.20-4.21**). However, the illustration is not a personal interpretation of an object, as for example the renderings on the walls of Simunye Supermarket. Here the product detail is presented as an exact, scientific fact: it serves mostly to confirm the name of the brand. The top and bottom of the bottle have been cropped, so that the emphasis is on the logotype of Black Label: words and numbers are what count.

⁷¹ This suggests that Keys has access to a number of different graphic artists whose skills vary when it comes to image rendering.

- **Ethos — How does Black Label Champion mural construct character?**

Location/ environment and structure

Although it is not on a corner site, the location of the Black Label billboard draws on a similar township *ethos* as that of the CHIXO and Med-lemon murals. However, there is a sense that this mural is more at home in Kgotso Street than CHIXO and Med-Lemon. This may be because the brand is closely associated with the township sub-culture of football, but also because no isolating white frame has been placed around the advertisement. The edges of the mural appear to blend in with the structures around it (**Fig. 4.21**). The white bar at the base, with its warning — DRINK RESPONSIBLY. NOT FOR PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 — is a legal requirement and necessary owing to the proximity of several schools.

Letterforms, language, and layout

Typography and colour create the *ethos* of this mural. If one were to remove the product illustration (see letterforms in **Figs. 4.20 & 4.21**), it will still be clear to most people that this is a Black Label advertisement. The ordered, sans-serif letterforms and restricted colour palette signify a disciplined, adult character and the reference to 'champions' and 'reward' suggest a parental tone. Unlike earlier campaigns for Black Label, hard work is not depicted, but implied by the disciplined typography. The reward, placed almost out of reach, is desirable, but not (like CHIXO) associated with *fun*. Masculinity is inferred, but not imposed.

Of the three examples of Keys's efforts to 'occupy all walls', this is the most assertive and the authority signified by the letterforms contrasts with the lettering of the informal enterprises where crafters apply typographic visuals that are the product of an individual intuition and self-taught skill. In addition to the character of the Black Label letterforms, the predominance of text is in itself of interest: the township is no longer a space in which advertisers have to adjust their messages for a semi-literate audience.



Figure 4.22 Photographer unknown, Black Label mural in Katlehong, CBL KATLEHONG ONLY POF 2019 (CBL KATLEHONG ONLY POF 2019).

Imagery

As mentioned above, the texture of the wall contributes to the realism of the image: the graphic artist placed white highlights on the edges of pitted holes in the surface of the wall to enhance the appearance of frost on an ice-cold bottle, thereby intensifying the product's taste appeal. From a distance, it seems as if a mechanically printed board was pasted on the wall, but drawing closer one notices the airbrushing technique and realises that this outdoor advertisement is hand painted. The transformation adds interest and character to the brand.

The sense of mystery is intensified by the use of the colour black as a background, against which blurry red shapes suggest the tail-lights of cars: this is a beer to be enjoyed after sundown, after a hard day's work in the city. The quality of the illustration does not only reference the quality of the beer: it also signals a new and rising quality of the residents of Katlehong.



Figure 4.23 Ogilvy JHB (designers) Carling Black Label website banner, 2019 (Carling Black Label 2019).

- **Pathos— What is the emotional appeal of Black Label Champion beer mural wall?**

What was meant to be a house's security feature, is now part of the township's visual identity that, in turn, is being altered by mainstream advertising culture. The aesthetics of the Black Label mural have been crafted within certain confinements, owing to the fact that there were numerous agents involved in its execution, of which Keys is only one. However, what I find to be convincing about the visual rhetoric of the wall is how the mural responds to human circumstances in Katlehong, in this case, the masculine sub-culture of drinking beer and partaking in sports events. Although the Black Label advertisement is more generic than its Med-Lemon neighbour and does not engage conceptually with its location, the mural nevertheless reminds passers-by of their favourite drinking spot and having a beer after work with friends. It is not a giant billboard on a scaffold removed from the fabric of the township, neither is it the printed material attached to township taverns that is thrown away when a promotion ends. Despite the fact that Keys utilises 'high-definition' airbrushing that heightens technological reasoning, the mural is still *hand-painted* and, as such, a unique creative experience.

