

**Mobile workplace: work conditions and family life of taxi drivers.**

By

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### **Declaration of Authenticity**

I Mpho Manoagae Mmadi declare that this dissertation is my original work. Where secondary material has been used (either from a printed source or from the internet), this has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Sociology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria.

Signature.....

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## **Abstract**

The recognition that employees and employers wield different levels of power in the workplace makes labour legislation a central part of the workplace. This is because the different levels of power possessed by the two parties impact not only on workplace decision making but also on the relationship between the two parties, thus, being the weaker party (worker), the importance of worker protection through legislation is very important. However, the extent to which all employees enjoy legislation protection has always been a bone of contention.

The lack of employment security in certain sectors of the labour market is not always the direct consequence of a lack of labour legislation aimed at those sectors. Rather, factors such as supervising compliance and implementation of labour legislation are crucial towards achieving important goals of labour legislation such as job security and worker protection. This study attempts to understand the interplay between the nature of work, legislation and the impact on family and community life of taxi drivers, through studying the everyday work experience of local taxi operators.

This study looks at the labour process of taxi driving in Mamelodi Township (Pretoria, Gauteng Province) and Jane Furse (Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province). The study draws on post-Bravermanian labour process theory, work-life balance debates and labour geography for theoretical frameworks. This is an ethnographic study that mainly draws on the extended case method, supplemented with semi-structured interviews.

Results indicate that taxi drivers work under harsh working conditions with very few employment-related benefits and little time for their families (social life). The drudgery of labour and the nature of the labour process motivate the need for taxi drivers to “make out”, as Michael Burawoy has described worker coping strategies. This involves what is termed binding, floating, sekero and rocky relations in this study. Findings also point out that current legislative stipulations, particularly the definition of a workplace, are incompatible with the nature of work characteristic of the minibus taxi industry.

The study concludes that taxi drivers remain largely vulnerable and unprotected due to this mismatch between legislative stipulations and the nature of work in the industry. Related to the foregoing, the study concludes that the informality of the minibus taxi industry benefits to some degree both taxi drivers and taxi owners. The study also points out the fact that geography/space is critical to our understanding of certain industries and successful application of labour regulation laws. Finally the study concludes that different localities impact on the intensity and duration of the labour process(es) therefore negates the successful uniform application of labour laws.



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## **Abbreviations**

<b>BCEA</b>	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
<b>BRT</b>	Bus Rapid Transit
<b>DoT</b>	Department of Transport
<b>GCTA</b>	Ghana Co-operative Transport Association
<b>GNTOA</b>	Ghana National Transport Owners Association
<b>GPRTU</b>	Ghana Private Road Transport Union
<b>GTA</b>	Groblersdaal Taxi Association
<b>IRM</b>	Integrated Rural Mobility Access
<b>LRA</b>	Labour Relations Act
<b>LRTB</b>	Local Road Transportation Board
<b>MWA</b>	Matatu Welfare Association
<b>MVOA</b>	Matatu Vehicle Owners Association
<b>NHTS</b>	National Household Travel Survey
<b>NTC</b>	National Transport Commission
<b>NTTT</b>	National Taxi Task Team
<b>NTPS</b>	National Transport Policy Study
<b>OHSA</b>	Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993
<b>SABTA</b>	Southern African Black Taxi Association
<b>SALDTA</b>	South African Long Distance Taxi Association
<b>SANTACO</b>	South African Taxi Council
<b>UIF</b>	Unemployment Insurance Fund

## Glossary

**Matlapa:** the exchange of passenger loads to minimize travelling without sufficient loads.

**Lekouso/Makhanda:** a term used both literally and figuratively to refer to pilfering by taxi drivers

**Sekerong:** a designated place marking the end of floating.

**Sekero:** to cut off another taxi to prevent a pick-up.

**Floating:** to drive up and down in search of passengers.

**Binding:** wait for passengers at the taxi rank.

**Baiting:** deliberately driving past passenger for the tailing taxi to stop.

**Leshaka:** a designated safe place where taxis are parked

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1. Introduction

According to the *National Travel Household Survey* carried out in 2003, of approximately 3.9 million public transport commuters, 2.5 million use minibus taxis to travel to work on a daily basis, making the minibus taxi industry the largest public transport provider in South Africa (Department of Transport, 2003: 16). This industry accounts for over 63 percent of all public transport work trips (Department of Transport, 2003: 16). Given the minibus taxi industry's centrality to everyday life in South Africa, it is maybe not surprising that people hold strong views on the topic. One could argue that the South African public has a love-hate relationship with the minibus taxi industry. This love-hate relationship could be due to the general impression that taxi drivers are notorious for disobeying traffic laws, are disrespectful to passengers, are a danger to other road users and downright rude. Newspaper reports and online comments on newspaper stories often remark on taxi drivers' involvement in road rage scuffles, their stopping in the middle of the road, jumping of red traffic lights, cutting in front of other motorists, swearing at passengers and many more such offences. Furthermore, for the most part, road deaths are attributable to minibus taxis for reasons ranging from unroadworthy vehicles, overloading of vehicles, speeding and disregard of traffic laws.

Public perception of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa is negative for the various reasons outlined above. In October 2011, the South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) launched a new training school for taxi drivers in response to taxi drivers being "labelled as selfish road-hogs who daily flout traffic rules and regulations" (SABC, 2011). However, does inadequate training alone account for this notoriety? This study explores issues such as work organisation, and the minibus taxi industry's operation outside of legislative frameworks. These factors can help explain the behaviour of taxi drivers on the road.

Attempts have been made to regulate the industry. In terms of working conditions, the amended and improved Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1997 (BCEA) along with the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (LRA) hoped to improve basic working conditions, as well as to achieve equitable power relations between

employers and employees. The recognition that employers and employees wield different levels of power in the workplace makes labour legislation a central part of the workplace. This centrality of labour legislation in the workplace is because the different levels of power possessed by the two parties (employer and employee) impact not only on workplace decision making but also on the relationship between the two parties. Thus, the importance of worker protection through legislation cannot be overemphasised as the worker or employee has less power and is therefore the weaker party. However, the extent to which all employees enjoy legislative protection has always been a cause of disagreement. This is due to the pivotal role played by labour legislation in achieving certain employment standards, namely employment security and benefits.

However, how does a general piece of legislation, such as the BCEA impact on workplaces that do not conform to the norms set by places such as factories and mines? What if the workplace is a mobile vehicle (such as a minibus taxi)? Nevertheless, the lack of employment security in certain sectors of the labour market is not always a direct consequence of lack of labour legislation aimed at those sectors. Rather, factors such as supervising compliance and implementation of labour legislation are crucial in achieving the important goals of labour legislation, such as job security and worker protection.

This study attempts to understand the interplay between the nature of work, legislation and the impact on the family and community life of taxi drivers through the study of the everyday work experience of taxi operators in the Mamelodi Township, Pretoria and in Jane Furse, Limpopo. It is through the understanding of the nature of work in the minibus taxi industry that one hopes to understand how the nature of this work affects the successful implementation of labour legislation as well as the family and community life of taxi drivers.

### **1.1. Problem Identification and Rationale**

The 1994 democratic dispensation ushered in a number of changes, namely political, social and economic. The new democratic South Africa has seen an economic shift towards more market-oriented trade liberalisation. The changes in economic policy stimulated debates and research activities, notably, those geared towards

understanding the implication of trade liberalisation on labour. Ultimately, the research focus was on nonstandard employment with considerable attention on farm workers, domestic workers and contract workers (for examples, see Kritzing, 2006; Kritzing & Vorster, 2001; Ray, 1997; Rees, 1997; Theron, 2003, 2005; Webster & Von Holdt, 2005). Given the centrality of the minibus taxi industry to public transport, this industry is conspicuously absent from these post-apartheid studies. The nature of work and the work experience of taxi drivers have largely been excluded from research. This points to the need to understand the everyday work experience of taxi drivers vis-à-vis formal protection, family life and community activities.

It is not argued here that there is absolutely no research on the industry. To be sure, the South African minibus taxi industry has been the subject of some research from the 1990s to the present. The presence of some research on this industry is largely because the industry's status has been debated in policy circles to some extent. In the main, the debates relate to whether the minibus taxi industry is part of the formal or the informal economic sector. As such, the majority of research done in this area revolves around issues of regulation, access to trade unions, labour legislation and taxi violence. According to Mahlangu (2002: 7, 25, 65-68) and Majeke (2003: 26), the post-apartheid minibus taxi industry is characterised by the following: poor working conditions, exploitation, the lack of access to trade unions and low salaries received by taxi drivers. All of the above-mentioned characteristics are largely the result of the working arrangements within the minibus taxi industry which McCaul (1990: 89) describes as being "unusual".

While the studies by Mahlangu (2002) and Majeke (2003) are contemporary post-apartheid attempts at unpacking and understanding the working conditions of taxi drivers, both studies fail to understand the nature of work that is characteristic of the minibus taxi industry. Furthermore, by virtue of being quantitative research, Majeke's study (2003) suffers from the methodological limitation of failing to unearth more nuanced and in-depth perspectives of the everyday work experiences of taxi drivers. Moreover, since the industry is informal, significant aspects (such as individual experiences of work) are hard to measure and quantify.



In addition to understanding the actual nature of the work in an informal context, such as the taxi industry, South African studies of changing patterns of work have started to emphasise the importance of considering how work is embedded in communities and family life (see for example Mosoetsa, 2011; Webster, Lambert & Bezuidenhout, 2008). In addition to these factors, a lack of male participation in the upbringing of children and the sharing of family responsibilities in general (particularly among working class groups) has been identified and recognised as a social problem in South Africa and around the world (Denis & Radikobo, 2005: 237).

The above-mentioned problems inform the objectives of this study. In a more general sense, the study is an attempt to explore the links between the nature of work, labour legislation and family situations of those parties concerned.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

As pointed out above, working conditions of taxi drivers can be described as exploitative and characterised by low salaries (Mahlangu, 2002: 7, 25; Majeke, 2003: 26). The aims of this study are to unpack the everyday work experience of taxi drivers, to explore how the nature of the work in the minibus taxi industry negates the successful application of labour legislation and to understand how the nature of such work affects the family life and community activities of taxi drivers.

## **1.3. Research Questions**

It is because of the above argument that the following questions are posed in an attempt to address the identified problem, which is how the interplay between nature of work and legislative protection impacts on family life of taxi drivers:

1. What is the nature of work for taxi drivers? (In other words, what is the actual labour process of taxi drivers?)
2. Given the nature of work, do labour market regulations provide for employment security in the minibus taxi industry?
3. How does the interaction between the nature of the work and legislative protection impact the family and community life of taxi drivers?

The above-stated questions, together with the theoretical framework of this study, will focus and shape the nature of the discussion that this study follows. The study

intends to problematise the notion of the workplace and work organisation within the minibus taxi industry. Thus, the study will draw from labour process theory and wage theory (which is more economic in its approach) to offer insight into the everyday work experience of taxi drivers.

#### **1.4. Outline of Chapters**

Chapter 1 introduces the study and the sociological problem that this research endeavours to address. In addition, the chapter briefly highlights the current state of the minibus taxi industry and its relationship with the South African public.

Chapter 2 considers three broad literature samples in order to frame the empirical part of this research. Firstly, post-Bravermanian Marxist labour process theory is discussed. Secondly, the geography of labour and labour geography are utilised to locate the minibus taxi industry spatially and to understand how taxi drivers actively make geographies on a daily basis. Lastly, the embeddedness of work in communities and family life is explored through the work-life balance debate.

Chapter 3 critically reviews the existing literature in this area and traces the emergence of the minibus taxi industry historically within the South African context. In addition, this chapter takes a critical look at current efforts to regulate the taxi industry by the government.

Chapter 4 details both the ontological and epistemological orientation of the research and qualifies the decision to employ ethnography for the purpose of this study. A reflexive account of the research process is provided, coupled with a critical engagement with ethical dilemmas.

Chapter 5 details the findings of this study. Participants' daily work experiences are comprehensively described while flagging major aspects of the minibus taxi industry. Taxi drivers' daily labour activities receive central attention with focus around issues of working hours, 'checking', spatial influences over the labour process, employment insecurity and work control. The above are thematically discussed.

Chapter 6 interprets the findings of this study. Furthermore, this chapter considers both the theoretical and policy implications that emerge from the data.

## **Chapter 2: Work, Family and Space – A Framework of Analysis**

### **2. Introduction**

This chapter considers three broad literature samples in order to frame the empirical part of the project: labour process theory, debates on the work-family life balance and labour geography. The labour process, characteristic of the minibus taxi industry, is framed by considering the works of theorists such as Marx and Braverman, and post-Bravermanian theorists such as Burawoy, Edwards and Friedman. Labour process theory is employed as a way of understanding the work aspects of taxi drivers (public sphere). The chapter goes on to consider the impact of being a taxi driver on family relations. Sapsford's wage theory is also considered in relation to the work-family life debate. The chapter concludes by providing a context-sensitive understanding of the minibus taxi industry as provided by labour geographers.

#### **2.1. Labour Process Theory**

For the purpose of this research, labour process theory is used to analyse the work experiences of taxi drivers. Labour process theory has been very influential as an analytical tool for understanding work in South Africa (Omar, 2005; Von Holdt, 2003; Webster, 1985, 1999). As Webster (1999: 29) points out:

The labour process approach, with its notion of the inherently antagonistic character of capitalism production relations and its stress on coercion in the workplace, captured the despotic nature of apartheid workplace and generated wide spread interest in the labour process among industrial sociologists.

It can be acknowledged that the original Marxist labour process theory has limitations when applied to the kind of labour process characteristic of the minibus taxi industry. Omar (2005: 270-271) points out the fact that labour process theory cannot be applied adequately to the analysis of the service sector. This is owing to the fact that this theory was initially developed to understand production relations, in other words factories in an industrial context.

Criticisms levelled against labour process theory, notably that of Braverman's application (1974) of the Marxist labour process regarding work in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, are acknowledged here. Consequently, the theory is supplemented with arguments advanced by proponents of labour geography.

The grounding premises of Marxist labour process theory are important and will be discussed. According to Marx, there are three basic human needs, namely: shelter, food and clothing. Because these needs are biological, humans are then compelled to interact with their environment on a daily basis in order to fulfil these needs. It is based on these three basic needs that Karl Marx argued that work is a necessary part of social life that ensures a regular and continuous production of those goods necessary for human sustenance (Marx, 1970: 42, 47-9). Humans are ultimately forced to engage in labour because human labour is the only means of producing products with use value (Thompson, 1989: 38).

The Marxist notion of historical materialism finds, to a certain extent, its expression in Sapsford's wage theory (Marx, 1970: 42, 48; Sapsford, 1981: 15-38). At the centre of Marx's historical materialism is the argument that history is driven by material forces. Marx's contention is that humans are, primarily, biological beings and as a result, before they engage in any form of activities, humans must first self-sustain. The biological nature of human beings dictates that the first historical thing humans perform is labour (Marx, 1970: 48; Seidman, 2004: 24; Braverman, 1998: 31). Thus, the individual decision to supply labour is influenced by the need to self-sustain. Sapsford (1981: 15) defines labour supply as: "The amount of labour, measured in person-hours, offered for hire during a given time period".

