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TRANSPORT: EFFICIENT BUT VIOLENT

In this chapter we examine the minibus and sedan taxi sectors. Whereas the minibus taxis sector is well capitalised, organised and reliable, we show that sedan taxis are highly responsive to emergent impulses and fulfil an important role in overcoming mobility constraints.

Transport: efficient but violent

Taxi transport emerged as an organic entrepreneurial response to the spatial injustice of apartheid planning, providing a means of mobility to connect township residents to the centres of economic opportunity and resources situated within inner cities and suburbs, as well as connections to rural homes. In response to the inadequate services of state controlled public transport, trains and buses in particular, minibus taxis provided a complementary and ultimately competitive service. Since its origins in the late 1970s, the minibus taxi sector has become the most prominent example of autonomous black entrepreneurial achievement, providing a profitable business opportunity for thousands of township entrepreneurs (Fourie 2003). Today, formal (minibus) and informal (sedan) taxis provide a relatively efficient public transport service which helps to reduce the spatial injustices of township planning. In this chapter, we examine both the minibus and sedan components. Whereas the minibus taxi sector is well capitalised, organised and reliable (though possibly expensive), we will show that sedan taxis are highly responsive to emergent impulses and fulfil an important role in overcoming mobility constraints. We will argue that the mobility benefits from township transport need to be weighed against the interests of powerful groups whose control is underpinned by the use of violence. While the minibus sector is formally regulated, many of its operations are informal, illegal and criminal, with power vested in a mafia-styled business model that benefits the leaders, the fleet owners and a financial-industrial complex of corporate interests.

The state has a complex relationship with the township transport sector: on one hand, it supports the modernisation of the minibus sector and its continued monopolisation of intra-city minibus taxi transport; on the other hand, it seeks to reduce the high-risk driving and associated road accidents to which minibuses contribute. In contrast to its ambivalent stance towards the minibus sector, the state continues to 'enforce' the 'informalisation' (Charman, Petersen & Piper 2013) – in other words, to strategically confine businesses to the informal sector – of other segments of township taxi transport whose contribution to the local economy is potentially greater and whose negative impacts are similarly less. The power responses of both the state and violent entrepreneurs frame opportunities in the sector and constitute threats to new entrants and competing taxi operators. The alignment of powerful taxi business entities with regulatory institutions and corporate stakeholders, we argue, limits the scope of local beneficence. Much of the surplus from the minibus sector leaves the specific township (from which the taxi operates), and is accumulated by fleet owners and corporates, affording minimal benefit to service-oriented micro-enterprises.

In advancing this argument, our analysis is calibrated at three levels of spatial gradient: one, the city-wide level at which taxis connect particular settlements to CBD and

economic destinations; two, the small-area level wherein we highlight the role of sedan taxis in connecting people to transport hubs and neighbouring suburbs; and three, the micro-contexts where we describe the organising influence of a taxi rank on surrounding street-trading activities. At the micro-level in addition, we describe how hand signs are used in communication between commuters and drivers, affording a legibility to the seemingly indiscernible logic of taxi routes.

The township transport sector

The transport sector is an important component of the township economy and comprises private vehicles, formal minibus taxis, informal sedan taxis, school transport, freight, and employee transport services. These modes of transport emerged as a people-centred response to the intersection of several challenges: the spatial location of townships on the urban periphery, the absence of private vehicles in the 1970s and 1980s, the inadequacy of state-funded public transport services within the townships, and the entrepreneurial impulse of local entrepreneurs. The result is a transport system which is highly adaptive (in parts, though not necessarily in totality), privately operated and commercially oriented, and tailored to localised needs for mobility on affordable terms. We should note that township taxi transport arose at a time of intense political resistance to apartheid injustice during the 1970s and 1980s, an era wherefrom it acquired an entrepreneurial culture imbued with ideas of resistance to the state, black power and violence as legitimate strategies.

Township transport competes with public bus transport and rail services. Unlike these services, which are reliant on operational subsidies, micro-enterprise transport businesses receive less than 1% of the direct public transport subsidy and this benefits only the minibus component (Kerr 2015; Lomme 2008). The apex township transport businesses are formally registered minibus taxis, which operate inter-suburban and regional routes. Minibuses provide transport to around 15 million persons per day and are the mainstay of a sector valued at some R90 billion per year (Tsele 2017). Minibus taxis are subject to state registration, and are regulated in terms of the particular vehicles that may be used, the routes along which they may operate, the licensing requirements (for the driver and use of the vehicle for public passengers), and the adherence of the moving vehicle to municipal traffic laws. In operational terms, the minibus business model has both formal and informal aspects. Formally, taxi operators require operating licences from the state, a function of provincial government, though simultaneously and informally, the operators are also beholden to organisational entities (associations) that control taxi routes and thus provide access to the route permits (Walters 2008).

At the neighbourhood level, public transport is provided by informal sedan taxis which operate largely within the township confines, though in some situations, they also ferry passengers to neighbouring suburbs. These taxis are prohibited from competing with the minibus taxis, with both state authorities and minibus taxi associations enforcing their exclusion. If the minibus taxis are the backbone of the township transport sector, the informal taxis are the arteries (akin to an informal 'Uber'), ferrying passengers from their home to shops and nearest transport nodes such as the taxi rank, train station or bus stop. Unlike the minibus taxis, informal taxis tend to be wholly informal, adhering neither to provincial public transport licensing requirements nor municipal by-laws.

From a macro-economic perspective, transport services stimulate opportunities via a multiplier effect for supporting micro-enterprises. Businesses which benefit include those that provide stickers and decals, car washes, driving schools, mechanics, panel

beaters, suppliers of vehicle spare parts and micro-enterprises providing wheel repair services. Examples of these businesses are shown in Figure 7.1, Figure 7.2, Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.4.