Summary

Keys Communications, in negotiating these three wall paintings with large, multinational corporations and skilled graphic artists, bridges the gap between hand crafted and digital signage. While vernacular signages may utilise established brands on informal enterprises, Keys Communications has introduced another angle: the brand as the main actor on the stage. In this manner, Katlehong is drawn towards a sophisticated global community — a space where people are exposed to, and can embrace (if they choose), the identities constructed in 'high-end' advertising.

In this case, the argument for change is made on one long wall, which is part of a single yard in Katlehong. This house suggests the vibrancy of many other walls located on main roads in Katlehong. What is of interest is that these walls are never defaced or vandalised: instead, Katlehong residents see themselves as custodians of these murals, and look after them. Although the crafters claim that all they do is make signs, it may be that these signs are appreciated and admired by the community not just as incidental corporate advertising, but as artworks.



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The core focus of this study was to undertake a rhetorical analysis of Katlehong's informal enterprises and 'high-end' wall advertising in order to demonstrate how conflicting identities are constructed in township visual culture. My analysis demonstrates six categories of contestation, namely the purpose of the sign; the sign maker(s); the location of the sign; language; letterforms; and images used in the design.

Purpose of the sign

Signages by local crafters are constructed with the aim of promoting small enterprises that are intertwined with the essential needs of Katlehong residents. Consequently, there is a commitment to keeping the local visual culture alive and relevant in a digital age. The signages selected for this study were crafted with the intention to communicate *oneness* — that the enterprises are owned by Katlehong people for the benefit of the Katlehong community.⁷²

Keys's intent differs from that of the crafters: the company seeks to promote big brands on behalf of global corporations with headquarters outside South Africa. The larger aim of Mondelez, GSK and Anheuser-Busch InBev is profit for foreign shareholders, with no concern for Katlehong except as a potential market for their products. Keys has as its objective not to preserve but to change the visual landscape of Katlehong, so as to attract big brands as clients: the bigger the brand, the bigger the media budget. Although crafters sometimes depict well-known brands, they are not commissioned by these brands:⁷³ depicting a pack of Iwisa maize meal or Colgate toothpaste signals an understanding of local identity, based on personal use and attachment to a brand.

The sign makers

A crafter is likely to be a buyer at the same shop for which he once crafted signage, and the commission to paint the sign might have resulted from a customer relationship, or a referral from local people who know the crafter and his work. Owners of informal enterprises in Katlehong are largely migrants and to foster acceptance in the community they rely on the lived experience of local crafters to create an identity that signals *being local* and hides the migratory status of the owner.

⁷² This close engagement with the community would change in September 2019; see Section 5.5.

⁷³ In fact, crafters are contradicting copyright laws by reproducing the brand image in a commercial context without consent from the copyright holders.

The making of signs for informal enterprises is therefore intimately bound up with the crafters' relationship with the township. However, the graphic artist, commissioned by Keys, is probably an outsider, thus s/he will not get to walk Kgotso Street and see the mural after the project has been completed. There is no connection to the mural beyond remuneration and no shared interest with the owners of the wall.

Crafters are self-taught and work intuitively; their tools are simple, and they use available materials. The graphic artists employed by Keys are trained in the accurate reproduction of pre-existing vector images provided by professional graphic designers (who probably have a qualification in a design discipline from a tertiary institution). These professional skills are enhanced by complex technology, such as the 'high-definition' airbrush process that is Keys's unique selling proposition. Finally, crafters take ownership of their signs; as creative practitioners, they often sign their work. Keys graphic artists remain anonymous contractors; the entity that 'signs' the completed mural is Keys.

Location

Informal enterprises share their spaces with people in small yards and the signages often blend in with the activities in that location. Vernacular signage is always associated with a shop, but one that might shift its location overnight, thus signifying a migratory identity. The Keys murals, on the other hand, are placed on the corner of a main road and painted on the street-facing side of a large brick wall. The *stop-nonsense* in Kgotso Street surrounds an extensive property containing a large brick house. The owners therefore appear to be affluent and of a higher class than the occupants of shacks. Shacks are the avatars of township life; brick houses reference middle-class suburbia. Therefore, brands advertised on this wall are not associated with marginalisation, but with a 'new, improved' township identity, a 're-imagined' and permanent community with a good infrastructure that has the ability to attract mainstream business.