It is important to note that the decision to participate in the labour market is (mostly, but not always) made at the expense of social life in general, in other words at the expense of family time and leisure. The material conditions of taxi drivers and the composition of their respective households have an immense influence on the decision to participate actively in the labour market (Sapsford, 1981: 17-18). According to Sapsford (1981: 17-18), the decision to enter the labour market, as well as the number of hours of work, is influenced by household composition. Sapsford (1981: 18) is of the view that both the household's total "*available resource*" (italics in

original) and the household composition are central determinants in the decision of whether to participate in the labour market or not.

Arguably, taxi drivers can be classified as the “working poor” (Blasi & Leavitt, 2010: 25-6). The lack of economic security in the minibus taxi industry is exacerbated by the fact that taxi drivers are not paid standard wages and this renders taxi drivers vulnerable, both as employees and as citizens (Blasi & Leavitt, 2010: 25; Mahlangu, 2002: 88; Majeke, 2003: 26; McCaul, 1990:89). Therefore, material conditions compel taxi drivers to sell their labour power, which can be described as an exchange between what feminist labour economists describe as the realms of production and reproduction (Peck, 1996: 153).

Marx identified three elements of the labour process: (a) purposeful activity of humans, that is: the activity with an intended end product in mind; (b) the instruments with which to perform the work, this includes tools and any form of technology used in the labour process; and (c) raw materials (Thompson, 1989: 38-9). For the purpose of this study, only (a) and (b) are deemed appropriate for the current discussion. Service sector labour processes do not involve any processing of raw materials (see Hochschild, 2003). According to Martin (2006: 51), the labour process is not only necessary for subsistence to Marx, but also:

[The] form in which, and from which, human beings create and transform themselves and all other aspects of society, develop the full range of their creative potential.

Marx was not only concerned with the labour process in general, but also with the nature of the labour process in a capitalist mode of production in particular (Martin, 2006: 51; Marx, 1930: 793). Of particular interest to Marx was the fact that within the capitalist economy, labour became commodified and production became chiefly concerned with achieving profit (Marx, 1930: 792-3; Wood & Kelly, 1982 cited in Martin, 2006: 51). Commodified labour means that labour has become something that is sold on a market as a commodity, following the proletarianisation process in which the majority of the people were denied access to the means of production and as such were forced to sell their labour power in return for wages to meet their daily needs (Marx, 1930: 793).

Within a capitalist economy, the activity of labour is not only directed at the production of goods necessary for human sustenance, but also the activity of labour is aimed at profit generation; hence the labour process becomes inextricably linked to the struggle for profitable production (Thompson, 1989: 41). The need to make a profit results in the appropriation of the means of production and consequently, the control of the labour process (Thompson, 1989: 41). Following the concentration of the means of production in a minority, control of the labour process becomes the ultimate goal in a capitalist system. This is because control is linked to profit levels. By owning the means of production, capitalists have the power to determine (Martin, 2006: 52):

- what workers do;
- how workers work;
- the conditions under which workers work; and
- the remuneration that workers receive.

All of the above-mentioned factors are tied to the notion of control in the work place. However, Wardell (1991: 91) argues that labour processes vary and so do the patterns of control. The management's control of the labour process within the minibus taxi industry is different from that of a factory. McCaul (1990: 89) describes the labour process in this industry as being "unusual" and Khosa (1994: 15) notes a variety of ways in which the labour process is controlled in the minibus taxi industry. The recruitment of labour (taxi drivers) from the rural areas, the pacification of drivers by providing them with backroom accommodation and the usage of a quota system and other forms of surveillance (such as spies, kilometres travelled and speed limits) are some of the control mechanisms that taxi owners use (Khosa, 1994: 15).

A further notable difference in the labour process of the minibus taxi sector is that labour activity is not characterised by eight or nine hour constant surveillance of the drivers by their employers. Wardell (1999: 9) supports this line of argument by stating that the:

Labour processes, regardless of what the output happens to be, are structured within arenas of control *specific* [italics mine] to a particular work setting.

According to Braverman (1974), cited in Martin (2006: 61), the modern-day labour process has been transformed by the emergence and implementation of scientific management (Taylorism). Scientific management can be defined as an attempt to apply the methods of science to the increasingly complex problems of the control of labour within a growing capitalist enterprise (Braverman, 1998: 59). Braverman argues that the exploitative and antagonistic nature of the capitalist relations of production has led to a fundamental conflict of interest between managers and workers (Martin, 2006: 61). The lack of trust between the workers and the capitalists or the employers means that workers cannot be relied upon to maximise profit accumulation and consequently capitalists strive to take away the control of the labour process from the labour (Martin, 2006: 61). Thus, control of daily labour activity is concentrated in the hands of management. This concentration, according to Martin (2006: 53), is because: “Capitalists are intent on extracting more labour from the workers than the equivalent the workers receive in the form of wages”.

Burawoy (1979: 27) cautions against portraying workers as passive victims of the capitalist labour process. That is to say, this control that Braverman (1974, 1998) refers to, should not be presented as a seamless process to which workers are subjected. Hence, Burawoy (1979: 27) argues that, while coercion is central to the control of the labour process, it is supplemented by consent. According to Burawoy, the manner in which work is organised manufactures consent. By drawing on the analogy of a “game”, Burawoy (1979: 85) highlights how consent is produced between workers and capital. The game metaphor is used to show how different parties can play together because they have both consented to the rules of the game (Burawoy, 1979: 93). Burawoy (1979: 85) states that:

When the labour process is organized into some form of a game involving the active participation of both management and worker, the interests of both are concretely coordinated.

However, the above analogy is not used to suggest that both parties benefit equally, but that to the extent that the game offers distinct rewards to the players gives rise to



a common interest among the different parties (Burawoy, 1979: 85). While workers are concerned with an acceptable wage, capital is geared towards achieving a profit (Burawoy, 1979: 26, 85). Consequently, the labour process (under certain conditions) could be organised to meet the interests of both parties. Ultimately, the labour process should be understood as a combination of force and consent that elicits cooperation from both parties (Burawoy, 1979: 30; Edwards, 1979: 71).

The argument put forward by Burawoy (1979: 85) links well with Friedman's notion (1977:106) of "responsible autonomy"—the extent to which workers are allowed to exercise control over the labour process. Responsible autonomy entails an elaborate ideological apparatus aimed at co-opting workers (Friedman, 1977: 106). This can only be achieved with the consent of both workers and capital. Arguably, responsible autonomy seems more applicable in the minibus taxi industry as opposed to direct control. Importantly, control over the labour process varies with regard to the sector of the economy and industry that is identified (Burawoy, 1990: 127; Wardell, 1999: 9). It follows from this argument that the interaction between the labour process and the economic sector impacts on other aspects of a worker's social life, for example family time and leisure. This impact on the lives of workers is because the daily lived experience of workers is shaped by how work is organised (Burawoy, 1979: 85)

Thus far, it has been the contention of the literature reviewed that the capitalist labour process entails a struggle over the maximisation of profit and that the outcome of this struggle can lead to various regimes of control. One also has to consider that the taxi industry is different from factories when initially analysed by the labour process theory. It should also be considered that regimes of control have to take the specific nature of the work involved in the sector into account. In the third part of this chapter, labour geography is used to elaborate on this point. But first, the impact of work on family life will be considered in more detail.

## **2.2. Work-Life Balance**

The work-life quandary has been well documented by the literature. This is because the work-life balance has, to some extent, been identified as a social problem and has attracted a considerable amount of attention – including a legislative measure in April 2003 aimed at addressing the work-life balance introduced in the United

Kingdom (UK) (Houston 2005: 1; Hyman, Scholarios & Baldry, 2005: 123). The fact that people still work between 15 and 17 hours per day demonstrates why the work-family life balance deserves attention. Kahn *et al.* (1964: 19), cited in Jeffery and Beutell (1985: 77), define family-work conflict as the: “Simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressure such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other”.

Jeffrey and Beutell (1985: 77) identify three major forms of work-family conflict, namely: (a) time-based conflict, (b) strain-based conflict and (c) behaviour-based conflict. However, for the purpose of this study, the main focus will be on time- and strain-based conflict, since behaviour-based conflict tends to involve the discipline of Psychology. Broadly speaking, time-based conflict relates to the allocation of hours available in a day to the various daily activities that individuals must perform. Consequently, according to Jeffery and Beutell (1985: 77): “Time spent on activities within one role generally cannot be devoted to activities within another role”.

An examination of the literature suggests that taxi drivers work between 15-17 and 18-20 hours per day for seven days a week in both South Africa and the United States, respectively (Blasi & Leavitt, 2010:5, 21; Forrest, 1997: 24; Jugerson, 1998 cited in Majeke, 2003: 26; SAPA, 1997: 12 cited in Mahlangu, 2002: 34). These long hours mean that taxi drivers have almost no time for anything else except work. According to Hyman *et al.*, (2005: 135), it is those workers with dependants who are more likely to experience time-based conflict. In the findings of the research carried out in Los Angeles (in the United States), Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 21) argue that “The negative consequence of such long [working hours] extends to the drivers themselves, their families, and the general public”.

The type of work that taxi drivers do makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to perform any other roles outside of work. This difficulty arises because on days that they are off from work, taxi drivers spend most of their free time sleeping or are just too tired to do any other activities (Blasi & Leavitt, 2010: 23; Hyman *et al.*, 2005: 123). Long working hours can intrude into workers’ private lives through exhaustion, stress and illness (Hyman *et al.*, 2003 cited in Hyman *et al.*, 2005: 123). Furthermore, both Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 24) and Hyman *et al.*, (2005: 136)

highlight that the mismatch of schedules affect eating together as a family. Dinner table conversations are an important part of family relations and critical to cohesion. Kanter (1984: 115) argues that:

A lump of free time out of synchrony with the rhythm of the rest of the family and society may not improve the quality of family life... [and ultimately], the amount of time available for family and leisure ... is [not] an issue [rather] its timing.

The nature of the work and work organisation in the minibus taxi industry is a direct root cause of the above-mentioned family-work 'mismatch'. As the minibus taxi industry is a part of the service sector, the work schedule of taxi drivers does not generally allow for participation in certain activities. This is motivated by the fact that certain leisure and community activities can only be performed at certain times and on certain days of the week, with the resultant failure of taxi drivers to fulfil certain social roles (Hyman *et al.*, 2005: 126; Kanter, 1984: 114). Consequently, according to Hochschild (2003), cited in Pocock (2006: 48): "Family life and community are thinned as they face a competing urgency system and a rival conception of time".

Most taxi drivers start work at 04:00 and only return home after 20:00 in the evening. This long working day means that taxi drivers do not get to spend time with certain members of the family, particularly the elderly, young children and friends. Working under these conditions can lead to strain and symptoms such as tension, anxiety, irritability and fatigue, which are all broadly categorised under mental and emotional wellbeing (Pocock, Skinner & Williams, 2008: 22; Brief, Schueler & Van Sall, 1981 cited in Jeffrey & Beutell, 1985: 80; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980 cited in Jeffrey & Beutell, 1985: 80). Such work strain clearly has a negative impact on workers, their family and their community life. For Warhurst, Eikhof and Haunschild (2008: 3), the current work-life balance debates highlight one thing – "too busy working lives are detrimental to private life, particularly family life". This point is made more salient by the fact that work tends to interfere with life more than the other way round (Pocock *et al.*, 2008: 27). The findings of research carried out in Australia point out that 70 percent of both men and women indicate that personal life never, or rarely, interferes with work activities (Pocock *et al.*, 2008: 27; Hyman & Marks, 2008: 196). As a

result, many working class people are forced to adapt their private lives to their job requirements, not the other way round (Henninger & Papouschek, 2008: 153).

Kanter (1977), cited in Jeffery and Beutell (1985: 81), posits that employees who experience “interaction fatigue” at work might withdraw from social contact at home and the broader community. Motivated by the traditional gender-role ideology that projects man as the breadwinner, men are more likely to experience work-family conflict (Pleck, 1984: 2). Importantly, men’s labour market participation and commitment to work are also directly linked with their household responsibilities as providers (Pleck, 1984: 3; Sapsford, 1981: 17-18).

Labour market participation takes place at the expense of leisure, but leisure takes place at the expense of income (Sapsford, 1981: 28). The latter is more relevant to taxi drivers, particularly those drivers paid according to quotas and percentage systems (Mahlangu, 2002: 32, 88; Majeke, 2003: 26; McCaul, 1990: 89). Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 25) summarise taxi drivers’ attachment to the labour market succinctly: “The evidence from our surveys makes clear that taxi drivers work such long hours, with such negative consequences for themselves and their families, out of economic necessity”.

As Pocock (2006: 4) argues, this is due to the commodification of our social life. More and more people spend most of their adult life attached to paid work with a resultant reliance on the market to provide everything (Pocock, 2006: 7). With a particular emphasis on the minibus taxi industry, Khosa (1994: 15) argues that waged labour has successfully replaced family or individual labour. Khosa (1994: 15) avers that capital accumulation gives impetus to the spread of wage labour as a dominant system, thus drawing large numbers of the population into waged labour with severe implications for social relations. Khosa (1994: 14) states that this has led to the commodification of mutual aid in black communities and the minibus taxi industry. Pocock (2006: 39) asserts that the downside to market sustenance (i.e. the extent to which people rely more and more on the market for provision of all kinds of goods and services) is the commodification of time through paid labour with corrosive impacts on families and the broader community.

The fact that taxi drivers often do not enjoy legislative protection (see Chapter 5) means that they do not receive employment benefits, such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and leave pay. The lack of economic security, which is typical of the minibus taxi industry, exposes taxi drivers to exploitation and ensures that they are forever attached to the labour market with negative consequences for themselves and their families.

In an attempt to understand the interplay between work and family life, Kanter (1984: 111) acknowledges the fact that the nature of work and work organisation are key determinants of the quality of life for individuals and families. With a specific focus on the minibus taxi industry, it is imperative to factor in the nature of work and work organisation in order to better interrogate the two aspects of an employee's life, namely work and family life. To do so, it is important to locate the minibus taxi industry within its 'spatial fix' in order to better interrogate the labour process characteristic of the minibus taxi industry (Harvey, 1982 cited in Rainnie, McGrath-Champ & Herod, 2010: 298).

### **2.3. Contextualising the Labour Process**

There is a need to state from the onset that labour geography will be utilised in conjunction with geography of labour (while a distinction between labour geography and geography of labour is made here, these will be grouped together under the broad heading labour geography in the chapters to follow). These two theoretical frames have distinct approaches to understanding and theorising labour. Pioneered by great writers (such as David Harvey, Doreen Massey and many more), the largely Marxist geography of labour approach started to emerge during the 1970s (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010: 212; Herod, 2001: 3). This Marxist informed geography of labour approach is chiefly concerned with theorising the importance of space for the everyday operations of capitalist societies and how the making of landscapes are connected to the machinations of capitalism (Herod, 2001: 3). Here, the focus is on how capitalism's spatial structures shape its daily functioning (Herod, 2001: 4). Under the geography of labour approach, workers have little role to play (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010: 212; Herod, 2001: 16; Lier, 2007: 820, 821). In his critique of the Marxist geography of labour, Herod (2001: 16) writes:

In the process, workers have habitually been represented as always being outmanoeuvred by a seemingly omnipotent, omniscient, infinitely flexible capital, as unquestionably dupes when they side with capital on certain issues, as invariably divided in the face of an always more internally coherent capital, and as inevitably less important than capital in explanations of the making of the geography of ... capitalism.