FIGURE 7.1 Automotive service businesses such as panel beaters and tyre repairers share interdependence with the taxi sector



FIGURE 7.2 Car mechanics working on an informal taxi, Ivory Park



FIGURE 7.3 A business providing taxi signage, Eveline Street



FIGURE 7.4 Car wash businesses, Eveline Street
 Note: Their main customers are sedan taxis.

The combination of the various transport services supports the functioning of micro-enterprises, providing the entrepreneurs with access to suppliers in the township and beyond as well as by bringing customers to their businesses. As in Eveline Street, taxis are an important component in the operation of the night-time economy and in nurturing nodal growth along the high street. In Browns Farm, Delft South and Ivory Park sites, the taxi hubs create markets to benefit a range of micro-enterprises, including street and stall-based traders and sellers of snacks, airtime, cigarettes and takeaway food. As points of convergence and connection between the township and wider economy, taxi ranks stimulate opportunities for adjacent businesses and contribute towards the vibrancy of the high street.

Apart from minibus and sedan taxis, the township economy sustains other forms of transport services. One such service is the provision of scholar transport, providing a door-to-door service for children to travel from their homes to schools within the township and beyond. School transport is provided by independent operators as well as taxi owners (both minibus and sedan) who return to collect passengers during school hours and in the late afternoon. Scholar transporters need to possess an operating licence and abide by regulations for the public transport of passengers, such as the requirement that vehicles are marked as 'scholar transport' and tested at a roadworthy centre every six months, though since there is little enforcement of these regulations, most operators trade informally with vehicles ranging from sedans to bakkies¹ (Western Cape Government, 2017).

The spatial economy of township transport

Minibus taxis

Minibuses are passenger vans that commonly carry up to 16 people. Taxi vehicles include the Toyota Quantum Ses'fikile (meaning 'we have arrived') and the older 14-seater Toyota HiAce Siyaya ('we are going'), Nissan Impendulo ('the answer') and newer models from Indian and Chinese manufacturers. The most modern vehicles have been purpose-built for the sector, designed to legally accommodate 16 seated persons, though some still illegally carry additional passengers. The collective fleet of township minibuses, which number in excess of 150 000 vehicles, are generally in a roadworthy condition, though vary in age and appearance, with some vehicles enhanced with sports mag wheels, spray designs, window tinting and the 'obligatory' on-board sound systems (Arrive Alive 2018; see <http://autoraj-blog.tumblr.com/BIGBOSS> on re-imagining taxi identity through art). Minibuses operate inter-suburban routes, usually departing from specific ranks established in the township and within the urban CBDs, connecting commuters in two daily waves of mobility. These occur in the morning to ferry commuters from the township to urban centres, and again at the end of the working day to ferry commuters in the reverse direction. Because the business model is based on operating a loaded vehicle on set routes, minibus taxis do not operate late at night when demand is reduced, nor do they offer customers a door-to-door transportation service.

Minibuses commence their activities from taxi ranks and only once fully laden with customers do the vehicles depart for their intended destinations, dropping-off and collecting passengers along the designated transport route. The operational system is subject to strict regulation, both formal and informal, which restricts the scope of adaptability. Taxi routes are controlled and overseen by the taxi associations, whose

¹ Bakkies – light pickup trucks, generally open, but possibly fitted with a removable canopy or similar accessories, but distinct from a large truck and from a delivery van or similar small utility vehicle.

main function is to protect the market for its members in an industry which is considered overtraded and whose routes are subject to both competition and shifts in the urban form as a result of new settlements, demographic change and new transport routes (Lomme 2008). Taxi associations also manage the taxi ranks and monitor the vehicle drivers, with each departing vehicle subject to a small fee.

Passenger fees are determined by the taxi associations, applied on a route basis and are subject to change as a result of fluctuating costs and inflationary pressures. The division of income in the case of minibus taxis operating in Delft South, using 2015 data, is explained in the chart in Figure 7.5.

In this site, we made systematic observations of the organisational dynamics, counted the vehicles and passengers, and conducted interviews with commuters, drivers and owners. The Delft high street is the main taxi artery route connecting the township to various destinations within the metro region; the various routes are shown in Figure 7.6.

There are three ranks in Delft which accommodate about 450 minibus taxis; one is formally established and the other two are undeveloped and simply operate from open land sites. From our research in 2015, we have calculated that between 24 300–32 400 commuters travel by minibus from Delft South to various city destinations on a daily basis, generating an income for the Delft South taxi businesses of R11,5 million pm or R138,2 million per annum. As shown in Figure 7.5, the lion's share of this revenue (around 56%) accrues to the taxi owners, 27% is spent on fuel and miscellaneous operational costs, 15% goes to the driver and around 1% to the rank marshal. None of the drivers or owners with whom we spoke declared income for taxation purposes. As the majority of the Delft minibus fleet comprise the newer Quantum Ses'fikile models, a sizeable portion of the owner's share of turnover (up to R570 per day for finance over 60 months in 2018) is subtracted for vehicle repayments.

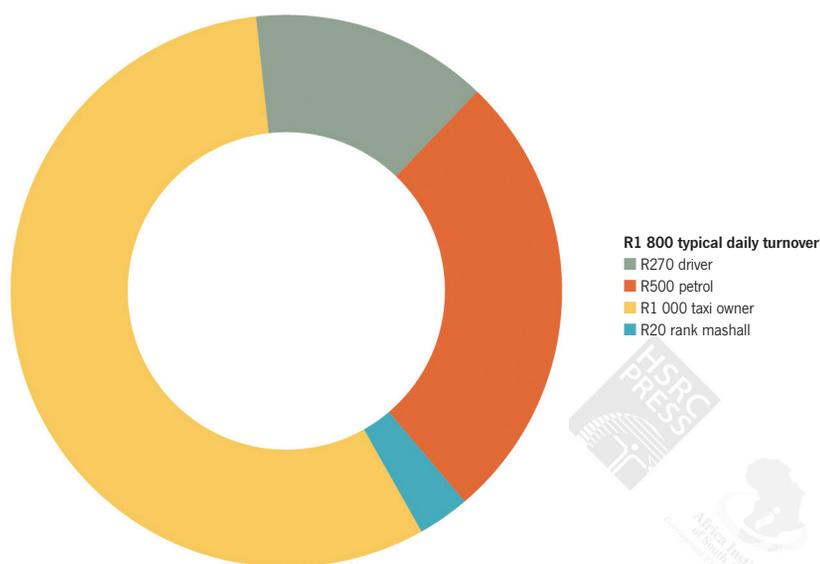


FIGURE 7.5 Diagram illustrating the division of earnings for a day's work in the minibus sector in Delft South, 2015