Crafters don't have much choice in terms of the surfaces on which they paint and their creativity has to adapt to a wide variety of surfaces ranging from plastered walls to corrugated iron and shipping containers. The main aim is to use their creativity to transform 'dirt' into a desirable space, relying on imagination to generate the necessary visuals. Keys, on the other hand, only applies its murals to well-constructed plastered walls to ensure that the brand's image is not tarnished by structures that may be associated with decay. Crafters seek to showcase the raw township aesthetic, whereas Keys censors this beauty, favouring standard commercial communications that are impersonal and only concerned with the brand's identity.

Language

For the crafters, language is crucial. Words such as ‘senza zonke’, ‘corner restu’, ‘simunye’, ‘chiskop’, ‘plate’, ‘special’, ‘lupi’, ‘ekasi’ and ‘kota’ reinforce pride in a unique culture: *lingo* is the driving agent of township identity.

Keys murals favour standard commercial texts that are generic to the brand: both the CHIXO and Black Label billboard designs could have been used, unaltered, in any English-speaking setting. In my sample, only the Med-Lemon advertisement acknowledges an affiliation with township *lingo*. Overall, the Keys-related promotions encourage the uncontaminated use of “the powerful language of wider communication” (Dyers 2007:97). Here, again, the Keys murals argue for a ‘re-made’ community that counters perceptions of the township as *ghetto*.

Letterforms

Complementing the use of township *lingo*, the letterforms applied by the crafters are personal interpretations of the practitioners’ intuitive understanding of the elements of design. The vernacular forms resonate with people who identify with a Katlehong lifestyle and they serve to keep older traditions and community spirit alive.

On other hand, Keys graphic artists do not alter the typefaces to suggest individualism but apply typography specific to the brand identity as it was designed in an advertising agency. Sameness with an extended campaign, with no specific connection to Kathleong or the graphic artist, is a requirement.

Images

Helmets and Hill (2014: 1) state that “images have played an important role in developing consciousness and the relationship of the self to its surroundings”. In the case of Katlehong, images promoting informal enterprises signify an ‘underground’ collective of practitioners that operate without specialised education but believe in their skills. These crafters form part of a visual tradition associated with township barbershops, salons and *spazas*. Their illustrations depict real objects but remain simplified and perhaps deliberately ‘naïve’. Crafters assume that consumers *know* what the qualities of a familiar product or service are — images merely serve as a visual shorthand for ‘supermarket’, ‘fast food shop’ or ‘salon’.

The high-end Keys murals offer an alternative, namely highly realistic product renderings. The skill of the graphic artist in transferring the original product illustration to the wall signifies the sophistication of the product, as well as its user. Skill is the result of training, and the style of execution argues for a township community that is well-educated, informed about Western aesthetics and able to be assimilated into an international community of professionals.

High-end imagery is as real as it gets; in contrast, the imagery of BARBERSHOP, for example, ignores the impulse to construct the exact likeness of a typical township resident in its signage. The resultant imagery takes on an abstract, and even spiritual character. In contrast, the visual rhetoric of the Black Label beer bottle ends up being mundane, typical of advertising images in mainstream media; its only interest lies in its hand-generated application.

Keys Communications sets out to exploit an authentic township culture by emulating hand-painted signages, but in doing so introduce a conflicting identity that rejects township aesthetics and, in this particular sample, also its language. However, it is important to note that the globalising identities offered by Keys are not rejected by Katlehong residents; the murals are not vandalised or destroyed. This suggests that the conflict is not just between Keys and the crafters, but in the shifting values of the township community itself.

5.2 VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

In her critique of the rhetoric of organised township tours, Shelley Butler (2010:15) questions “public discourses that valorize the creativity of the poor”. As an example, Butler (2010:17) mentions tours that visit the home of the crafter Golden Nongawuza who creates flowers from recycled cans. Butler (2010: 21) is critical of the “celebration”, through photography, of township shacks, for example the book *Shack chic: art and innovation in South African shack lands* (Fraser 2003).⁷⁴ In summary, Butler (2010:21) asks: “What are the ethics of highlighting individual resilience and creativity in light of widespread hardship?”.