However, unlike geography of labour, labour geography seeks to bring to the fore the agency of labour by demonstrating how workers actively influence and shape geographies of capitalism (Herod, 2001: 2, 15-16, 18). According to Herod (2001: 15), labour geography recognises and:

... [T]reats working-class people as sentient social beings who both *intentionally and unintentionally* [italics mine] produce economic geographies through their actions – all the while recognizing that they are constrained [as is capital] in these actions.

Significantly, despite the criticism, Herod (2001: 48) highlights the fact that geography of labour cannot simply be replaced with labour geography. The foregoing point by Herod (2001: 48) speaks directly to the need to incorporate both approaches for the purpose of this study.

Labour process organisation and how workers behave varies across place and industry. The central contention of labour geography, according to Rainnie *et al.* (2010: 304), is that:

The manner in which the labour process is structured within the workplace, together with how workers are regulated and resist such regulation, is shaped ... by how particular workplaces are ... [spatially] embedded within [places and economies in which they are located].

In a criticism of sociology and economics, Doreen Massey points out the fact that the two disciplines have a tendency of treating the world as if it is distance-less and spatially undifferentiated (Massey, 1995: 49). There are two main reasons why it is important to spatially locate the minibus taxi industry (spatial here is used to refer to both the geographical location and the space that the minibus taxi industry occupies within the service sector economy). The first reason is that South Africa is a developing country with the majority of its population classified as the working poor (Fields, 2000: 1-2) and thus the majority of the population relies heavily on cheap

public transport to get around. The second reason is that the broader South African context (described in the first reason), together with the space that the minibus taxi industry occupies, both shape how the labour process in the minibus taxi industry is organised in different places. A focus on spatial differences allows for a nuanced analysis of certain processes, for example the difference in intensity and duration of the working day (Massey, 1995: 54). Massey (1995: 54) convincingly argues that it is not necessarily space in itself that produces particular outcomes, “but the fact of spatial variation [that] will demand social response”. According to Rainnie *et al.*, (2010: 299), the structure of the labour process is not only informed by what occurs on the shop-floor, but is also the broader societal organisation that should be taken into account. Massey (1995: 51) states that it is important to remember that there are no such things as pure spatial processes, nor are there any non-spatial social processes. According to Rainnie *et al.* (2010:303), the above is informed by the fact that:

The spatial embeddedness [of particular industries] plays [an] important role in shaping how cultures of work emerge in particular places, which in turn affects how labour processes develop.

Indeed, Massey (1995: 53) notes how spatial separation can be a factor in the preservation of particular local conditions of production (such as low wages, loyalty to the company and lack of militancy) which are generally referred to as the uneven geographic development of capitalism (see Harvey, 1982). This is because the multiple subjective positions of workers influences if, how and why workers seek to assert their agency (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010: 218). According to Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010: 218), “... agency always needs to be ‘grounded’ or re-embedded in the space-time context of which it is a constituent process”. This is because when capitalists and workers become spatially fixed in certain places, labour control regimes, traditions of work and ways of organising the labour process might become congealed in those places and economic spaces (Herod, Rainnie & McGrath-Champ, 2007: 248; Rainnie *et al.*, 2010: 303). Therefore, space remains an integral part of understanding agency and work organization (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010).

Spatial fix is used here to emphasise how the embeddedness of certain industries in particular places give rise to localised production relations. As a concept developed



by Harvey (1982: 390, 394), spatial fix relates to the extent to which companies can relocate production with relative ease (footloose). Relying heavily on fixed infrastructure (such as roads, taxi ranks and communities) the minibus taxi industry is not that much of a 'footloose industry'. Importantly, to some extent, the historical emergence of the minibus taxi industry, together with the space occupied by the minibus taxi industry in the service sector economy, has motivated how the everyday labour process unfolds on a day-to-day basis.

While recognising the important role played by the physical and economic spaces occupied by the minibus taxi industry in shaping everyday labour processes, this is not to present taxi drivers as quiescent. By employing important insights provided by labour geography, it is attempted here to project taxi drivers as actively engaged (Herod, 2001: 15). Here Burawoy (1979) is instructive as labour geography speaks to his notion of manufacturing consent. Linked to Burawoy's notion (1979: 26, 85) of manufacturing consent, Herod (2001: 16) stresses the fact that workers are capable of making spaces in ways that ensure their own self reproduction and survival, "even if this is self-reproduction and survival *as workers in a capitalist society* [italics in original]". However, it should be noted, with regard to the notion of labour agency (as used here and as advocated by labour geographers), that there is an awareness of the criticism against labour geographers' failure to theorise the concept fully, if they manage to theorise it at all (for examples, see Castree, 2007; Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010: 214) point out that:

... [T]he notion of agency needs to be further conceptualized and fleshed out in terms of its multiple geographies and temporalities, and that the potential for worker action should always be seen in relation to the formations of capital, the state, the community and the labour market in which workers are incontrovertibly yet variably embedded.

By recognising the weaknesses pointed out above, this study does not in any way suggest that an attempt will be made to better theorise the concept of agency here. Rather, by drawing on the categorisation suggested by Katz (2004), cited in Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010: 216), the study hopes to provide a clear picture of taxi drivers' daily actions. Katz (2004), cited in Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010), categorises acts of agency under the following, resilience, reworking and resistance. Resilience refers to



small acts of getting by that help individuals and groups cope with everyday realities. Reworking is an intermediate category that reflects people's effort to materially improve their conditions of existence (for example strategies to leverage better terms and conditions). Resistance refers to any direct challenges to capitalist social relation and attempts to regain control of labour time and its use in the spheres of production and social production (Katz, 2004 cited in Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2010: 216).

Furthermore, Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010: 217) argue that people need to start appreciating individual agency. For a group of workers who remain un-unionised, such as taxi drivers, recognising individual actions can help to understand how taxi drivers navigate their daily work struggles. According to Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010: 217), we need to appreciate individual actions as much as those carried out collectively.

## **2.4. Summary of the Main Theoretical Points**

The Marxist labour process theory is built around the following assumptions, which in turn become critical analytical tools for understanding the interaction between capital and workers:

- Labour is a primary part of social life because humans are, before anything else, biological beings (Martin, 1995: 51; Seidman, 2004: 27; Thompson, 1989: 38).
- Labour is not only necessary for human existence, but also the basis from which all forms of social relations built (Martin, 1995: 51).
- The undertaking of labour for the purpose of subsistence is natural; however, it is the labour process in the pursuit of profit that warrants concern (Martin, 1995: 51).
- It is the labour process geared towards profit that motivated the appropriation of the means of production and the subsequent commodification of labour (Martin, 1995: 51).
- It is the labour process under capitalism that resulted in antagonistic relations between workers and the owners of the means of production. These antagonistic relations is motivated by the need to extract more out of workers

than the equivalent that the workers will receive in the form of wages (Martins, 1995: 53).

- The wage-profit link has heightened the need to have control over workers, hours of work and how work is to be organised (Braverman, 1974: 59; Martin, 1995: 61).
- While control is a central part of labour process, it is however incorrect to project workers as passive victims of the capitalist labour process. Workers are actively engaged in the labour process and their choices shapes while also being shaped by the labour process (Burawoy, 1979: 27, 85).
- Labour process should be contextualised in order to enhance our understanding of workers' work experience and organisation of work (Rainnie *et al.*, 2010; Wardell, 1999: 9).

## **Chapter 3: The South African Minibus Taxi Industry in Context**

### **3. Introduction**

The current state of the minibus taxi industry contains remnants of the apartheid era in many respects. This chapter looks at the current state of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa. The chapter also factors in current government efforts implemented to try to improve the working conditions, reliability and safety of the minibus taxi industry. A comparison is drawn between the South African situation and other developed, as well as developing countries around the world. Significantly, this chapter carries out a critical review of the research done in this area up to this point in time. The chapter concludes with an in-depth discussion of the South African minibus taxi industry and a critical engagement with the success and failures of government intervention.

#### **3.1. A Snapshot of Public Transport in South Africa**

Public transport is an important part of everyday life in that it facilitates access to social mobility and as such, is an integral part of social life. Public transport has an inherent influence over people's access to employment, education and health care and it is also linked to urban development (Abuhamoud, Rahmat & Ismail, 2011: 51; Chapman, 1987 cited in Khosa, 1997: 19; Walters, 2010; Zimmerman, 1988: 43-44). Buses, trains and minibus taxis are the three most popular forms of public transport in South Africa, with both buses and trains considered formal and minibus taxis regarded as informal (Khosa, 1997: 18; Lomme, 2011: 1). However, informal minibus taxis are the most popular mode of transport in many African communities (Barrett, 2003: ix, 2; Khosa, 1997: 18; Lomme, 2011: 2; Walters, 2010).

Different modes of public transport are used in South Africa by different social classes for various reasons and in different social conditions. This variety of modes of transport is largely because the three modes of public transport available in South Africa offer a range of limitations in different contexts for a variety of reasons. For the most part, the majority of the working poor rely upon trains, buses and minibus taxis to get around while largely the middle classes make use of privately owned vehicles. Issues of access, availability, reliability and safety place limitations on commuter choices with regard to public transport. The existing rail infrastructure, for example, is

in a state of decay (Lomme, 2011: 7). This decay of the rail infrastructure is due, in part, to the fact that:

The average age of the rolling stock fleet of the 4 500 coaches is currently 31 years, with 39% of the fleet between 30-45 years old. [Furthermore], [m]aintenance funds are also insufficient to sustain heavy maintenance cycles and required performance (South African Rail Commuter Corporation, 2007 cited in Walters, 2010).

Moreover, the current rail commuter network layout was originally motivated by the socio-political structure of the apartheid regime, that is the rail commuter network was designed to transport cheap labour from the faraway labour reserves (or homelands) of South Africa (Barrett, 2003: 6; Lomme, 2011: 7; Walters, 2010).

The *National Household Travel Survey*, undertaken in 2003 (Department of Transport, 2003: 15), points to the fact that both government-subsidised modes of transport (buses and trains) rate the worst in terms of access and availability when compared to the informal minibus taxis (Lomme, 2011: 5; Walters, 2010; Zimmerman, 1988: 85). Consequently, the commuter rail service has experienced a perpetual decrease of its market share, thus threatening its future existence (Lomme, 2011: 7). The use of the rail commuter service has been in decline for the past few years to the extent that, as Lomme (2011: 7) notes:

It has become a residual transport medium for the poor with its main function being to carry large volumes of disadvantaged people to their workplace during the morning peak and back home during the afternoon peak.

According to Walters (2010), there are currently around 10 000 commuter buses and 1100 municipal buses on our roads of which 7119 buses are part of the Department of Transport's subsidised system. Despite the number of buses available on our roads, buses (and trains) are still unable to cater to the everyday social mobility of the commuter population of South Africa. The majority of buses do not run after hours and are rarely run on weekends; therefore, this is very constraining to the working class population that has to travel the long distance to and from work on a daily basis (Lomme, 2011: 7). It is important to note here that travel demands are not limited to the five-day working week. Saturdays and Sundays remain important workdays for those in retail and other sectors.

Since the beginning of the democratic dispensation of 1994, shifting settlement and travel patterns have been a constant feature of our landscape (Barrett, 2003: 6; Lomme, 2011: 7; Walters, 2010). Inadvertently, settlement and transport infrastructure patterns present during the apartheid regime have now become an impediment to transport development in South Africa. One of the many reasons for this situation is that: “Formal commuter transport services are increasingly inadequate as they have not been rerouted to adjust to a shifting travel demand towards new job places” (Lomme, 2011: 7). Writing on public transport in South Africa, Lomme (2011: 6-9) argues that minibus taxis should be viewed as complementary to the formal modes of transport, as opposed to being viewed as “unhealthy” competitors. In most cases, minibus taxis make up for the shortcomings of the conventional transit modes (Lomme, 2010: 8). Muofhe (2005), cited in Lomme (2010: 8), observes that: “If the first ten shacks in an unauthorized informal settlement are built today, it is very likely that two taxis will be offering transport service tomorrow.” It is against this backdrop that the informal minibus taxi industry emerged. Contextualised within the erstwhile apartheid South Africa, the historical emergence of the minibus taxi industry is discussed in the next section.

Certain racial groups were systematically excluded from the economic benefits that the country had to offer because of South Africa’s history of racial segregation. Social mobility of certain racial groups was restricted by (amongst other factors) pass laws, as well as racially-controlled access to public transport. The minibus taxi industry emerged from this context as a way of providing alternative transport to the state-run buses and trains. The fact that the industry was wholly owned by black South Africans acted as impetus for the support that it received from black communities and the resultant growth (Croucamp, 2002). In line with the insights of labour geography, it is important to situate the South African minibus taxi industry spatially to allow for a context-sensitive understanding of the labour process distinctive of the minibus taxi industry. However, before discussing the historical development of the South African minibus taxi industry, it is important to look at taxi industries elsewhere in the world.

### 3.2. The Taxi Industry around the World

Public transport infrastructure is more developed, more efficient and well integrated in major parts of the developed world as compared to the transport infrastructure in South Africa, which is a developing country. Nonetheless, it is important to note that historical trajectories of a given country will, to a great extent, be a determining factor with regard to how public transport management and development, in general, unfold.

While taxis may serve almost the same purpose the world over, taxis are not homogeneously organised and managed, rather they differ from country to country. Gwilliam (2005: 1) points out that:

It is ... common, particularly in developing countries, for a company or an individual to own a vehicle or a fleet of vehicles and charge drivers a fixed monthly 'rent'. This rental fee may cause drivers to work long hours.

Contrary to Gwilliam's generalisation (2005), the above is not true for South Africa, Kenya and the majority of other African countries (Abuhamoud *et al.*, 2011: 54; Mahlangu, 2002: 32; McCaul, 1990: 89). Gwilliam's assertion (2005: 1) means that in many developing countries, taxi drivers are not employees. Theron (2005: 27) defines an employee as : "a person who works for, or renders services to, any other person is presumed ... to be an employee, regardless of the form of the contract of employment...". Ultimately, one can assume that regulation in such countries (where taxis are rented) will not necessarily focus on issues of employment conditions. The study by Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 46) indicates that regulation in a country such as the United States is more focused on the industry itself, rather than employees within the industry. Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 46) state that: "California assigns to each city the responsibility of regulating the taxi cab industry within its borders in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare".

Gwilliam (2005: 3) shows that in countries where minibuses or cabs are rented regulation is linked to the following:

- quantity of supply: specified in terms of the number of operators or number of vehicles;

- quality of supply: including quality of vehicles, the financial capability of the operator, as well as the competency and trustworthiness of the driver; and
- fares: either in terms of fixed or maximum tariff schedules.