THE TAXI ECONOMY

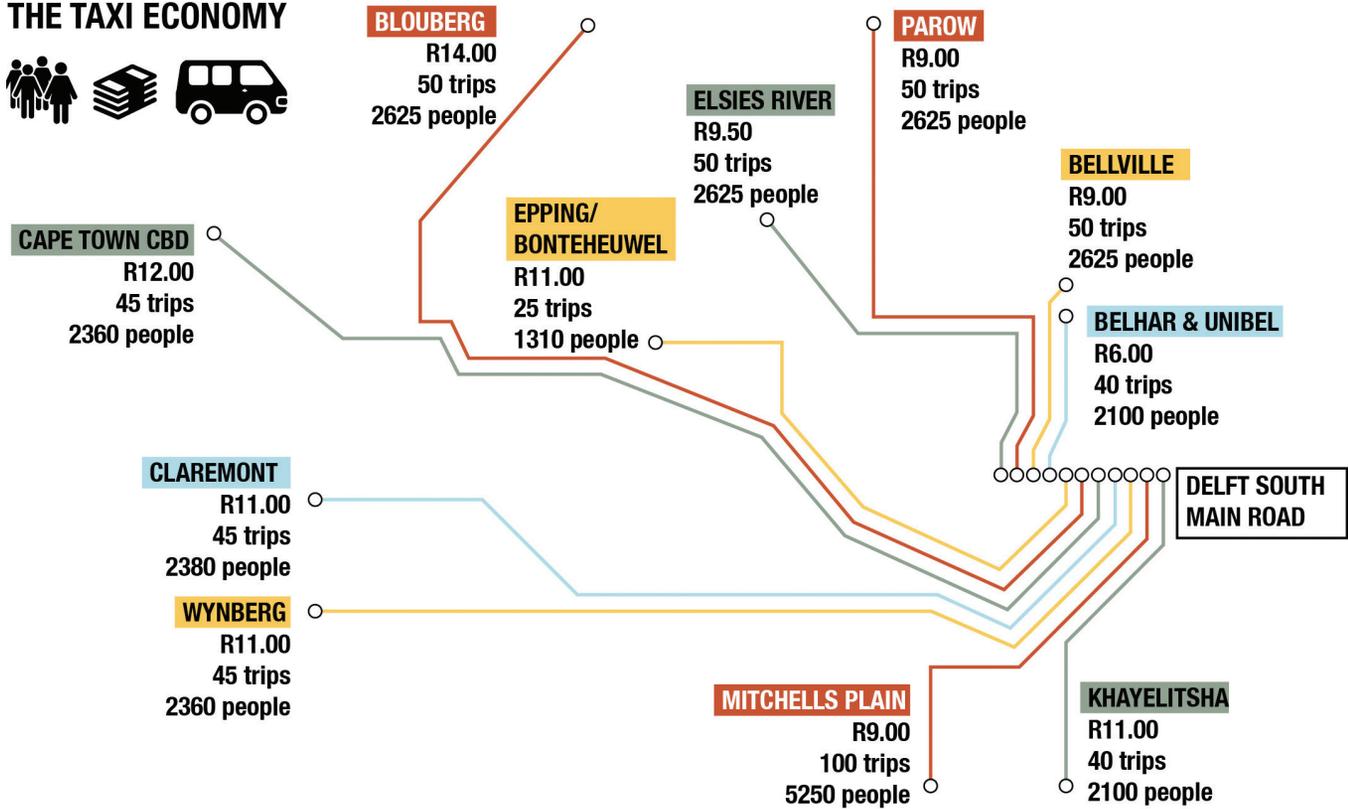


FIGURE 7.6 Minibus routes and volume of traffic from Delft South to various Cape Town destinations

Minibus taxis are generally operated by hired drivers, the great majority of whom are men whose behaviour individually and collectively fosters a culture of hyper-masculinity (Gibbs 2014). This is evidenced through aggressive driving and behaviours, disdain for traffic rules, assertive collaborations on the road, and the fulfilment of the ‘muscle’ function in the association’s rule of ‘thugocracy’ (see below). On routes with frequent stops and drops, the driver will be accompanied by an attendant (known as *gaatjie* in Cape Town) whose task is to tout for passengers and collect fares. The drivers (and attendants) ‘work’ for the taxi owner, engaged either as informal employees (paid a wage) or on a contractor basis in a target or commission system. As a sub-contractor, the driver is responsible for generating sufficient revenue to cover the ‘fee’ for the hire of the vehicle (under the target system), the costs of fuel, and the taxi rank charges (levied by the relevant associations). Any additional revenue is taken as income. In the commission system, the vehicle owner receives around 70% of the turnover from the day’s operation. Taxi drivers play an important role in motivating for fare price increases as operating costs affect their daily target. Since the driver has to pay for petrol out of his wage, increases in petrol prices reduce his earnings unless these cost increases are offset through raising the fares.