Although Butler’s (2010:17) point is taken in terms of practices of tourism and the potential “problem of voyeurism” (Butler 2010:17), it is important to note that my research, unlike that of Venter, Walker and Weller, proceeds from the lived experience of the township. This condition is fundamental to the validity of my study. Moreover, while I have taken photographs of township structures to illustrate my arguments, I do not set out to “aestheticise poverty” (Butler 2010:21). Captured with a borrowed mobile phone, images were not carefully composed, nor edited afterwards for greater impact, but deliberately kept ‘raw’.

Of equal importance is that I never equate the township with poverty, and I question Butler’s assumption that a crafter such as Nongawuza, merely by displaying his craft in a township, must be suffering ‘hardship’. This is perhaps a simplistic view: using Mkhekhe as an example, I would rather argue that township crafters undertake this work *because it suits them*.

⁷⁴ Weller’s coffee-table book only appeared in 2011.

I was born and have spent my entire life in Katlehong. I am therefore the target audience of the visual rhetoric of both the informal enterprises and the 'high-end' wall advertising. As a graphic designer, I respond positively to the professionalism of the rhetoric of the Keys murals. On the other hand, as a customer of barbershops and township supermarkets, I feel that the traditional *ethos* of Katlehong, and the crafters' contribution to this communal identity, may be undermined by Keys 'occupying all walls'. I am, therefore, in the relationship of my own self to my surroundings, also conflicted.

In order to explore this question of visual identity in the township, I systematically analysed eight examples according to the rhetorical appeals made by the context, the location, the letterforms and imagery of the signs. By applying a rigorous analytical instrument, I demonstrate how the visual rhetoric of Keys argues for an opposing identity to that of the informal enterprises.

5.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

My study makes a much-needed contribution to discourse on South African graphic design practice, and in particular to the gap in scholarly investigation of township communication design. The analysis provides considered insights with regard to the rhetorical elements of persuasion employed by vernacular signages within an African context. Although mainstream advertising such as the Keys murals is frequently discussed and valorised in the media for its ingenuity, I make what is a necessary critique of its contribution to township visual culture and aesthetics. By applying the principles of rhetoric, I demonstrate a method by which vernacular signages that may present "a strange and startling unfamiliarity" (Buchanan 1989:92) to outsiders can, in the words of Buchanan, be "made more intelligible".

5.3 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE STUDY

Keys Communications, although initially willing to participate, did not respond to the online questionnaire sent to them, despite repeated attempts to contact the company. The exact nature of its collaboration with advertising agencies and media consultancies therefore remains unknown. The sample of Keys murals analysed in the study may also not be sufficient to demonstrate the exact nature of Keys murals engagement with township *lingo*.

Although not essential to the purpose of my research, interviews with crafters, shop owners and members of the Katlehong community could have enriched this study. As explained in Chapter One, language was one of the setbacks that prohibited interviews with shop owners. Although local fast food enterprise owners were more cooperative, most potential participants were unwilling to sign letters of informed consent.

I am not alone in this situation; fellow students conducting design research in other townships have experienced similar resistance to signing institutional documentation. The insistence, therefore, by the academic system, on official processes that vulnerable communities might experience as sinister, perpetuates the silences of these agents in the sphere of design research. Measures designed to protect the institution therefore encourage and valorise studies, such as Venter's, that rely on theoretical analyses requiring little or no engagement with agents in marginalised spaces. It is not clear how these challenges are to be overcome, and this aspect of any future design research requires deeper reflection.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Firstly, future research could include the analysis of more examples of 'high-end' wall advertising, supported by interviews with companies such as Keys, as well as graphic artists that execute 'high-end' murals. Secondly, by applying the analytical framework used in this study, the analysis of 'signages' can be expanded to other townships in South Africa. Thirdly, interviews with township residents can shed more light on the value of sign making in townships and, as suggested above, methods to encourage and enable inclusion should be explored. Fourthly, future studies on signage, language and community can usefully engage recent scholarship on *linguistic landscapes*, for example the work of Irmi Wachendorff (2018; 2016) and William Kelleher (2015; 2014).