The quality and quantity of supply are controlled by national governments and municipalities (for example California) this is not easily enforceable in South Africa. This is largely because of the size of the industry and the fact that taxis are more or less always individually owned, as opposed to company ownership of taxis. Furthermore, the quantity of supply remains the prerogative of taxi associations (Gwilliam, 2005: 1).

In a developing country like Bolivia, in a metropolitan area, out of the 25 000 public transport vehicles, only 9000 are taxis (Gwilliam, 2005: 6). This means that the taxi industry is relatively smaller when compared to the size of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa. Whereas, it seems, at least at first glance, that to a certain degree, Kenya's taxi industry is arranged similarly to that of South Africa's taxi industry. Much like in South Africa, there exists alongside the Kenyan bus service, the so-called '*matatus*' (the term *matatu* means 'thirty cents' which was the standard charge per trip in the early 1960s) and they make up the Kenyan minibus taxi industry (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4; Wikipedia, 2011). It is not clear when the minibus taxi industry was established in Kenya; however, recognition of the *matatus* came in 1973 when they were declared a formal mode of public transport following a strong lobbying from *matatu* operators (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4). At that stage, the *matatus* were allowed to operate without obtaining Public Service Vehicle (PSV) licenses as long as taxi operators complied with the existing insurance and traffic regulations (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4).

Similar to the case in South Africa, the *matatus* of Kenya are organised into various organisations for taxi owners: the Matatu Vehicle Owners' Association (MVOA or MOA) and the Matatu Welfare Association (MWA). These organisations, unlike those in South Africa, serve the interests of drivers, conductors and other stage workers (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4). The failure of the Kenyan Bus Service to cater for the travel demands of the Kenyan people has ensured the growth of the

*matatu* industry from 17 600 taxis in 1990, to around 40 000 minibus taxis by 2003. The *matatu* industry is now responsible for 80 percent of the public transport in Kenya (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4; Wikipedia, 2011). Similar to the situation in South Africa, according to the Global Forum on Competition (2009: 4), rapid growth, combined with the lapse in regulatory standards in Kenya has:

... Been accompanied by increasing road traffic accidents which are caused by among other factors, reckless driving, unroadworthy vehicles, poor road conditions ... poor driving skills and poor working conditions.

The above situation can be attributed to a lack of harmony in policy direction owing to a number of ineffective and uncoordinated transport institutions. Faced with regular road accidents and the contravention of traffic laws, the Kenyan government came up with measures in 2002-3, much like the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme that took place in South Africa (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4). The new reforms implemented in Kenya aimed to achieve the following (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4) :

- the installation of speed regulators and seats belt as a requirement to improve road safety of all public service vehicles;
- the employment of drivers and conductors on a permanent basis;
- the regular inspection of motor vehicles for tests and certification; and
- the issuing of badges and uniforms to PSV drivers and conductors.

However, not all of the above aims were achieved (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4; Wikipedia, 2011) because of a number of reasons, including:

- a lack of proper enforcement by traffic police;
- the high expenses of instituting the safety measures; and
- a reduction of income for the operators owing to the fact that the seating capacity of the vehicles was reduced from 18 to 14 passengers.

While not all of the intended aims were achieved, there have been notable improvements, for instance, the restoration of order in the industry and the reduction of the number of road accidents (Global Forum on Competition, 2009: 4). While Kenya's *matatu* industry shares some similarities with the South African minibus taxi



industry, there are also some notable differences – for example the existence of an association for drivers and conductors in Kenya. In terms of the minibus taxi industry in various countries, South Africa, Kenya and Ghana are prominent African examples. Of the three, South Africa and Kenya are the most similar to one another.

The case of the Ghanaian '*trotros*' provides us with a more complex picture than the situation in South Africa and Kenya with regard to the minibus taxi. The *trotros* of Ghana represent a range of vehicle types that have commonality only in their function and mode of operation (Fouracre, Kwakye, Okyere, & Silcock, 1994: 45). *Trotros* is an umbrella term for anything from a minibus to saloon cars that are owned by the private sector (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 45). Unlike in South Africa, in Ghana the *trotros* sector's ownership is divided into three categories: the owner-driver, entrepreneurs who hire out *trotros* to drivers and entrepreneurs who employ drivers (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 51). The second category of entrepreneurs who hire out *trotros* to drivers is absent in both South Africa and Kenya. Furthermore, the last category is a company called 'King of Kings' (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 51). This means that their drivers are employees of a company, as opposed to individual owners (as is the case in South Africa). The majority of urban *trotros* are operated on fixed routes controlled by transport unions and cooperatives that regulate access to routes and terminals (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 51). While unions and cooperatives have control over routes and terminals, market entry controls are non-existent (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 45, 51).

The unions are divided between those of the drivers and owners. However, some of the unions are more powerful than other unions. As Fouracre *et al.*, (1994: 45-46) observes:

Some of the unions have derived their power through the patronage of earlier [g]overnments which encouraged their organization and development. Their power is exerted through control of the terminal from which services are operated. Without access to a terminal, independent operators have limited opportunities to generate custom. Through their control of the terminals (which are referred to as lorry parks), the unions have effective quantity control of the public transport sector and hence control of service quality. For the most part service to the user is poor.

However, what is not clear is which of the unions have links with the Ghanaian Government– those unions organising the drivers or those organising the owners? Furthermore, it would be interesting to understand the issues that the unions take on and even more interesting – the unions representing employed drivers. What is clear however is that it seems as though the unions that operate in Ghana, particularly those representing the interests of owner-drivers are similar to the taxi associations in South Africa and Kenya.

The following are the four major unions representing both drivers and owners in Ghana: the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU), the Ghana Co-operative Transport Association (GCTA), the Progressive Transport Owners' Association (PROTOA) and the Ghana National Transport Owners' Association (GNTOA) (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 52-52). Both the Kenyan and the Ghanaian cases seem to indicate that the South African minibus taxi industry, at least on operational level (that is in securing routes, taxi ranks and the labour process), has a lot in common with similar industries in certain parts of Africa. However, organisationally, there exist some noteworthy differences. These differences exist largely because, unlike their Kenyan and Ghanaian counterparts, South African taxi drivers are yet to be organised nationally into one umbrella body. The historical context of each of these countries can be used to account for the vast differences that exist with regard to the minibus taxi industry, particularly around the issues of regulation and control by both local and national governments.

As pointed out above, *matatus* in Kenya were historically allowed to operate without obtaining Public Service Vehicle licenses. In Ghana, though legislated, no bus route licensing system is operational (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 52). Legislated under the *Omnibus Service Decree of 1972*, the legislation provides for the establishment of the Omnibus Licensing Authority, which has the power to allocate routes, parking places and fares to be paid by passengers (Fouracre *et al.*, 1994: 52). As outlined above, the regulation and management of parking spaces and routes controls have been left in the hands of powerful unions, which is similar to the case in South Africa where such issues are left to taxi associations. The South African case is discussed in-depth in the next section.

### 3.3. Historical Background of the South African Minibus Taxi Industry

The South African minibus taxi industry is one of the industries that is believed to be one hundred percent black-owned. This industry was established by black South Africans (although white ownership was speculated, it could not be established) and it tends to cater (though not exclusively) to black South African communities (Khosa, 1991: 233; Mahlangu, 2002: 1; McCaul, 1990: 24). Broadly speaking, a taxi can be defined as a car and a driver that that one pays to be transported somewhere. In Kenya, the term '*matatus*' is used to describe minibus taxis and in Ghana the term '*trotros*' is used even though the taxis may include sedans. In South Africa, the term 'taxi' would typically refer to a 'minibus', which is a self-explanatory term referring to a smaller bus that carries passengers for a determined fee.

South Africans would call what is referred to as a 'cab' in the US, a 'meter-taxi' these are usually sedans fitted with a device that determines the fee according to the distance and time travelled on order. In the South African context, minibuses are used as taxis because they play a similar role to cabs in other countries – that is, they ferry passengers from point A to point B.

The following parties are major stakeholders in the minibus taxi industry in South Africa:

- fleet owners: usually own more than one taxi and as a result, they hire drivers to drive their fleet;
- owner-driver: usually own one taxi and drive it themselves;
- drivers: usually sell their labour power to a fleet owner; and
- taxi associations: represent the interests of the owners.

The minibus taxi industry has been in existence from as far back as the 1930s during which time the minibus taxis were allowed to carry no more than four passengers. Furthermore, minibus taxis were used mostly for short distances in and around townships while long distances were available on a hire-only basis (Barosky, 1990 as cited in Mahlangu, 2002: 2; Fourie, 2003: 32).

Given the political history of this country, the fact that the minibus taxi industry was exclusively in the hands of black South Africans was not well received by the

apartheid regime. Mahlangu (2002: 2) states that the industry had gone through turbulent times due to different and stringent measures resulting from numerous recommendations by different commissions established by the Department of Transport (DoT) that sought to impede the industry's growth. One writer who successfully manages to capture the history of the minibus taxi industry and government interventions in the industry at different phases is Noleen McCaul (1990). McCaul brilliantly captures the history of the minibus taxi industry from 1930 to 1989 (McCaul, 1990: 35-57). According to McCaul (1990: 36):

There was no control over the conveyance of passengers or goods by road before 1930, since there was almost no road transportation to speak of ... [as such there was] little competition between road and rail.

As a reaction to the emergence of road transportation, a number of commissions and Acts were instituted to look into the possibilities of regulation of transportation. Acts such as the *Motor Carrier Transport Act of 1930* came into being particularly as a reaction to the growth of the motor industry, which resulted in competition for passengers with rail transport (South African Rail or SAR) (Khosa, 1991: 234; McCaul, 1990: 36-7). Accordingly, the Act prohibited all transportation of goods and persons by road for a fare unless authorisation was obtained from the National Transport Commission (NTC) and the Local Road Transportation Boards (LRTBs), both of which were tasked with the responsibility of issuing motor carrier certificates (McCaul, 1990: 37). After numerous amendments to the *Motor Carrier Transport Act of 1930*, the Van Breda Commission of 1977 came into being, culminating in the *Transportation Act of 1978* (McCaul, 1990: 37-8). However, the 1978 Act had a huge loophole – it failed to define the concept of a taxi. The definition contained in the Act was that of a bus, defined as:

... [A] motor vehicle designed or adapted for the conveyance of more than nine persons (including the driver) and motor cars as authorized to convey up to nine persons (including the driver) (McCaul, 1990: 38).

As a result of the above-mentioned loophole, taxis operated legally as eight passenger vehicles and avoided the stringent measures imposed on buses. This situation exposed bus companies to stiff competition. Even worse, the advent of kombis meant that buses needed to be heavily subsidised by the state to stay afloat

in the industry (McCaul, 1990: 41). In 1981, a commission of inquiry, chaired by Dr Peter Welgemoed, was tasked with looking into bus passenger transportation in South Africa (McCaul, 1990: 41). The Commission's report, published in 1983, came up with the following proposals (McCaul, 1990: 41):

- The bus industry should be protected against kombi-taxis.
- Buses should be given preferential treatment.
- Buses should be classified as a strategic industry.
- The government should stimulate and expand the bus industry.
- All vehicles carrying five or more passengers should be treated as buses.

Reacting to the changes in policy from the Welgemoed Commission, taxis reduced their capacity to four (McCaul, 1990: 41). The Commission's attitude and intention towards the minibus taxi industry are revealed in a section called "problems in connection with taxis" (McCaul, 1990: 42).

The Apartheid Government's desire to protect both state and para-statal companies, such as Putco and the South African Railways (SAR), acted as impetus to the introduction and the implementation of such stringent measures introduced by the Department of Transport (Mahlangu, 2002: 2; McCaul, 1990: 35). Khosa (1991: 310-11) refers to this period as the repression era. According to Croucamp (2002: 63), legislation was designed in such a way to act as a barrier for minibus taxis to penetrate the transport economy. Furthermore, Croucamp (2002: 63) posits that the Bantustan Government also had economic interest in bus companies that did not belong to the SAR and consequently the then Bantustan Governments acted to the detriment of the minibus taxi industry.

Given the government's attitude towards the industry, the industry struggled to gain recognition as a form of public transport. The period 1977 to 1987 was characterised by the industry's fight for survival (Fourie, 2003: 32). McCaul (1990: 35) states that:

As far back as the late 1920s, government policy on passenger transport has manifested as one of its central concerns the regulation of competition between different transport modes and carving up the passenger market in a particular way between the bus companies (private and state owned), the state owned railways, and black taxis. It has been only from about 1986/87

that state policy has not been largely to the detriment of the black taxi industry... [T]he taxi industry had, until then, always been burdened with legislation and administrative practices that restricted entry...

Indeed, the findings of the *National Transport Policy Study* (NTPS) investigation signalled the beginning of a major shift in the South African transport policy since 1930 (McCaul, 1990: 47). Among many of its ground-breaking recommendation, the NTPS recommended that (McCaul, 1990: 47):

- 16 seater minibus taxis be allowed to operate as taxis; and
- applicants for permits should no longer be required to prove the need for their service.

This investigation was followed by the *Competition Board Report*, which was in favour of a total deregulation of the minibus taxi industry (McCaul, 1990: 40). The principal argument contained in the *Competition Board Report* was that the entry restrictions imposed by the 1977 Act on taxis were problematic in that they were highly restrictive and counterproductive to the government's objective of promoting private initiative, competition and deregulation (McCaul, 1990: 50). The recommendations of both the NTPS and the *Competition Board Report* culminated in the *White Paper on National Transport Policy*, published in January 1987 (McCaul, 1990: 51). The *White Paper on National Transport Policy* rejected some of the recommendations of the NTPS, but it also accepted the deregulation proposal from the Competition Board Report (McCaul, 1990: 51). However, the Southern Africa Black Taxi Association (SABTA) did not welcome these proposed changes. Subsequently, in August 1987, SABTA (McCaul, 1990: 54-5) proposed the following:

- The permit system should remain in place during the transition period.
- No new applications for permits should be accepted during the transition period.
- All those applying for permits should be members of national associations recognised by the DoT.
- Pirate taxis should be legalised.
- White capitalists should be prevented from obtaining permits and providing taxi services to black residential areas.

- Taxi associations should receive government and private sector funds for affirmative action programmes.
- Stricter law enforcement should be implemented to deal with non-permit holders.

Following numerous deliberations with the then-government, it was agreed in 1989 that the government would commence a process of implementing a controlled deregulation programme to be phased in over three years (McCaul, 1990: 55-6). This was, however, a calculated decision intended to: (a) legalise the existing pirate operators and (b) give local authorities total control over the minibus taxi industry in their respective municipalities (Fourie, 2003: 32; Khosa, 1991: 248; McCaul, 1990: 57). This move saw between 12 000 to 15 000 new minibus taxis entering the transport economy and consequently this led to the phenomenal growth of the minibus taxi industry (Fourie, 2003: 32; McCaul, 1990: 57). The growth was encouraged by the fact that the government allowed market forces to determine entry into the minibus market and the granting of permits to new entrants (Fourie, 2003: 35).