In Ivory Park, the taxi rank serves around 200 minibuses. It is controlled by the Ivory Park Taxi Association (IPTA) who exerts authority over the routes connecting Ivory Park to Midrand and the CBDs. As an informal regulator, the IPTA employs marshals who dispatch the taxis and patrol the streets (from ‘squad cars’) to prevent route encroachment by informal taxi drivers or by minibus taxis from other associations. The marshals collect tributes from the unregistered informal taxis that ferry passengers to the rank, but which are prohibited from operating outside Ivory Park. Within the taxi rank itself, the IPTA

controls trading activities, specifying the use of commercial space and imposing a daily levy on traders. Mobile traders are excluded from this levy and instead operate on the street outside the perimeter fence. The authority of the association is reinforced through the imposition of a rule code to which drivers must adhere. The code specifies rules and sanctions, some of which pertain to the state of vehicles (must be clean) and behaviour expected of drivers (abstinence from liquor consumption and dress code). The rules are posted on the wall of the association office, displayed adjacent to a pencil sketch of Eugène Terre'Blanche (former leader of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging or AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement)), 'a strong South African leader' according to the rank marshal. The poster reads as a symbolic gesture, underlying the patriarchal authority of the association and to indicate its distance from the 'unruliness' of comrade politics. Due to the power of the IPTA, the taxi rank and surrounding trading area is relatively safe from crime. Informal food service businesses are prevalent both inside and outside the rank and capitalise on the substantial commuter foot traffic this transport hub generates.

Surrounding the taxi rank there are three orders of spatial authority; these correspond to the street, the pedestrian pavement and open space of the street verge (see Figure 7.7).

The street itself is congested with minibus taxis jostling to enter the rank and informal taxis dropping off passengers: horns sound repeatedly as cars muscle through the congestion. Outside the rank, the sidewalks provide an open passage for commuters to access the taxis without hindrance, which in itself is evidence of the prioritisation of transport in the use of space.



FIGURE 7.7 The minibus taxi rank in Ivory Park

Note: The taxi rank exerts spatial control over surrounding micro-enterprises, with taxi requirements dominant and traders largely confined to positions on the street outside the rank itself.

Where trading happens on the sidewalk, the stalls are small, minimising their consumption of sidewalk space. Most of the products sold address the needs of the taxi drivers and the commuters: cigarettes, airtime, newspapers, engine oil and fast food. Hawkers seek to capitalise on the market opportunities from the crowded and fast-paced spatial dynamic which encourages impulse purchases. On the opposite side of the street from the taxi rank, shops have encroached forward onto the street verge, though yield space to sidewalk traders who, in turn, yield to commuters. All role-players recognise that the extended node of activity is subject to the political authority of taxi bosses.

Once on the road, the authority of the IPTA wanes as the drivers gain autonomy over the vehicle and route, enabling them to make micro-adjustments to avoid traffic congestion or respond to commuter demands. Taxi drivers cooperate and collude in navigating traffic and congested roads. The demarcated route network is opaque; there are no maps, while route legibility and knowledge of fares is acquired through experiential learning. This system complexity restricts access for certain users, such as the disabled (including the blind), new and non-residents. An intricate language of hand signals has evolved between commuters and taxi drivers to communicate the destination to which commuters need to travel, thus enabling the drivers to stop only when required (Figure 7.8) (Woolf 2013).

An artist has sought to translate taxi signals into braille signs to enhance access for blind persons, though her suggestion has not been translated from a speculative art intervention to sector adoption. Though the drivers are tightly networked within the association, to the outside world their attitude is unsympathetic or 'kwaal', township slang meaning a closed heart (in a jealous sense) towards success or achievements (see graphic on the Chapter cover).

The minibus taxi system has both benefits and disadvantages for its participants. As part of the business, risk is transferred to the driver, as owner-entrepreneurs have oversupplied the market with vehicles. Because the drivers need to fulfil daily targets, they are incentivised to conduct as many journeys as possible with the maximum number of passengers in a given workday. Under pressure to fulfil targets, drivers drive as fast as possible, rat-race through side roads to avoid traffic jams and collect and drop off passengers at any point along the route in response to demand. Some drivers have sought to increase the vehicle carrying capacity through adding 'laptop' seats, positioned in the seating aisle. The more passengers that drivers can collect outside of the taxi ranks along the route, the more profitable the business return to the driver.



FIGURE 7.8 Hand signs are used by awaiting commuters to communicate to taxi drivers their desired destinations out of Ivory Park

Though the conduct of taxi drivers has negative externalities in terms of road accidents or poor commuter experiences, from a business perspective the minibus system is seen as comparatively safe and efficient (Lomme 2008). Indeed, survey data indicates that taxi passengers are considered safer than passengers on other modes of public transport, notably trains, while the frenetic driving of taxi operators (to shorten the trip) needs to be seen in the context of the long commute times for township residents travelling to work of between 68–94 minutes per day on average (Kerr 2015).

Sedan taxis

In townships across South Africa, informal taxis sometimes known as '*amaphela*' (meaning 'cockroach') and '*amaboender*' (meaning 'chicken') or '*jikeleza*' (meaning 'turn-around'), provide short-distance transport services. These names accurately describe the scurrying of these taxis. The vehicles used as informal taxis reflect the challenging operating conditions (such as poor roads) and the high mileages that such vehicles travel in the course of business. Some of the most durable vehicles in service are 1980s sedans, including Toyota Cressidas, and to a lesser extent, older model Nissan sedans and Mazda hatchbacks. Most informal taxis show signs of considerable fatigue, having undergone numerous repairs and panel beating; many would not fulfil roadworthy requirements. Yet these taxis remain operational through the services of other township micro-enterprises and the frequent requirement for repairs is a boon to mechanics and panel beaters. Over the past decade, Toyota Avanza vehicles have become used as informal taxis due to their high fuel economy and carrying capacity of seven passengers. Relative to the minibus sector, a higher proportion of the drivers of informal taxis are owner-operators, although the arrival of the Avanza presents a shift towards non-driver ownership and investment of taxi owners in the informal segment.

In Browns Farm, Cressida taxis provide a niche transport service for shoppers utilising local supermarkets (see Figure 7.9).