Finally, a possible response to scholarly findings could be a documentary of the rhetoric of 'signages' and their contexts that brings to a broader audience Dlamini's (2009:23) aim of providing a "new sense of townships".

5.5 CONCLUSION: THE LIMITATIONS OF RHETORIC

In this study I argue that, in Katlehong, signages on informal enterprises are crafted with the intention to generate *oneness* — that 'the enterprises are owned by Katlehong people for the benefit of the Katlehong community'. However, while I was completing my research, in August 2019, South African township communities demonstrated increasing dissatisfaction with regard to the historical change from local to migrant ownership of informal enterprises. This discontent erupted in so-called 'xenophobic' attacks and opportunistic looting; the Romeo supermarket (Fig. 3.24) was one of the shops that was burnt down. Despite the fact that migrants took care to cultivate the *appearance* of a local *ethos* for their businesses, this argument was not powerful enough to persuade township residents that migrant-owned enterprises, while solving a practical problem, are 'emotionally desirable and valuable'. What these attacks revealed was that the township is a territorial space with an identity and economy that cannot be

shared with outsiders. In this case, my argument of 'oneness' has been proven incorrect: Katlehong is welcoming, but only up to a point.

Nevertheless, the conclusions I reach about a creative disjuncture between the township visuals and the new mainstream mural designs reveal contradictions within the fabric of the township itself. However, by carefully contrasting the two type of visuals in Katlehong I also discovered many complementary and supplementary relationships that countered my initial perceptions of clashing, or 'conflicting' identities. My study does not seek to glorify signages as being a representation of an authentic Afrikan visual language; rather my research engages with the creative aspects of 'signages' as mediums of cultural production on their own. Thus, I find them to be reflective of the township identity at its grass roots.





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SOURCES CONSULTED

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APPENDIX A : Signed permissions requesting to photograph signages





3/22/2018

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH SIGNAGE

Dear participant

This letter serves to confirm that **Xolisa Sibeko** (student number **2011 27 454**) is engaged in a research undertaking that requires him to photograph aspects of promotional signage for informal enterprises in Katlehong township. The research forms part of an academic study in fulfilment of a Masters of Arts in Design in the Faculty of Art, Design & Architecture (FADA) at the University of Johannesburg.

The aim of the study is to document and reach conclusions about the visual language of Katlehong township as a reflection of a post-colonial, South African identity.

It would be appreciated if the student may be granted permission to document the images and/or signage outside or affixed to your establishment. The photographs will be used for academic research only, and will not appear in any documents other than those required for the student's studies. The images will not be sold, either individually, or as part of a book or film, or any other commercial enterprise. Consequently, no remuneration (payment) is being offered in return for permission to photograph your establishment.

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If you require any further information, please contact the project supervisor **Ms. Lize Groenewald** at **011 559 1024** or **lizeg@uj.ac.za**. If you are willing to grant the student permission, please sign the agreement form overleaf.

Many thanks for your cooperation

Supervisor's signature



I, KNOWLEDGE give permission that Xolisa Sibeko may photograph the following establishment:

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and use these photographs in his Masters dissertation, as well as in any other document or presentation required by the University of Johannesburg in fulfilment of his Masters of Arts in Design.

Comments

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Name: KNOWLEDGE UNIVERSITY
Signed at KATLEHONG SECTION on this day 09/01/2020 of 2018 20

Signature



I am MOLEFI SEFATSA give permission that Xolisa Sibeko may photograph the following establishment:

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Comments

No comments
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Name: MOLEFI

Signed at M.A.A. Kotleho ng on this day 24 March of 2018

Mapha Ngca

Signature M.A.A.



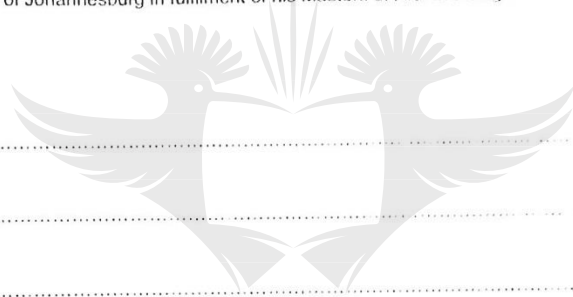
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Comments

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Name:
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