It is these events of the 1980s that have seen the minibus taxi industry grow at a great speed, even to the extent that minibus taxis have become a popular mode of transport among black South Africans and have overtaken both buses and trains as a mode of transport. These changes can also be attributed to societal changes taking place elsewhere. Firstly, the need for greater flexibility from the labour market resulted in mining contracts becoming less and less rigid (Croucamp, 2002: 62). The above-mentioned developments in the labour market resulted in a (Croucamp, 2002: 62):

More frequent migration between rural areas and the urban labour market [which] required a more flexible and regular transport system; but at this time, neither state-subsidized transport system nor the existing private transport could provide for the newly conceived needs that these dramatic changes to the political economy of South Africa brought about.

Secondly, the changing socio-political environment forced the Apartheid Government to legalise and formally recognise minibus taxis as a form of public transport in South Africa (McCaul, 1990: 35). Additionally, a combination of rigidity, unreliability,



unavailability and infrequent trips motivated the popularity of minibus taxis to the detriment of conventional transit modes of public transport (Barrett, 2003: 6; Lomme, 2011: 7; Walters, 2010; Zimmerman, 1988: 87). The flexibility of the minibus taxi service and the fact that minibuses were available well into the night augmented the minibus taxi industry's market share (Croucamp, 2002: 62; Jugerson, 1998 cited in Majeke, 2003: 26; Lomme, 2011: 5, 7; Zimmerman, 1988: 89).

Influenced by the broader social conditions (refer to Chapter 2), the minibus taxi industry emerged from and as a response to the dismal failure by conventional transit modes to cater for South Africa's transport needs. Here, the minibus taxi industry had carved out a 'niche' market that influenced how the industry was organised and consequently it also influenced the everyday labour process (refer to Chapter 2).

Unfortunately, the deregulation of the minibus taxi industry resulted in taxi violence. Deregulation of the industry has seen large volumes of minibuses entering the industry and consequently overcrowding of spaces has arisen (such as the overcrowding of taxi ranks and routes) which has resulted in taxi violence. The violence has been exacerbated by diminishing profit margins linked to overtraded routes (McCaul, 1990: 87).

### **3.3.1. Taxi Wars**

There seems to be an agreement in the literature that conflict usually stems from overtraded routes that the different taxi associations ply (see Dugard, 2001: 3-4; Fourie, 2003: 35; Khosa, 1991: 239; Mahlangu, 2002: 25; Majeke, 2003: 18). However, it is important to note that the conflict is not only limited to feuds between different taxi associations. As Khosa (1991: 239) observes, conflict can erupt between pirates, (that is those operating illegally without authorisation or permits) and legal operators. Conflict can even occur among operators within the same taxi association (Khosa, 1991: 239). The desire to monopolise routes and taxi ranks is usually the chief reason for taxi violence (Khosa, 1991: 239). This reason for violence is attested to by the then-president of SABTA in 1987, Mr Ngcoya. Reacting to the government's decision to deregulate the minibus taxi industry, Mr Ngcoya



argued that: "... [W]e cannot allow the ranks to be flooded with people overnight; there would be chaos" (McCaul, 1990: 55).

The intense competition and resulting violence within the minibus taxi industry could be attributed to the fact that this industry is a self-sustaining industry; this means that, unlike other forms of subsidised transport, the minibus taxi industry is wholly dependent on its income from commuters. Taxi ranks play a pivotal role in this industry simply because they are places where taxis can collect passengers. The need to monopolise routes has been the chief reason for the emergence of the largely owner-oriented local associations. Some of the earliest associations to emerge are associations such as SABTA, with 400 local taxi association affiliates and the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (SALDTA), with 68 affiliates, as well as many other associations (Barrett, 2003: 33; McCaul, 1990: viii). Unlike the subsidised sector (busses and trains), taxi ranks are crucial to business in the minibus taxi industry because they are centralised commuter points and are consequently a point of contention (Fourie, 2003: 40; Mahlangu, 2002: 78-84).

Nevertheless, in spite of the deregulation of the industry, which explains much of the more recent violence, conflict is not something new. To be sure, the South African minibus taxi industry is notorious for its long history of violence and conflict (Barrett, 2003: ix; Dugard, 2001:12; Khosa, 1991: 3; McCaul, 1990: 85). Khosa (1991: 249) writes that taxi feuds between registered taxi owners and pirates date as far back as the 1960s. These wars were sparked by the view held by the pirate operators that registered operators were actually a barrier between the illegal operators and legal recognition. Consequently, pirate operators vowed to wipe registered owners off the streets (Khosa, 1991: 241). The feud between these two parties led to what became known as 'death from the back seat' (Khosa, 1991: 241). As Khosa explains, pirate taxi gangsters pretended to be passengers, boarded taxis of legal operators, sat in the back seat and shot the drivers from there (Khosa, 1991: 241).

While taxi wars are chiefly a consequence of conflict over routes and taxi ranks, Barrett (2003: 7-8) adds that policy confusion on the part of the government has been a contributory factor. Furthermore, this confusion has led to corruption (Barrett, 2003: 8):

Given the limited number of permits and difficulties in obtaining them, bribery and corruption became increasingly common between taxi owners and law enforcement officers. The worst offenders were ... traffic officers and other traffic department. Prosecutors and other court officials have also been involved ... associations emerged to represent the interests of owners, creating a powerful cocktail of conflict between taxi owners and various tiers of government and law agencies. 'Taxi wars' in various parts of the country have over the years resulted in the deaths of hundreds of owners, drivers and commuters.

There seems to be little consensus regarding the number of deaths and the extent of the violence in different provinces (see for example Barrett, 2003; Dugard, 2001; Khosa, 1991; McCaul, 1990). The exact number of deaths and the location of the violence are beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, taxi wars occur over not only profit and routes, but they also relate to issues of recognition, control and legitimacy. These factors are pertinent to the minibus taxi industry for a number of reasons. Firstly, the need for recognition and control is linked to issues of access to facilities, such as access to the taxi ranks. Secondly, these factors are tied to issues of routes and in some cases, the exclusive use of routes in particular places.

The picture of the industry so far has been an industry that is largely self-regulated, due to lack of labour law enforcement. This broader lack of state regulation of the actual business practices within the industry also impacts on labour markets. As with every other business, profit is important because it is linked directly to wages. The profit-wage link actually encourages exploitative labour practices, especially where regulation is not stringently applied. It is precisely because of this reason that government intervention, through labour legislation, becomes imperative, largely because employees are relatively powerless in relation to their employers. The realisation of such power imbalances in the work situation has resulted in post-apartheid South Africa having seen the emergence of the improved and more inclusive *Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995* (LRA) (South Africa, 1995) and the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75 of 1997* (BCEA) (South Africa, 1997).

Both acts are designed to regulate employer-employee relationships within the workplace in South Africa. It is important to note that these amended versions of the acts cover economic sectors that were previously not covered – for instance,

domestic workers, taxi drivers and farm workers. The stated purpose of the amended legislation is to achieve and advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace (Mahlangu, 2002: 6). Furthermore, both the *Labour Relations Act of 1995* and *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* seek to bring about fairness between the two parties (employer and employee). However, it seems that the labour legislation has not yet filtered into the minibus taxi industry (Mahlangu, 2002: 6; Majeke, 2003: 26).

### **3.4. Regulation of the Minibus Taxi Industry in South Africa**

The nature of work in the minibus taxi industry is such that drivers (though this does not include all drivers) are paid either according to a set quota or according to a percentage of the takings and the taxi owners (employers) do not pay hourly or daily wages. The quota system entails that the fleet owner requires a certain amount of money daily (for instance R500.00) and the driver is then entitled to keep the rest of the money made after meeting the daily quota. The percentage system means drivers are paid a certain percentage of weekly or monthly collections and owners do not pay standard wages (Mahlangu, 2002: 32; McCaul, 1990: 89).

It is precisely because of the above-mentioned reasons that the regulation of the employer-employee relationship becomes critical. This regulation becomes particularly critical in the minibus taxi industry where the flexible wage structure contributes to the power differential between taxi owners and drivers. This point is clearly illustrated by McCaul's findings (1990: 89) in KwaZulu-Natal, where wages varied from R80.00 to R300.00 a week for drivers, provided by a range of different owners or employers. Mahlangu (2002: 88) and Majeke (2003: 26) also found this payment structure to be the case in both the Western Cape and Gauteng respectively. Based on these facts, it can be argued that the minibus taxi industry does not have a regulatory wage structure in place, but that such issues are left to be decided upon by the taxi owners and their drivers ("consent over the rules of the game") (Burawoy, 1979: 93). The above speaks to Rainnie *et al.*, (2010: 303) and Herod *et al.*, (2007: 248) argument about situating traditions of work and labour control regimes (refer to Chapter 2).

The *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* determines that every employee in South Africa (except those classified under sectoral determination) may only work for a maximum of 45 hours per week. Despite this requirement of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* taxi drivers were found to be working 15 to 16 hours per day (Forrest, 1997: 24; SAPA, 1997: 12 cited in Mahlangu, 2002: 34). These excessive hours are worked despite the fact that taxi drivers are not paid for overtime work (Mahlangu, 2002: 35). To demonstrate the abnormal hours worked by taxi drivers, Jugerson (1998 cited in Majeke, 2003: 26) states that to avoid inconvenience (such as oversleep and other unforeseen circumstances) some of the drivers actually prefer to sleep in their minibuses at the taxi rank. According to Jugerson (1998 cited in Majeke, 2003: 26), it is common practice for taxi drivers to wake up at 03:30 every morning to go to work and to only return after 21:00. This is a clear example of why the labour process should be understood as a combination of “force and consent” that shape work organisation (Burawoy, 1979: 30).

These factors indicate that adherence to labour legislation (particularly adherence to the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997)) in the minibus taxi industry is near non-existent. A number of factors contribute to the current unhealthy state of the minibus taxi industry. For example, Mahlangu (2002: 65, 26, 78-80) and Majeke (2003: 26) show that drivers are often unaware that they are entitled to certain key rights as employees, that this unawareness is, due to the fact that the majority of drivers have very limited or no knowledge of labour legislation and that these drivers lack:

- union representation, which in turn makes drivers voiceless; and
- employment contracts between themselves and their employers, which results in drivers being at the mercy of their employers. This also results in employees being dismissed when they are ill or when they are involved in accidents.

This, however, does not suggest that capital possess untrammelled powers over terms and conditions work (Burawoy, 1979: 30). One could raise the question of why taxi drivers do not seem to challenge the situation collectively. The study returns to this theme in the conclusion.

While the above-cited literature raises important issues regarding working conditions of taxi drivers, it however fails to account for why current labour legislation cannot be effectively applied in the minibus taxi industry. The literature reviewed tends to fall into the trap of assuming that the existence of labour legislation denotes an automatic and seamless application. Looking at the working conditions of taxi drivers in Pretoria, Mahlangu (2002: 111) concludes that:

Conditions of employment of Erasmus-Akasia Taxi Association (EATA) taxi drivers confirmed those outlined by the reviewed literature ... They are far short of what they are supposed to be according to the BCEA no. 75 of 1997.

The problem with Mahlangu's study (2002) is that it fails to account for the mismatch between the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997) and the nature of work that is characteristic of the minibus taxi industry. Furthermore, (Mahlangu, 2002:111) argues that "... Taxi drivers' working hours are not in line with the provisions of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act". This is an established fact; however, one should critically assess the compatibility between the nature of work in the minibus taxi industry and the stipulations of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997).

Wardell (1999: 9), in his critique of Braverman, points to the fact that "work settings" are important determinates of issues of regulation. This is motivated by the manner in which the labour process is structured, which can be directly linked to how workers are regulated and the resulting resistance against such regulations (Rainnie, *et al.*, 2010: 304). Thus, it is important to take into account the fact that the labour process is not only organised in such a way as to benefit capital, rather it is also organised to meet the interests of both workers and capital (Burawoy, 1979: 85).

Broadly speaking, as far as employment conditions are concerned, the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997: 8,9,12,16-8) covers (but is not limited) to the following: working hours, work days, leave, overtime and remuneration. According to Mahlangu (2002: 111-112) "... working hours [and] overtime seems to be very difficult to define in the minibus taxi industry because it is a need-driven industry".

The dissection of the above quotation further highlights the fact that the broader spatial positioning (both economic and geographic) of the minibus taxi industry is central to understanding the nature of work in the minibus taxi industry. This spatially informed approach is critical to understand the nature of work and the successful implementation of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, which is something that Mahlangu (2002: 111-112) fails to interrogate. The importance of space is highlighted by Barrett (2003: 4) in the comparison of the minibus taxi industry in Pretoria and Johannesburg:

Both cities are located in the province of Gauteng, the most populous and industrialized province of South Africa. While the distance between these two locations is relatively small (80 km), the ownership and organizational dynamics of the [minibus taxi] industry in the two cities are distinct.

Despite indications that the minibus taxi industry is unregulated, there seems to be a contradiction in the existing literature regarding the status of the minibus taxi industry. The industry could be seen as regulated and a part of the formal sector due to the fact that the government has given it the formal recognition that the industry is part of the public transport system. However, one could also argue that it is unregulated and a part of the informal sector because a lack of legislative application exists, as in the case of the application of *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997). For instance, contrary to popular opinion, Mahlangu (2002: 88), in his study in Pretoria found that not all taxi drivers have targets to meet and that not all drivers are paid according to the quota system. McCaul (1990: 89) has also found that some taxi owners actually do pay standard wages to their drivers. These variations could relate to the history and micro-dynamics of individual employer-employee relationships, rather than compliance with labour law.

While the industry remains largely informal, there is a need to acknowledge that there have been attempts historically to regulate and institutionalise the employer-employee relationship in the minibus taxi industry. Contrary to what some authors claim (see for example Mahlangu, 2002; & Majeke, 2003), McCaul (1990: 91) indicates that taxi drivers have long been protected, at least in theory, by the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1983* and recently the *Basic Condition of*

*Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector. In terms of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1983*, those drivers who worked for owners with 11 minibuses or more and those drivers who carried more than seven passengers were protected under the Wage Determination 452, which stipulated that they had to be paid R140.00 per week, similar to the wage paid to bus drivers (McCaul, 1990: 91). In line with the requirements of *The White Paper on National Policy of 1987*, it could be argued that the minibus taxi industry was regulated (McCaul, 1990: 51).

What the above demonstrates is the fact that taxi drivers were covered by labour law and as such could approach the then Conciliation Board and/or the Industrial Court for unjust dismissal and issues around wages and working hours (McCaul, 1990: 91). This is a clear example that the minibus taxi industry has been covered by legislation in the past. However, there seems to be difficulty with regard to the implementation of this legislation which may be because of the ignorance of the nature of work in the industry itself.

The arguments put forward by McCaul (1990) seem to suggest that the minibus taxi industry has long been regulated, but only to a certain degree. However, the reality is different to what the laws require. This point to the fact that authors who write in the post-apartheid era often fail to account for the fact that, in spite of labour regulation, poor working conditions of taxi drivers could be attributed to a lack of the effective implementation of labour legislation. Indeed, this study aims to highlight that the non-implementation of legislation in the minibus taxi industry is directly linked to the incompatibility between the nature of work in the minibus taxi industry and the requirements of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997). This was the case under apartheid rule and still remains the case at present. The change of policy without the change of policy assumptions does little to effect change.