FIGURE 7.9 Cressida sedan taxis await customers at a rank at the rear of the shopping mall, Philippi township

These taxis ferry people and their possessions as a door-to-door service and are also commonly used to transport goods for local businesses, collecting supplies from wholesalers for street braai businesses or spaza shops, for example. In these cases, the drivers can even assist in loading and unloading procedures. For passenger travel, the fees are charged on a distance basis. Similarly to the minibus taxi sector, the fees are centrally determined and vary according to distance travelled. Price discounting to outcompete other operators does not occur. Informal *amaphela* do not adhere to specific routes; instead, the drivers respond to demand situations and customer needs. The informal taxi system is emergent in that it is able to quickly absorb information on customer preferences and respond through minor changes to routes and drop-off points. In the Imizamo Yethu site, the *amaphela* and *amaboender* operate routes outside the township confines, providing workers with transport from township locations to work destinations in Hout Bay and Llandudno as well as operating routes to shopping malls, the clinic and other facilities. These sedan taxis collect passengers on the street and from an informal rank. If the taxi is fully loaded, individual costs are reduced so that the function of the informal rank is to enable passengers to group together to subsidise costs. Short trips cost R7 per person. Most of the informal taxi drivers live in Imizamo Yethu, and the transport service is predominantly owner-operated. Unlike minibus taxi operations, informal taxi routes change throughout the day, responding to the customer demands to access particular destinations in the surrounding suburbs (see Figure 7.10.)

Sedan taxis in Windhoek similarly benefit from route flexibility. As we demonstrate in Chapter 6, the economy of Eveline Street is influenced by sedan taxi transport. These taxis provide a means of connection and integration, moderating the tempo of

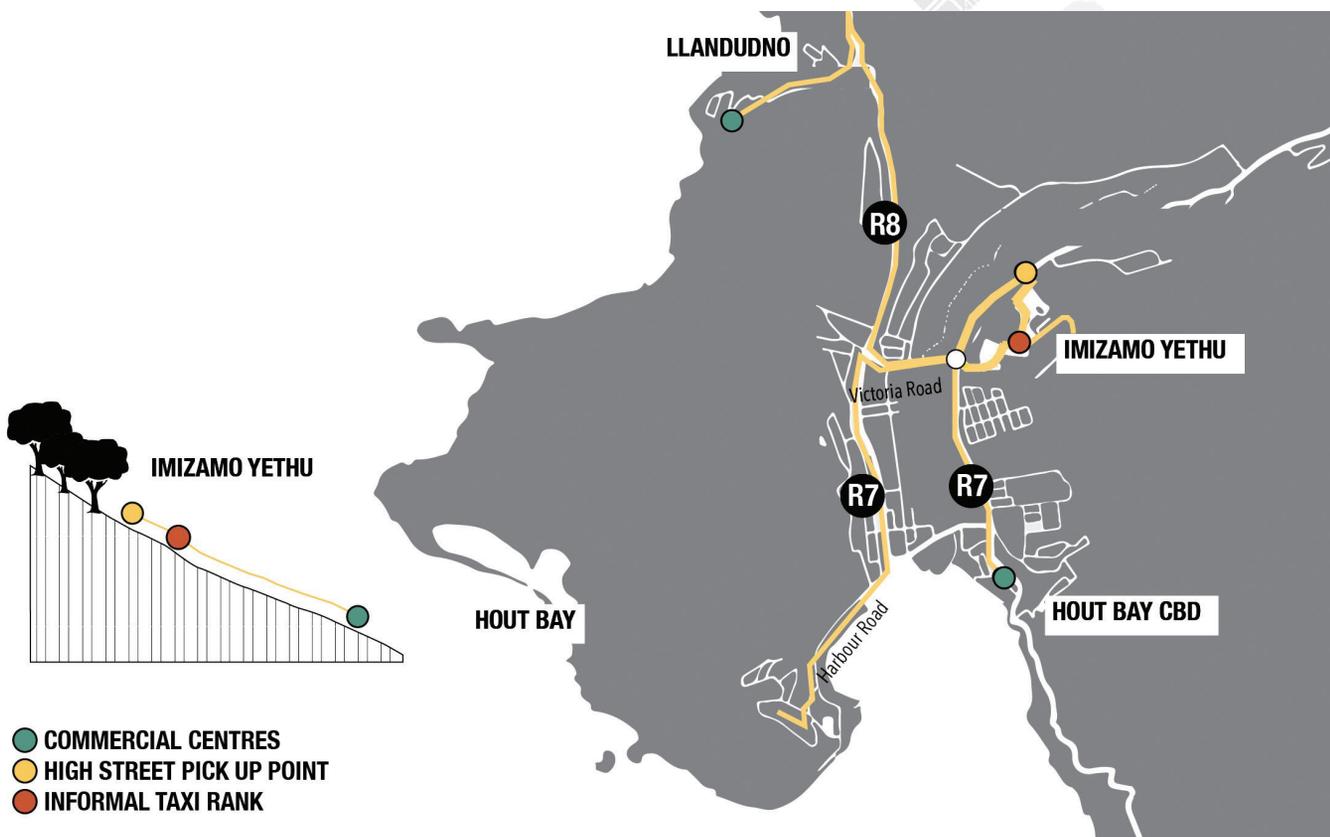


FIGURE 7.10 Taxi routes emerging from Imizamo Yethu township connecting nearby centres of employment and services
 Note: The taxi plays a critical role in transporting commuters up the steep slopes of the settlement.

movement along the street through their process of operating on a drop-and-go basis and contributing towards the development of a nodal morphology in business distribution. In function, the Namibian taxis are similar to the informal taxis operating in South African townships and most are second-hand vehicles imported from Japan. In form, the main difference is that the Namibian sedan taxis are regulated and operate under strict licensing conditions. Short-distance taxi trips within the broader Katutura area cost N\$10 (R10); longer trips to the CBD cost N\$20 (R20); these prices are considerably cheaper than Uber taxi trips in South Africa, which cost roughly N\$10 (R10) per km. Taxis ferry customers to bars on Eveline Street and home thereafter, operating late into the night with the high street a point of origin and destination. Apart from providing a transport service, sedan taxis are major customers of the car washes as well as the print shops (where taxis obtain their compulsory signs), the wheel alignment shops, the tyre repairers, and the micro-enterprises which provide mechanical servicing or panel beating. The taxi drivers are also important customers for hair salons, the bars (where non-alcoholic drinks are commonly available), and the various street food sellers.

CASE STUDY: *A sedan taxi operator*

Steve operated two Avanza taxis in the greater Philippi (Browns Farm) area. (See Figure 7.11).

He drove one and employed a driver to operate the second. His first job in Cape Town was in the construction industry, although he reported that the wages were so poor that he left this employment and started driving an 'old' Cressida, working on a commission basis for another person. In 2008, after two years of driving he saved R25 000 and purchased his own Cressida from a woman in Bellville.



FIGURE 7.11 An Avanza taxi driver, Browns Farm

He recalled: *'My aim was to own my own pela and once I had it, I went to the [minibus] terminus to talk to the taxi owners to register my Cressida.'* The registration fee was R2 500. One of the taxi bosses set out the rules: *'You do not go to Cape Town. You only operate here in Nyanga, Philippi, Gugulethu and areas around. Do not go outside. You can go to Delft but don't pick commuters from there.'* Steve's taxi business was highly profitable. By 2010, he had succeeded in saving R250 000 in cash, including *'a five-litre container full of coins'*, and he went to Toyota to purchase an Avanza. This plan was not straightforward as Steve did not have a driver's licence or a bank account and, according to him, the Toyota dealer would not sell him a vehicle without these documents. It took Steve six months to convince his brother, who possessed both of these institutional relationships, to purchase the vehicle on his behalf.

Steve had remained in business since then. He said: *'I like the Avanza because you make quick money; every day you make money.'* He started work at 5 a.m. and finished at 9 p.m. The standard fee per passenger within the catchment was R8. At the end of the month and into the first week of the new month, Steve was able to make between R800 to R1 500 per day from the car he drove. He expected the driver of his other Avanza to return earnings of between R400–R600 and to purchase petrol. In order to operate his Avanza, Steve had to pay the Nyanga taxi association a fee of R200–R300, although the collection of this fee was haphazard and Steve embarked on a strategy of cat and mouse to avoid the tax. He explained that the association *'just collects anywhere. Every driver knows who the collector is. If the collector sees me, he stops me and asks me to pay. I try as much as I can to evade the collector. If I see him collecting in one street, I change direction. We do not get receipts. There are so many drivers and the collector sometimes forgets who has paid and who has not. He cannot issue a receipt because he has no time to write down details.'*

Steve planned to exit the sector in the future. Though the business was profitable, the hours were long and drivers were constantly getting traffic infringement fines and were subject to informal taxes and the dictates of taxi bosses. According to Steve, some of these individuals operated 10 to 15 vehicles, though in Steve's words *'most of the owners are not staying here.'* Then there were the challenges of crime and vehicle accidents. He explained that there was an informal rule to manage this risk: *'If I crash into someone, I have to pay that person there and then. We go to the [local] panel beaters and get quotes, then the guy you crashed into takes you to the bank to withdraw the money to pay the panel beater, not any other time. Now.'* His long-term plan was to purchase a house as he lived in a shack. He reflected: *'I want to sell the two cars and build flats for rental... It's a better business because you don't pay petrol, you don't pay electricity, you don't pay fines or [the] association fee. I will sell the two cars once I buy a house.'* Still he reminisced about the old Cressida business: *'We made a lot of money that time. The fare was only R3 but then we made R500 per day.'* He felt that there were now *'too many players'* in the market.

Thugocracy and violent entrepreneurship

Public and private road transport services fall within overarching provisions of the National Land Transport Act (No. 5 of 2009). The aims of the Act are overseen by the National Department of Transport (NDoT). The Act clarifies the concurrent roles and responsibilities of the three spheres of government in public transport regulation: National government oversees transversal alignment with national transport policies, whereas the licensing and hence regulation of taxis falls under the jurisdiction of provincial authorities. Municipal government, the base of the governmental system, has jurisdiction of all road users within its domain (since most roads are municipal

property) and is primarily responsible for the provision of supporting infrastructure (such as taxi ranks) and wholly responsible for the monitoring of taxis in transit in terms of municipal road traffic by-laws and public transport operating licence conditions. Despite the demarcation of specific roles, transport regulation is complicated by the inclusion of non-state actors who represent select interests, one of which is to sustain the regulatory system in spite of its faults. Apart from (most) minibuses, township sedan taxis are excluded from institutional regulation and hence operate informally. The partial formalisation of the minibus sector provides a sharp insight into the intermeshing of money and the power which is derived from wealth, political allegiances, organisational magnitude and violence.

Minibuses maintain their inclusion in the formal economy with the aid of a powerful financial-industrial complex. In the regulatory process, a degree of power has been afforded to groups representing taxi owners or associations which today control route use rights, access to ranks and other opportunities. These associations consider themselves as de facto rights holders of demarcated routes (Boudreaux 2006) and wield influence in the issuance of operating licences through the statutory requirement that applicants register with an association (Mhlanga 2017). From a purely operational perspective, the association fulfils a coordinating function and simplifies the task of regulation through their roles such as communication between the regulator and taxi operators, supposedly adjusting (upwards or downwards) the number of taxis in response to route demand and in the resolution of disputes; roles which Lomme (2008) has described as 'effective if discreet and inconspicuous' (p. 4).