In summarising her findings on labour relations in the minibus taxi industry, McCaul (1990: 94) argues that "... labour relations strategies need to be particularly creative and need to take into account ... the uniqueness of the ... [nature of work in the minibus taxi industry]". This quotation expresses ideas similar to the arguments of



Rainnie *et al.*, (2010: 303) and Wardell (1999: 91) that centre on the varying nature of labour processes (refer to Chapter 2). The point about the nature of the industry and labour regulation in the industry also applies to attempts to regulate other aspects of the industry. It is to this, and more recent attempts at regulation, that attention is now turned.

### **3.5. Government Initiatives and Public Transport in South Africa**

When one looks at how government policy approaches the regulation of the minibus taxi industry, the language of economic growth and development is used. The importance of a good and efficient public transport system lies in the fact that public transport is an ‘enabler’ industry. The public transport industry exists to meet goals inherent to transport and wider objectives of socioeconomic development (Fourie, 2003: 5). Accordingly, public transport should be well looked after because of the critical role it plays with regard to social mobility, economy and growth. The *Moving South Africa Strategy* (Department of Transport, 1998) aims to improve the transport system in South Africa. This document comes after the realisation of the importance of transport in the achievement of the following (Department of Transport, 1998):

- accelerated economic growth;
- increased trade;
- improved access to employment opportunities; and
- increased social integration.

The *Moving South Africa Strategy* is in line with the objectives of the *White Paper on Public Transport* (Department of Transport, 1998: 18). As South Africa is a developing country, efficient public transport is indispensable. The main aim of the *Moving South Africa Strategy* (Department of Transport, 1998: 24) is to have:

... [B]y 2020, urban customers [being] able to participate fully in the various activities of city life by using a public transport network that provides as much city-wide coverage as possible and which is affordable, safe, fast and frequent.

It is on the basis of this long-term vision and plan that other public transport improvement initiatives, such as the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the Rural Transport Strategy of South Africa, came in to being. The realisation that South Africa could be facing severe road congestion by



the year 2020 requires these improvements and more investments in our existing transport infrastructure.

The Department of Transport's *Public Transport Action Plan* (Department of Transport, 2007: 5) states that the service currently offered for land-based long distance public transport is of poor quality, informal and expensive. According to the *Public Transport Strategy* (Department of Transport, 2007: 4), on the plans for the metropolitan and urban areas, South Africa will have, by 2014, Integrated Rapid Public Transport Service Networks operational in twelve cities and at least six rural districts. A long-term vision is to have 85 percent of the metropolitan city's population within a kilometre radius of an Integrated Rapid Public Transport Network (Department of Transport, 2007: 4). According to the 2003 *National Household Travel Survey* (Department of Transport, 2003: 112):

For RSA as a whole, the mode of which carries the largest share of commuters is the motor car which accounts for roughly one-third of all commuters (32%). Minibus taxis account for a quarter of all trips to work (25%).

As one of its main objectives, the *Public Transport Strategy* is to achieve a shift of 20 percent in travel modes, from private cars to public transport networks by 2020 (Department of Transport, 2007: 4). By radically transforming public transport from the current operator-orientated, low-quality system to a more high-quality and user-friendly system for captive users, it is hoped that private car users will be encouraged to use public transport (Department of Transport, 2007: 5). Reduced travel time will be achieved through the development of dedicated bus-ways and stations with pre-board fare payment systems for road-trunk corridors. This, according to the policy, will enable a door-to-door travel time of just less than 60 minutes (Department of Transport, 2007: 6).

Significantly, integration will be achieved through a multi-modal integration consisting of rail-trunk corridors and roads supplemented with feeder systems (Department of Transport, 2007: 7). Multi-modal integration, according to the policy, also relates to an integrated fare structure that will aid free transfer within the network (Department of Transport, 2007: 7). The taxi industry is mentioned as a part of this network. The

following points are the major focus of the Department of Transport (2007: 11) in relation to passenger transport in South Africa:

- the fast-track of taxi recapitalisation and facilitation of taxi industry participation in the current subsidised bus contract system;
- the conversion of interim bus contracts to tender contracts;
- the management of car use in the metropolitan areas;
- the consolidation of passenger entities; and
- the implementation of priority infrastructure (for example dedicated lanes) for public transport.

The intention is that the above vision will be transformed into an action plan, which will entail three phases (Department of Transport, 2007: 18):

- Accelerated recovery and catalytic projects (2007-2010);
- Promote and deliver basic networks (2010-2014); and
- Advance and sustain accessible network (2014-2020).

Since this study focuses on minibus taxis industry operating in an urban and rural area, it is important to consider policy intentions in these less developed areas of South Africa. While the *Public Transport Strategy* includes plans for the rural areas of South Africa, the *Rural Transport Strategy* (Department of Transport, 2007) for South Africa provides in-depth and context-specific planning for different regions. The *Rural Transport Strategy* (Department of Transport, 2007: 7) opens by acknowledging the plight of those living in rural areas:

... Given this context, the delivery of rural transport infrastructure and service can be a significant catalyst for a sustainable economic development, improved social access and poverty alleviation in South Africa's rural areas.

The principal purpose of the *Rural Transport Strategy* (Department of Transport, 2007: 6) is to:

- promote coordinated rural nodal and linkage development; and
- develop demand-responsive, balanced and sustainable rural transport systems.

According to the *Rural Transport Strategy* (Department of Transport, 2007: 77), the Department of Transport had already piloted the *Rural Transport Strategy* under the banner of Integrated Rural Mobility and Access (IRMS) in three districts, namely: the Sekhukhune District Municipality in the Limpopo Province (which is where one of the case studies is located), the Umkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal and the O.R. Tambo District Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province. Furthermore, the following six rural districts have been included in the *Public Transport Action Plan Phase 1: 2007-2010* (Department of Transport, 2007: 77):

- the Sekhukhune District Municipality in Limpopo;
- the Umkhanyakude District Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal;
- the O.R. Tambo District Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province;
- the Ehlanzeni District Municipality in Mpumalanga;
- the Thabo Mofutsanyane District in the Free State Province; and
- the Kgaladi District Municipality in the Northern Cape Province.

As can be seen from the discussion of these nationwide plans that aim to improve passenger transport in South Africa, an even greater emphasis has been placed on the formalisation of the minibus taxi industry.

### **3.6. Regulating the Minibus Taxi Industry**

The difficulty experienced in trying to regulate the industry has, to some degree, ensured that the industry operates in what some would describe as a 'mafia-style' operation. Acting as impetus to such behaviour is largely the need to monopolise routes. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the state of the industry has been found to be the chief factor in encouraging taxi feuds and exploitative labour practices (Khosa, 1991: 233). In November 1994, the then Minister of Transport established a National Taxi Task Team (NTTT) with the chief mandate to investigate all problems and issues in the minibus taxi industry and to come up with solutions that would ensure that the industry remained sustainable and competitive (Barrett, 2003: 14; Dugard, 2001: 20). The NTTT was inclusive of all major stakeholders, namely: nine provincial owners' representatives, nine government representatives, nine specialist representatives and representatives from organised labour from the three major trade union federations (Barrett, 2003: 14; Dugard, 2001: 20). The NTTT followed a

rigorous investigation programme from August 1995 to January 1996 and conducted 36 public hearings throughout the country, including two national plenary meetings (Barrett, 2003: 14; Dugard, 2001: 20). The NTTT was established during a very volatile phase in the minibus taxi industry. The following are among many of the concerns raised (Barrett, 2003: 14) by both stakeholders and the public in relation to the minibus taxi industry:

- on-going violence and conflict;
- the fragmentation of owners' associations;
- safety;
- problems with transport infrastructure (such as the roads and taxi ranks);
- subsidies for public transport, with the minibus taxi industry complaining about the levels of subsidy allocated to trains and buses; and most importantly
- poor employment conditions.

According to Dugard (2001: 20), the most significant recommendation to come out of the NTTT was the need for the minibus taxi industry to be re-regulated. The need for re-regulation was motivated by the fact that self-regulation had been a dismal failure and had resulted in an over-saturation of the market. This over-saturation came as a result of permit availability, many of which were false and or duplicated permits (Barrett, 2003: 14). The fragmented nature of the industry and the absence of a single national association to represent the needs of the industry were also highlighted as contributory factors to the state of the industry (Barrett, 2003: 14). Furthermore, according to Barrett (2003: 15):

The NTTT pronounced labour practice in the [minibus taxi] industry unconstitutional, given that the national constitution spells out the right of workers to fair labour practices as well as rights to organize and bargain collectively.

In the main, the NTTT recommendations focused on three key aspects (Barrett, 2003: 15):

- regulation and control: these included, inter alia, labour standards, regulation of access through permits and safety;
- the establishment of a nationally-recognised structure representing owners or employers; and
- economic assistance directed at the minibus taxi industry.

Accordingly, the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme aims to formalise the minibus taxi industry to make the industry more sustainable and profitable.

The recapitalisation programme aims to achieve the following (Barrett, 2003: 15-6; Walters, 2010):

- to replace the existing 16 seater vehicles with 18 seater and 19 to 35 seater vehicles;
- to improve the safety and reliability record of the industry through the replacement of old vehicles with new higher quality and safer vehicles, such vehicles must comply with the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) safety requirements;
- to reduce the number of vehicles operating in the industry from 120 000 to 85 000;
- to address the economic sustainability of the industry, to formalise it, as well as to regulate the industry; and
- to allow the transport authority to take control of routes and ranks that are currently owned by operating associations.

A scrapping allowance of R50 000.00 is offered to taxi owners. The intended purpose of the scrapping allowance is twofold: on the one hand, taxi owners are being offered an exit package for those wishing to exit the industry (this is in line with the government's intention to reduce the number of vehicles) and on the other hand, the scrapping allowance is also an incentive to purchase new vehicles. However, taxi owners have to be in possession of a legal operating permit in order to be eligible for the scrapping allowance (Barrett, 2003: 15; Walters, 2010). Furthermore, a taxi clearance certificate is required to ensure that owners pay their income taxes (Walters, 2010). Vehicles that are offered for scrapping are physically destroyed by means of mobile compacting machines to ensure they do not re-enter the industry (Walters, 2010).

Moreover, the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme aims to assist in the formalisation of the industry by encouraging the formation of larger business units that may be able

to participate in the public transport tendering process (Department of Transport, 2007: 31). In line with the *Public Transport Action Plan* (Department of Transport, 2007: 31), minibus taxi operators must become part of the regulated and subsidised integrated network. The inclusion of the taxi industry into the public transport system aims towards the realisation of:

Taxi operators form[ing] and become[ing] shareholders in operating companies which in turn provide network services to the transport authority in terms of a formal performance contract (Department of Transport, 2007: 36).

In an attempt to deal with what Khosa (1991: 233) describes as exploitative labour practices, the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme aims to:

- ensure that minimum wages are paid to all the employees employed in this sector. The wages are determined in the following manner: R1 740.53 monthly and R401.69 weekly for drivers; R1 740.53 for admin workers; R1 392.42 for rank marshals and R1 218.38 for other workers not specified elsewhere by the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector, part B (South Africa, 1997:3).
- regulate working hours – which have been determined to be no more than 48 hours a week. Employees are entitled to have at least 12 consecutive hours of daily rest between ending work and starting work the next day and 36 continuous hours of rest weekly according to the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector, part D (South Africa, 1997: 9).
- require all employers to grant their employees at least three weeks of annual leave with full pay according to the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector, part E (South Africa, 1997: 10).

Arguably, if one were to bring the minibus taxi industry into line with other public transport systems, it would go a long way in ensuring efficiency and sustainability. However, Fourie (2003: 29) is of the opinion that the formalisation of the taxi industry (which requires that taxi owners pay taxes) is not as challenging as the prospect of having to operate in line with the requirements of labour legislation stipulations and safety standards. This reluctance to formalise then leads to the question of to what

extent the minibus taxi industry would be receptive to new government-led initiatives to formalise employer-employee relations in the industry. Nevertheless, the successful regulation of the industry might bring about positive impacts on public transport in South Africa in general.

According to Fourie (2003: 101), regulation in the industry in other countries (such as Chile) has brought about quality and reliability of service, which has also resulted in good security and tariff transparency. If Fourie (2003) is correct, then though there are policies that are ‘tailor made’ for the minibus taxi industry, such as the Recapitalisation Programme, the labour market aspect of regulation remains a challenge. More precisely, the stipulations of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997) still do not seem to be implemented and this non-implementation is the chief reason why taxi drivers do not appear to be covered by legislation. This takes us back to a central point made in Chapter 2 – it is important to understand the nature of the work in the industry because the manner in which the everyday labour process is organised has an impact on legislative regulation.

Indeed, in the description of the working conditions of taxi drivers, Mahlangu (2002: 7) concludes that the industry has not yet felt the impact of the transformation brought about by the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997). In addition, the nature of such work exposes taxi drivers to safety risks emanating from taxi violence and hijacking. Such risks become even more likely when taxi drivers have to sleep at their place of work (in other words, the taxi rank) (Mahlangu, 2002: 34; Majeke, 2003: 26). This certainly raises important issues with regard to workplace safety. Laws that regulate matters of health and safety function with an assumptions of what would constitute a workplace. The definition of a workplace is not a straightforward matter in the case of the minibus taxi industry. Hence, it is important to look at what constitutes a workplace in the minibus taxi industry.

### **3.7. Notion of Workplace and Formal Protection within the Workplace**

To illustrate the point of how one defines a workplace, here is a popular dictionary description: a workplace can be “defined as the place such as, factory, office, firm or



a workshop where people are employed, or the work setting in general” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com>. Accessed 14/05/10). The definition of the workplace of the workers in the minibus taxi industry is difficult to identify, (this will be elaborated below). Interestingly enough, in the minibus taxi industry, the day-to-day duties are performed from mostly inside the vehicle and to some extent the taxi rank. However, according to the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector: part H (South Africa, 1997: 16): a “workplace means the employer’s premises and any other place where the employee works, such as a taxi rank”. This definition is rather insufficient and further illustrates the inadequacy of current legislation to deal with the minibus taxi industry, particularly pinpointing a workplace for employees in this industry. Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck (2005: 259) take it further by defining a workplace as:

Any place or places where the employees of an employer work. Any other operation that takes place at *any-place* [italics mine] constitutes the workplace for that operation.

The presence of either or both of the following characteristics constitutes a workplace (Van Jaarsveld & Van Eck, 2005: 259):

- A workplace may be any place where services are rendered in terms of a contract of employment.
- If any employer carries on two or more business operations, each place where the operations are conducted independently of the other by reason of its size, function or organisation, will be regarded as an independent workplace.