To strengthen their operational power, the several hundred associations have consolidated into local and sub-regional political alliances or 'mother bodies'. These structures have succeeded in enhancing the power for their membership through mobilising against competing associations in the struggle over routes, challenging state actions that impact on the profitability of the sector and dominating individual taxi operators. At present mother bodies are allied to one of two overarching structures: South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO, established in 2001 with state funding) and the National Taxi Alliance (NTA). SANTACO was intended as an umbrella body to represent the minibus sector on behalf of its constituents, organised by provincial bodies, regional structures and local associations. In operational terms, SANTACO has no control over the mother bodies, some of which are accused of carrying out 'route invasions and hostile takeovers' (Boqwana 2018, p.10). The exercise of power by the mother bodies is akin to the conduct of organised criminal networks that engage in 'violent entrepreneurship' (Volkov 2002, p. 25) to enforce contractual agreements, maintain compliance with informal rules, and extract fees to finance their 'discreet and inconspicuous' market interventions. Volkov argues that violent entrepreneurs fulfil a role as suppliers of 'protection' (pp. 28, 53) in a context in which the state is weak and/or unable to respond to the complexity of informality. In such a context, he argues, violent entrepreneurs substitute and complement state roles in terms of instituting (institutionalised) systems of measurement, rules and means of enforcement to ensure an 'orderly exchange' of goods or services. In the context of a crisis of mobility, whose roots lie in the peripheral situation of townships and under-provision of rail and bus services, the taxi associations potentially facilitate a relatively orderly provision of transport services. The analogy with violent entrepreneurs stems from the control of mother bodies by 'big men' who institute a thugocracy of governance in their organisations wherein rules are underpinned by violence. In the operation of minibuses in Johannesburg, for example, taxi routes from the South (Soweto) and Northern settlements such as Ivory Park converge in the CBD whereupon

passengers seeking to transit either southwards or northwards are compelled to change taxis as they enter routes of a different power bloc. The relevant licensing authorities are unwilling to grant operating licences to enable minibuses to traverse across these routes out of fear that this would result in violent conflict.

The 2005 Commission of Enquiry into the causes of taxi violence in the Western Cape (Ntsebeza 2005) provides a rare insight into the strategies of mother bodies, particularly their systematic use of violence to defend and advance business interests. In the townships of Cape Town, the mother bodies include the Cape Organisation for Democratic Taxi Association (CODETA), whose powerbase is spatially situated in Khayelitsha, and the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (CATA), which broke away from CODETA and has its powerbase spatially situated in the older township of Nyanga. CODETA and CATA have been the main protagonists in a two-decades long taxi war whose battles centre around disputed taxi routes, including rights to ply trade along the routes in Delft South. The so-named Ntsebeza Commission heard that respective association leaders have worked their way upwards through the minibus sector through roles as vehicle drivers, rank managers and fleet owners. In climbing the leadership ranks, these emergent 'big men' have had to engage in struggles within and outside of their respective associations, thus acquiring experience in the use of violence to exert strategic control over an association and to advance the business interests of its members. The Commission's report described the leaders as 'warlords' whose authority is 'feared' and decisions obeyed.

Drawing their revenue from levies on members, protection fees on township businesses and fines issued to the drivers, mother bodies enforce their system rules through violence and intimidation, with their core focus to control routes and ranks (Dugard 2001). State weakness has allowed mother bodies to facilitate market dominance using methods that include arson, murder and intimidation to enforce silence and sustain a 'culture of lawlessness' (Ntsebeza 2005, p. 82). As Dugard (2001) notes, hit squads are a 'vital component' of a mother body's system of control (p. 18), while the Ntsebeza Commission found that hit men are 'paid up to R12 000 for a single contract killing' (Ntsebeza 2005, p. 53). Although thousands of people have been killed in taxi wars, so great is the public fear of retribution that the state has struggled to take action against the leadership and perpetrators of violence. During the period 1991–1999, 2 007 persons were killed as a direct consequence of taxi violence (cited in Dugard 2001, p. 13). The 'wars' and killings continue to the present. In the struggle for the Delft South route, a 'low intensity war' has raged since about 2015. In May 2018, with respect to a single battle in this 'war', 10 people were killed, including the Chairperson of the Delft Taxi Association (Isaacs, 2018). In times of 'war', the 'mother bodies' hire professional assassins, some of whom are said to be former freedom fighters, to murder taxi drivers, the leaders of rival associations or simply to carry out revenge killings. The political connectedness and power of senior taxi leaders was demonstrated during the 2005 Ntsebeza inquiry when a number of subpoenaed respondents were murdered despite participating in a state witness protection scheme. In addition to their turf struggles, mother bodies have also been implicated in challenging alternative forms of public transport, including bus and rail services and other forms of sedan taxi competition. In recent times taxi associations have challenged the state to disband the BRT systems which are being established in metropolitan areas and major towns, to reform the taxi recapitalisation programme (Boudreaux 2006), to oppose the pricing of new vehicles and to obtain direct control over state subsidies.

At the heart of the township minibus taxi economy is a financial-industrial complex, based on a relationship between vehicle finance organisations (eg Transaction Capital,

a Johannesburg Stock Exchange [JSE] listed financial holding company, owns the SA Taxi Finance Company) and taxi vehicle manufacturers. SA Taxi Finance Company is the market leader in providing finance to entrepreneurs to purchase new minibuses. Large business has a vested interest in sustaining the dominance of minibuses as the sole provider of inter-suburban taxi services. The financial-industrial complex enables large businesses (who provide financial services, new vehicles and after-sales support) and taxi federations such as SANTACO and NTA to control the minibus transport system. Their collective influence shapes the terms of finance, insurance, maintenance services and resales. The idea of a 'complex' refers to the informal collaborations of financial and industrial interests which coalesce around the need to influence or maintain public policy, often through aligning their strategic interests with government needs or political pressures. In the minibus sector, the political pressure derives from the goal of the taxi associations and their leadership to sustain the minibus role as a public transport service and ownership structure in which most of the leaders possess large fleets of vehicles. Their self-interest neatly aligns with the corporate objectives to sell costly new minibus vehicles (recommended retail prices for the Toyota Quantum ranging from R486 300 to R525 600 cash price in 2018) and to contractually tie the purchasers into a raft of services provided by subsidiary businesses and other large businesses. To these objectives, big business and corporates have aligned moral, psychological and material interests, deemed to be central characteristics of an industrial-financial complex. These interests are symbiotic with government objectives to sustain the manufacturing of minibus vehicles, nurture black entrepreneurship and appease a powerful grassroots organisation. In this context, taxi formalisation is not used to facilitate inclusive opportunities for township entrepreneurs and investors, but as a mechanism to safeguard established operators and accommodate corporate business interests. As we learnt in Steve's story, most of the 'big-men' beneficiaries of this business arrangement who operate fleets of minibuses do not live in the township.