The definitions offered by both Van Jaarsveld and Van Eck (2005: 259) and the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997) seems broad enough to cover the taxi sector. However, on closer inspection these definitions are largely inadequate as taxi drivers are known to perform the greater part of their daily duties away from the employer’s premises. While the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector, part H (South Africa, 1997: 16) regards the employer’s premises as a workplace, it is a known fact that almost none of the daily labour activities within the industry are performed there. The question of to what extent is work carried out on



the road independent from the taxi rank arises. This question is informed by the fact that taxis usually (though not exclusively) collect passengers from the taxi rank and continue to render service to the commuters throughout the journey. The failure of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11: Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997) to recognise and explicitly identify the vehicle as a workplace in the minibus taxi industry also exposes the failure of the government to adequately deal with the minibus taxi industry. Given such situations, what then constitutes a place of work for taxi drivers? If the owner's premises and the taxi rank are the only places explicitly stated and regarded as workplaces, difficulty may arise when issues of protection and workplace safety (as stipulated by labour legislation) are examined.

The aims of both the *Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993* (South Africa, 1993) and the *Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act No. 130 of 1993* (South Africa, 1993) were put in place to maintain a healthy environment, ensure safety and the prevention of accidents at work. Further, the two Acts allow for compensation for employees who, as a result of their activities in the work situation are partially or totally disabled or may even contract occupational diseases (Ehlers, 2007: 37). Despite the intention of this piece of legislation, the labour activity characteristic of the taxi industry seems to negate the successful application of the aforementioned legislation in the minibus taxi industry.

As suggested above, the difficulty experienced in pinpointing a workplace in the industry might impede the successful application of the legislation. For example, should the employee be injured on the employer's premise and/or at the taxi rank or should injury take place on the road for the employee to receive compensation? This question arises out of the vagueness of the phrase 'in the work situation'. To what extent does 'in the work situation' extend beyond the parameters of the physically-defined workplace? To be sure, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993* (cited in Theron, Godfrey & Visser, 2011: 69) defines a workplace as "any premises or place where a person performs work in the course of his employment". The definition of the workplace in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993* (cited in Theron, Godfrey & Visser, 2011: 69) seems broad enough to encompass the conditions in the minibus taxi industry. However, the definition in the *Basic*

*Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 Sectoral Determination Taxi Sector* (South Africa, 1997) fails to address this aspect of the industry. The fact that there are taxi drivers who do not use taxi ranks and who also work away from the employer's premise requires the notion of the workplace to be rethought. The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1993 (cited in Theron, Godfrey & Visser, 2011: 69) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 Sectoral Determination<sup>11</sup>: Taxi Sector: part H (South Africa, 1997:16) make mention of 'any premises or place', arguably a vehicle cannot adequately be addressed by notions of premise and place. To the extent that the minibus taxi is a mobile entity requires that it be explicitly stated and defined as a workplace. This need to identify and recognise the minibus as a workplace is motivated by the fact that legislation, particularly sectoral determinations need to speak directly to particular industries.

It is evident that the nature of work in this industry makes taxi drivers vulnerable both as employees and as citizens. Thus, the nature of work in the minibus taxi industry and the state's failure to implement legislation and/or the lack of any legislative implementation mechanisms hamper workers' access to employment protection and benefits. It is important to take into account the fact that the character of the minibus taxi industry, as well as the working conditions of taxi drivers, are largely shaped by the history of South Africa exacerbated by the 'hands off' approach by the government, both the previous regime and to some extent the current government (refer to chapter 2).

The literature reviewed in this study points out the tension surrounding the status of the minibus taxi industry. This section seeks to elucidate this confusion. Based on the information gleaned from the literature that has been reviewed, one can point out that the minibus taxi industry is formalised in some aspects, but is informal in other areas. Indeed, the minibus taxi industry is formally recognised as a part of public transport in South Africa. Furthermore, taxi operators require formal permission to operate, as well as to be members of recognised taxi associations, which are given permits to operate certain routes and facilities such as taxi ranks. The formal requirements that operators are required to meet include safety standards as set out in the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme that vehicles must adhere to (Barrett, 2003: 15-6; Walters, 2010).

On the one hand, the informality of the industry relates to employer-employee relations. Noteworthy here is the fact that there is legislation in place (for example the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997)), though it is not enforced. The focus of this research study is to understand the interplay between legislative protection, the nature of work and the family and community life of taxi drivers. The apparent incompatibility between the minibus taxi industry and the designated legislation (the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997)) calls for an understanding from 'within'. The everyday operations of the minibus taxi industry can be understood through observations. It is to this end that the ethnographic extended case method was employed in this study. A full discussion on methodology is offered in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design

### 4. Methodology

The methodological choices for the research investigation are crucial to the outcomes that emerge from the research process. This is informed by the fact that one's epistemological position will always determine the methods of gathering data.

The on-going debate between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research has heightened the need to justify the choice of one's research methods. This debate relates to the adequacy as well as the relevance of certain methods to explaining certain phenomena. Under the influence of the opposing epistemological and ontological positions, both quantitative and qualitative approaches make distinct claims as to what amounts to plausible social inquiry (Morgan & Smircich, 1980: 491-492). The quantitative approach, rooted within the positivist paradigm, is the opposite of the qualitative approach, which is rooted within the interpretive paradigm (Brynman, 1984: 77; Morgan & Smircich 1980: 492; Mukherjee, 2002: 40).

The close association of the quantitative approach with the discipline of natural sciences has greatly influenced the call for objectivity and replication of the research process. Those who argue for the positivist paradigm put great emphasis on value-neutral research, which is carried out by means of surveys, censuses and experiments (Berg, 2007: 3; Brynman, 1984: 77). Those who favour a qualitative approach argue that observations, case studies, focus group discussions and recorded data are the only well-positioned research methods that can be used to capture the everyday social interaction of social actors (Berg, 2007: 3). The qualitative group argues that quantitative research is based on a naïve belief in objectivity, that it cannot describe the complexities of social life and consequently that it fails to understand an agent's motives and efforts to create meaning of everyday reality (Denemark, Estrom, Jacobsen & Karlsson, 2002: 151). However, the choice of research method for this study is influenced by the nature of the study and the questions that this study seeks to address.

#### 4.1. Reflexive Science and the Extended Case Method

This multi-case ethnographic study is based on a combination of observations of taxi drivers' daily labour activity and interviews conducted with taxi drivers in two geographical locations: Mamelodi and Jane Furse. This is a comparative study inspired by the Extended Case Method, as elaborated by Burawoy (2009). Given the need to explore and understand labour processes of taxi drivers in a real-life context, the work-life balance experience of taxi drivers, as well as the spatial constitution of this industry, an ethnographic approach would probably be the most suitable research method. An ethnographic approach would be best suited to understanding the minibus taxi industry and work experiences of taxi drivers because "The day-to-day experiences [of workers] emerge out of [work organisation] ..." (Burawoy, 1979: 85).

The research questions that this study endeavours to examine, together with the need to locate the minibus taxi industry spatially, inform the choice of the research method (Burawoy, Blum, George, Gille, Gowan, Haney, Klawiter, Lopez, Rian & Thayer, 2000: 25). This is because the spatial positioning of the minibus taxi industry largely influences work organisation and how taxi drivers experience their everyday work. It is the subjective work experience of taxi drivers (as shaped by and also shaping the broader social forces) that this study documents (Burawoy, 1998: 14; Burawoy *et al.*, 2000: 25, 27). According to Burawoy (1998: 5), by "extending out" from the field, one is better positioned to delineate the link between "micro" and "macro" forces that shapes everyday life (Burawoy, 1998: 5; Burawoy *et al.*, 2000: 27). Accordingly:

The extended case method thus bursts the conventional limits of participant observation, which stereotypically is restricted to micro and ahistorical sociology (Burawoy, Burton, Ferguson, Fox, Gamson, Gartrell, Hurst, Hurzman, Salzinger, Schiffman & Ui, 1991: 6)

The nature of this study, that is what the research endeavours to understand, has an influence on both the methods and methodological choices that one employs. Similarly, the methods that one utilises in social inquiry also reveal one's assumptions of reality and one's ideas about what constitutes relevant knowledge (i.e. ontological and epistemological assumptions). The ontological and

epistemological grounds of this study are informed by reflexive science (Burawoy, 1998: 5). While making a case for a socially-constructed world, Burawoy (1998: 5-6, 11) concedes that there is a world that exists independently of an individual and this world shapes, but is also shaped by, social actors.

Positive science is limited by its inherent disregard for context, whereas ethnography suffers from field confinement and power effects (Burawoy *et al.*, 1991: 6; Burawoy, 1998: 5, 7; 2009: 201). Consequently, the extended case method calls for specification of some particular features of the social situation (which needs explanation) by reference to particular forces external to the social situation (Burawoy *et al.*, 1991: 9). Ultimately, it becomes important to situate knowledge within its structuration, which is to move beyond social process towards social forces (Burawoy, 1998: 15). As Burawoy (1998: 15) puts it: “Reflexive science insists, therefore, on studying the everyday world from the stand point of its structuration”.

As both positive science and ethnography have certain limitations, Burawoy (1998: 6; Burawoy, 2009: 39) advocates what he terms reflexive science which finds its expression in the extended case method. This is a model of science that employs multiple dialogues to reach explanations of empirical phenomena by combining understanding (the hermeneutic dimension) and explanation (the scientific dimension) (Burawoy *et al.*, 1991:3; Burawoy, 1998: 5). Reflexive science is based on four principles: intervention, process, structuration and reconstruction (Burawoy, 2009: 39-44). These four principles are discussed below as the framing methodological principles of the extended case method. The four principles will be discussed in relation to the four dimensions of the extended case method: extending the observer to the participant, extending observations over space and time, extending from process to force and finally extending theory (Burawoy, 1998: 46-53).

Burawoy’s emphasis (1998: 15) on context fits with labour geography’s notion of a spatial fix (Herod *et al.*, 2007: 248; Rainnie *et al.*, 2010: 303) and Wardell’s particularity of “work settings” (Wardell, 1999: 9) (see Chapter 2). Put differently – there exist direct influences between social forces, work traditions and the way labour process unfolds. To the extent that the extended case method is a combination of positive science and ethnography, both peoples’ subjective views and

broader falsifiable hard data are imperative to document (Burawoy, 1998: 15, 5; 2009: 70). It is imperative to document such information because observations allow us to juxtapose what people say they are doing against what they *actually* do (Burawoy *et al.*, 1991: 2).

By engaging in the labour process, taxi drivers enter into social relations, both with one another and with management or taxi owners. It is these social relationships that shape taxi drivers' work experience and the meaning of their work (Burawoy, 1979: 15; Burawoy *et al.*, 2000: 27). According to Burawoy (1998: 14), "Reflexive science commands the observer to unpack those situational experiences by moving with the participants through their space and time".

To the extent that situational experiences produce their own "situational knowledge", one should strive to understand such knowledge within its context (Burawoy, 1998: 14). Observations are arguably better equipped to offer more rich and nuanced understandings of the everyday labour process within the minibus taxi industry. The activities that taxi drivers carry out every day when at work can be captured through observations of such activities. Informed by the commonly held belief that one can only understand work and working conditions by engaging in the specific work, ethnography has been widely used to understand work and work organisation (see for example: Burawoy, 1972; Webster, 2005; Von Holdt, 2003). Furthermore, interviews and documents alone reveal very little about certain situations as Burawoy (1998: 8) discovers during his study of "Zambianization" in Zambia:

Mine was not a study that could be accomplished by combing through documents since, as I was to learn, by themselves they revealed so little. Interviews, conducted from outside, were no less useful since managers were protected by layers of public relations.

Ultimately, observations afford an opportunity to engage with a situation from 'within'. Given the limits of direct control in the minibus taxi industry, observations present an opportunity to observe responsible autonomy and the various manifestations of consent in practice (see Chapter 2). The interaction between coercion and consent is best-established through observations of the labour process. Observations capably revealed the extent to which taxi drivers are both self-disciplined and self-motivated



to work with little or no supervision – these observations allow the extending of observations over space and time (Burawoy, 2009: 47). By extending over space and time the manifestation of responsible autonomy into social processes within the minibus taxi industry can be clearly delineated.

Work-family conflict was accounted for by diarising the length of the workday and the number of days worked per week by the majority of taxi drivers in relation to their social lives. In addition, it was in the course of observing that the spatial influence over the labour process was clearly explicated. The interview is not simply a stimulus to elicit the true state of the interviewee, but is rather an intervention into the interviewee's life because reflexive science joins participant and observer (Burawoy, 1998: 14; 2009: 39). According to Burawoy (1998: 14, 16-17; 2009: 44-5), intervention creates the opportunity to learn more about the participant's world and ways of thinking. Ultimately, "Intervention creates perturbations that are not noise to be expurgated but music to be appreciated, transmitting the hidden secrets of the participant's world" (Burawoy, 2009: 40).

In order to enhance the knowledge of the world studied, reflexive science commands us to dissect situational experience by being part of the everyday world of the participants (Burawoy, 1998: 14; 2009: 40-1). Reflexive science does not eschew context. Garfinkel (1967 cited in Burawoy, 1998: 15) cautions that while the discursive dimension of social interaction can be captured through interviews, it is however the non-discursive dimension that can only be discovered through participation – in this instance through non-participant observations (extending the observer to the participant) (Burawoy, 1998: 44-6).

Knowledge does not occur *tabula rasa*; therefore, there is a need to be aware of factors that are external to a given locale (Burawoy, 1998: 15). Thus, we therefore look upon the external field as a way of providing an understanding of the conditions prevalent in the locale within which the research takes place (Burawoy, 1998: 15; 2009: 42) (see Chapter 2). Here, we seek to understand the social processes as manifestations of social forces that exert themselves on the ethnographic locale (Burawoy, 1998: 15; 2009: 42). These social forces are the effects of other social processes that, in most cases, lie outside the ethnographic locale (Burawoy, 1998:



15; 2009: 42). These social forces can be observed as existing outside the minibus taxi industry's locale (Burawoy, 1998: 15; 2009: 42, 70).

By extending out from process to force, we are able to discern factors external to our case under study. The fourth dimension of the extended case method (theory reconstruction) will be guided by the emerging evidence (Burawoy, 1998: 53-6). As Burawoy points out, theory is an essential dimension of the extended case method because it guides intervention, constitutes situated knowledge into social process and locates those social processes in their macro-context (Burawoy, 2009: 55).

#### **4.2. Research Design**

According to Brewer (2000: 57), research design is the strategic plan of the project that sets out the broader structure of the research. Thus, the design for this research study takes the form of a multi-case ethnographic study (Burawoy, 2009: 201) with the aim of understanding identified cases in the Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces, respectively.

The multi case ethnographic design is informed by the study's attempt to understand the interplay between the nature of work, legislation and the impact on the family and community lives of taxi drivers. The study aimed to address the following questions: (a) what is the nature of work for taxi drivers, (b) given the nature of work, do labour market regulations provide for employment security in the minibus taxi industry and (c) how does the interaction between the nature of work and legislative protection impact on family and community life of taxi drivers? It is the researcher's opinion that a multi-case ethnographic approach provides the tools needed to highlight the fact that, over and above the labour process (see Chapter 2), the minibus taxi industry is not homogenous. To be sure, the heterogeneity of the minibus taxi industry (in relation to working hours and wages) is a damning indictment of the one-size-fits-all approach of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 2007). This heterogeneity requires a method that would enable a comparison of cases (Burawoy, 2009: 203).