In support of an agenda to modernise and formalise the minibus industry (and under pressure of the vested interest groupings), the NDoT instituted a taxi recapitalisation programme to remove 'older' vehicles from the public transport system (using a 'scrapping allowance' as an incentive), reduce the total number of taxis, and introduce new vehicle fleets. The programme aimed to formalise taxi operations through transforming vehicle operators into registered businesses and instituting sectoral labour regulation. Had the recapitalisation programme been fully implemented, the minibus system would have limited opportunities for (new) entrants, while externalising all allied services to formal businesses situated outside the township. Instead, the watered-down version of recapitalisation that has emerged thus far has merely reinforced the political power of the taxi associations and strengthened the interests of the industrial-financial complex. It is important to note that apart from the washing of cars, township micro-enterprises gain almost no direct benefit from the recapitalised minibus taxis. The new vehicles which enter the system (some of which have benefited from recapitalisation subsidies) are symbolic of the outflow of value from places like the Delft South high street to corporate capital and the 'big men' who dominate the sector and wield influence over the mother bodies.

Outlook

The post-apartheid state recognised the need to reduce the costs and efficiency of public transport services for township residents. Under the influence of World Bank thinking, the NDoT adopted policies to develop 'Integrated Mass Rapid Public Transport

Networks'. In this vision, the transport networks would integrate rail, bus and minibus systems (intermodal integration), though the state would prioritise and enhance the economic viability of business services (including BRT and conventional business) through the provision of operational subsidies (Figure 7.12).

In addition, the buses would directly compete with minibuses through new routes at the point of origin within the township, thus resulting in bus routes that 'meander excessively...to prevent minibus taxis from feeding or distributing' route demand (Lomme 2008, p. 8). These ideas found fertile ground among metropolitan municipal planners who had come to embrace Transit Oriented Development (ToD) as a planning strategy to redress spatial injustice.

ToD thinking first arose in North American cities in the 1980s as a response to the effect that high use of private vehicles was having on transport, spatial development and sustainability (Bickford & Behrens 2015). ToD is premised on a 'utopian' set of ideas with respect to the reorientation of land use in strategic points (such as transport corridors and nodes) towards high density settlement and public transit rather than urban sprawl and private transport, with the objective to achieve more spatially inclusive, liveable and sustainable cities (Harber 2018; The South African Property Owners' Association and the South African Cities Network 2016). As Harber (2018) has argued, the ToD vision rests on achieving increased density, pedestrian walkability and mixed-use landforms, which in turn, enables the provision of mass rapid public transport. Instead, city politicians have embraced ToD thinking to justify investment in BRT transport with the singular aim of replacing the minibus taxi system, a move applauded by non-minibus commuters who have become impatient with what is perceived as the state's failure to control lawlessness



FIGURE 7.12 Buses, minibuses, and a horse and cart

Note: There are three different orders of public transport – of which public buses receive the bulk of state subsidies. Some municipalities have aimed to integrate bus and minibus services.

of taxi drivers and associations. The introduction of BRT routes into the townships and establishment of related infrastructure has profound development implications for local transport services and organic spatial transformations.

Our analysis of Eveline Street (Chapter 6) shows that urban characteristics are transforming towards greater density, walkability and mix-uses without specific ToD interventions. In this case, sedan taxi services fulfil an enabling mechanism, providing a fluid, flexible and highly responsive transport system which not only transports clients to high-street businesses but is a major customer of township based micro-enterprises. Sedan taxis travel in both directions along the streets, offering a multiplicity of pick-up and drop-off stages and providing a truly door-to-door service. Despite the investment to establish BRT infrastructure within the township, the insecure environment in many settlements decreases the scope of walkability, with only sedan taxis able to provide a safe and relatively efficient mode of transport between township homes and the high street. The comparative advantages of sedan taxis (over minibuses and buses) are particularly evident at night when these taxis enable a diverse night-time leisure economy in Eveline Street which is contingent on the safe and efficient passage of participants. With significantly lower societal externalities than South African minibuses, the sedan taxis in Namibia illustrate the gains from a reduction in scale (smaller vehicles), formalisation and thus state control, owner operation and route flexibility. The collective benefit of the regulated Namibian sedans far outweighs the informal *amaphela* taxi system which, while flexible (and relatively affordable) within the confines of neighbourhoods, operates under the patronage of minibus associations and embraces lawlessness, partly in pursuit of profit and partly due to state weaknesses.

Due to its efficiencies, potential to contribute to the development of the township economy, and its status as a black-owned business sector, there is a strong imperative for broadening and deepening the inclusion of township transport services within ToD and intermodal transport plans. Taking a different approach to formalisation, the objectives should be twofold: first, to widen benefits to include informal taxis; and second, to shift the minibus system towards a township base where a wider range of micro-enterprises could provide services. These changes would require government to reconsider the minibus concept or at least think about how a range of taxi services can collectively participate in intra-area transport. To enhance public safety and redress the governance challenges, the state needs to persist in seeking to reform the employment models under which drivers currently work. At present, these are weighted against the drivers and are largely non-compliant with the sector determination (such as working conditions, hours and rates of remuneration). A system of owner-operators and a more affordable range of vehicles (applied to both minibus taxis and sedan taxis) would shift economic power away from the current fleet owners while simultaneously redirecting profits away from the financiers and manufacturers towards the owner-drivers and township-based support services. If the power of the associations could be significantly mitigated, the potential efficiencies and comparative advantages of minibuses could be better harnessed to improve access to mobility in ways that are safer and more affordable than subsidy-dependent BRT and rail services.