According to Burawoy (2009: 201), multi-case ethnography is a rejection of classical anthropology's spatial incarceration. Here, 'case' is used as opposed to 'site'.

Burawoy (2009: 202) argues that instead of a pre-existing “natural” site, multi-case ethnography is rooted in “theoretically constructed objects” (or case/s). Ultimately, multi-case ethnography is preferred over traditional multi-site ethnography. Multi-case ethnography places greater emphasis on understanding and explaining difference, while the multi-site ethnography focuses on connections (Burawoy, 2009: 202). Burawoy (2009: 202-3) indicates that the case (as in multi-case ethnography) is doubly constituted: by the social forces within which the case is embedded (spatial positioning) and the social process it expresses, that is the macro-micro link. This double constitution is influenced by the fact that the ‘case’ has to be reflective of the broader political and economic context (Burawoy, 2009: 203). Creswell (1998: 61) states that a case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” over time by means of detailed, in-depth data collection made up of multiple sources of information, rich in context (situation and its field of location).

Burawoy (2009: 203) writes, “The ... [cases] have to be rooted in their broader political and economic context, in the field of social forces of which they are a product”. This is the first step to see the micro processes as an expression of the macrostructure (Burawoy, 2009: 203) (see Chapters 2 and 3). In line with Burawoy’s “structuration” (1998: 14) and multiple dialogue approach, Babbie and Mouton (2001: 281) argue that: “Thickly described case studies take multiple perspectives into account and attempt to understand the influences of multilevel social systems on subjects’ perspectives and behaviour”. In other words, the explanation of particular situations is achieved by reference to external forces (Burawoy *et al.*, 1991: 9; Burawoy, 1998: 14).

As argued earlier in this study (see Chapter 2) the labour process is a social construct of spatial processes and it is through this realisation that one then begins to appreciate the distinct working conditions that exist within the minibus taxi industry. In the book, *Global Ethnography*, Burawoy *et al.*, (2000: 5) argue that the whole picture can be assembled by recognising diverse (or multiple) perspectives from the parts of a whole. Even though multiple parts are used, each case has to be a reflection of its own spatial embeddedness (see Chapter 2) (Burawoy, 2009: 203). Thus, the multiple-case ethnography approach is better equipped to highlight the

broader picture of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa and it also highlights how the local conditions influence the everyday labour process.

Participants were selected from Denneboom taxi ranks in Mamelodi and Jane Furse taxi ranks in Limpopo. The proximity of the researcher's place of residence in both Pretoria and Limpopo influenced the decision to select participants from the above-mentioned taxi rank locations.

#### **4.2.1. Research Geographical Location**

As pointed out above, the research took place in two distinct geographical locations in South Africa. Motivated by the theoretical framework of this study (see Chapter 2), the research took place in two different provinces of South Africa, namely: the Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces, respectively.

The Limpopo Province is situated in the northern part of South Africa with a population of roughly 5.4 million people ([www.safrika.info.za](http://www.safrika.info.za) 2011). Limpopo Province is made up of five major districts, namely: Greater Sekhukhune, Mopane, Vhembe, Capricorn and Waterberg (Department of Agriculture, 2009: 3). The Limpopo province is largely rural to semi-urban with a few urban centres. This study took place in the Greater Sekhukhune district which has a population of about 895 390 people (Department of Agriculture, 2009: 6). As of 2007, there has been a 75 percent unemployment rate (broadly defined) in the Greater Sekhukhune district of Limpopo alone (Department of Agriculture, 2009: 14). The Jane Furse taxi rank is the major taxi rank servicing both trips heading out of the district and the province. Observations were carried out on the major route linking the district with other provinces, notably the Mpumalanga and Gauteng Provinces. However, the focus was on the local road that stretches for 80 kilometres from the Jane Furse taxi rank to the Groblersdal taxi rank at the other end.

The Jane Furse to Groblersdal route caters for students, workers and general travellers who travel to the local shopping centres (namely, the Jane Furse shopping complex and Moratiwa Crossings) to shop, or commute for social reasons. The majority of these groups normally start their day around 6:00 in the morning. The above-mentioned groups are the life-blood of the minibus taxi industry in this district.

The above-mentioned observations are synonymous with the 2003 *National Household Travel Survey* (Department of Transport, 2003) findings on the travel time in different provinces (see Chapter 5).

In contrast to the Limpopo Province, the Gauteng Province is considered the industrial hub of South Africa and Pretoria is one of the major cities in this province. The province has a population of 11.1 million people. This study took place in Mamelodi (Pretoria), which is situated 20 kilometres outside the City of Tshwane ([www.saweb.co.za](http://www.saweb.co.za) 2011). The township has a population of about 1 million people ([www.saweb.co.za](http://www.saweb.co.za), [www.mameloditrust.org.za](http://www.mameloditrust.org.za)). The majority of the population living in Mamelodi are working class migrants who came to Gauteng looking for employment opportunities from all over the country and neighbouring countries. Over and above migrant workers, Mamelodi is also home to students who are attracted to Pretoria by many of its major universities and further education and training (FET) colleges.

In the Limpopo Province, public transport is limited to buses and taxis, whereas in Mamelodi alternatives range from buses to taxis and trains. Observations were carried out at Denneboom taxi rank, which serves as the main hub in the transport network within the township. Almost all the roads leading into different parts of the township branch off from the Denneboom taxi rank which serves also as a shopping centre, a point of departure for long distance taxis to other provinces (such as Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West Province) and other parts of Pretoria (such as Menlyn, Brooklyn, Willows and so forth). For the purpose of this study, observation was focused primarily on taxis plying the routes Denneboom to Lusaka and Denneboom to Nellmapius. The location of the observations was motivated by the fact that the majority of the other sections are serviced by cabs and not minibus taxis.

The minibus taxi industry in Mamelodi is heavily dependent on workers, students, shoppers, employment seekers and general travellers. For the majority of workers in this township, travel starts very early in the morning, normally around 04:00 and at 03:00 for those who sell vetkoek at train stations, taxi ranks and major intersections. 'Vetkoek' is literally translated as 'fat cake' and they are a South African delicacy

consisting of deep fried dough, which is similar to that of a doughnut, but is not as sweet.

#### **4.3. Data Collection: Observations and Interviews**

Creswell (1998: 58) defines ethnography as a description and interpretation of a given social group. In a more general sense, the researcher examines the group's way of doing things in their everyday social life, from the standpoint of observation (Burawoy, 1998: 5; Creswell, 1998: 58; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 2). According to Burawoy (1998: 5):

Instead of collecting data from the informants about what ... [it means to be a taxi driver] ... [one begins to diarise]... accounts of what ... [taxi drivers] actually ... [do] with accounts of real events, struggles, and dramas that ... [take] place over space and time.

Motivated by theory, the extended case method reflexively engages in multiple dialogues between the observer and participants to reach explanations of empirical phenomena (Burawoy, 1998: 5). However, Burawoy (1998: 7) cautions that such a dialogue does not spring from outside space and time. Guided by what he terms reflexive science, the extended case method seeks to take advantage of its “situation and its field of location” (Burawoy, 1998: 5, 7, 10). It becomes imperative that the labour process be observed and located within its field of location because the labour process is itself a socially-constructed terrain (Burawoy, 1998: 14; Rainnie *et al.*, 2010: 299; Von Holdt, 2003: 5). The labour process is a product of the everyday social process shaped by social forces (see Chapter 2). Reflexive science ultimately insists on understanding the everyday world from the “standpoint of its structure”, that is how broader social forces simultaneously shape and are shaped by the everyday work experience of taxi drivers (Burawoy, 1998: 15; Rainnie *et al.*, 2010: 299).

Listening, watching and asking questions (both unsolicited and solicited accounts) served as data collection methods (Lofland, 1971 cited in Hammersley & Atkinson 1983: 89). The researcher spent some time (normally two to three days) with participants in an effort to acquaint the researcher with certain aspects of the minibus taxi industry. However, the researcher opted for the complete observer role (that is a

nonparticipant role) because it is the researcher's understanding that observations alone, without active participation, were pragmatic. This was dictated by what the researcher sought to understand, together with constraining field factors. Given the nature of work that taxi drivers do, participant observation would be impractical as a taxi driver's labour activity is individualistic in nature and consequently, one would find oneself alone behind the wheel of a taxi with only oneself to observe.

According to Davies (1999: 73), the tendency of ethnographers and the followers of ethnography to base the quality and validity of ethnographic findings on the level of participation of an ethnographer is misguided. Davies (1999: 73) argues that:

A more useful guide is the way in which ethnographers ground their observations in *critical* [italics mine] reflections on the nature of their participation and its suitability to the particular research circumstances.....

Furthermore, the role of complete observer was to the advantage of the researcher as it reduced reactivity (Bryman, 2001: 300; Hammersely & Atkinson, 1983: 96). Taking into account the limitations of a complete observer as discussed by Hammersely and Atkinson (1983: 96), solicited formal interviews in the form of semi-structured interviews were used to elicit relevant information from participants. Complete participant observation was arguably best suited to study the nature of the work distinctive of the minibus taxi industry, while more individual subjective views of taxi drivers were covered through semi-structured interviews. Participants' subjective feelings and attitudes towards their working conditions and the impact of their work on their social lives can be accounted for through qualitative interviews (Brewer, 2000: 63).

According to Berg (2007: 95) and Brewer (2000: 63), semi-structured interviews can be located somewhere between the extremes of completely structured and completely unstructured interviewing structures. The questions asked are usually predetermined and are asked in a systematic and continuous order, whilst allowing the interviewer the liberty to probe far beyond the answers provided to the prepared questions (Berg, 2007: 95). Semi-structured interviews allow the opportunity for both directive and non-directive questions (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983: 113). The freedom to ask unscheduled probing questions allows the researcher to obtain rich

information. Such questions include, for example: “Why is that?”, “Tell me more”, and “But how do you feel ...?”.

The desire to understand the participant’s subjective work experience made the use of interviews an obvious data collection method. Marshall and Rossman (2006: 53) state that:

A study focusing on individual lived experience typically relies on ... [an] *interview strategy* [italics in original]. This is informed by the fact that “... the primary ... [aim] is to capture the deep meaning of experience in the participants’ own words.

Furthermore, interviews allow flexibility as they are used in a one-to-one situation or collectively in a group setting (Kumar, 1999: 24). This flexibility allows the interviewer to elicit extremely rich information and is thus an asset (Kumar, 1999: 24). However, interviews are not without their downside and Kumar (1999: 24) cautions that the quality of the data obtained is only as good as the interviewer obtaining the data. The decision to opt for semi-structured interviews is a strategic one in order to maintain the focus and the direction of the interview process.

The above-mentioned data collection methods are used in the study in light of the on-going debate around the accuracy of ethnographic data (Kusow, 2003: 594). Participant observation, which is the extent to which one engages fully in the everyday activities of those being studied whilst observing has traditionally being regarded as the hallmark of ethnography (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994: 248). This suggests that credible ethnographic data rests upon one’s participation in the everyday social activities of those under study (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994: 249; Kusow, 2003: 592; Styles, 1979: 148).

Participation in social activities of any given group is limited to ‘members only’ and thus this has led to the insider-outsider debate. Broadly speaking, the debate is dichotomised rather unproductively, around the insider-outsider distinction (Kusow, 2003: 592; Narayan, 1993: 671; Styles, 1979: 148). The insider-outsider stance and its associated advantages and disadvantages are tied to issues of but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and sexual and political orientation (see



for example: Kusow, 2003; Narayan, 1993; Styles, 1979). For the purpose of this study, the insider-outsider status is linked to the methodological orientation of the study. Those advocating the insider perspective aver that only insiders (or to use the colonial delineation of ‘natives’) are better placed to understand the experiences of those being studied (Kusow, 2003: 592; Narayan, 1993: 671). Central to the insider perspective is the assertion that “Those who diverge as ‘native’, ‘indigenous’ or ‘insiders’... are believed to write about ... [those studied] from a position of intimate affinity” (Narayan, 1993: 671). The above quote implies that the insider perspective makes an epistemological claim to monopolistic access to social truth (Merton, 1972: 19).

On the other hand, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), as cited in Atkinson and Hammersley (1994: 249), argue that the outsider perspective is naïve and unrealistic because all social research is, by practice, a form of participant observation and as a consequence, it is impossible to study the social world as an outsider. Influenced by classical philosophical arguments, the outsider perspective eschews any intimate involvement with research subjects. The outsider view is premised on the following argument: “[To attain] ... objective knowledge ... researchers should detach themselves from the prejudices of the social groups they study” (Agar, 1980; Boom, 1983; Simmel, (1908) 1971 cited in Kusow, 2003: 592). The outsider perspective argues that insiders invariably project their own groups in a favourable light (Styles, 1979: 148). It goes without saying then that researchers should endeavour to maintain an emotional and personal distance from the subjects of study to achieve objectivity (Simmel (1908) 1971, cited in Kusow, 2003: 592; Styles, 1979: 148).

Insider-outsider debates generally put too much emphasis on researcher’s social position (insider or outsider), as discussed above. Consequently, as Styles (1979: 148) notes, the insider-outsider debates tend to degenerate into *ad hominem* attacks rather than critically engaging with the nature of the research and its outcomes. This research seeks to address the ontological and epistemological implications resulting from the insider-outsider status as opposed to the moral insider-outsider debates. This is informed by the fact that the ontological and epistemological assumptions speak directly to the research outcomes of this study.



Based on his experience as a 'native' Somali studying his countrymen in Canada, Kusow (2003: 597) concludes that:

... [T]he insider/outsider dichotomy as a methodologically distinguishable analytic categories cannot be supported empirically. The relationship between researcher and participant cannot be determined a priori such that a researcher can be categorically designated either an insider or an outsider.

Burawoy (1998: 5) alludes to the fact that the extended case method eschews the insider-outsider dichotomy as the extended case method reflexively engages the phenomena under study. That is, the extended case method does not advocate a fixed approach to understanding the social world, rather the extended case method's approach is emergent (Burawoy, 1998: 11). Kusow (2003: 592) posits that, instead of adopting fixed approaches, we should acknowledge that all social roles and statuses are situationally-based and depend on the prevailing social, political and cultural values of a given social context. The overlapping argument between labour geography (see Chapter 2) and the methodological framework of this study is that all social activities or actions should be situationally understood. As Kusow (2003) and Narayan (1993) demonstrate, social research would be rather cumbersome, if not impossible, when applied with the insider-outsider dichotomy. The fluidity of the social world suggests that the insider-outsider status should be treated as variables and not as diametrical opposites. It is the researcher's view that social research and social researchers should rather emphasise inter alia: research positionality and reflexivity as a way of engaging the social world (see for example: Cottrell & Parpart, 2006; Langhout, 2006). Positionality speaks to the need to critically and continuously engage in one's social positions vis-à-vis those being studied, whilst reflexivity involves reflections by ethnographers on the social processes that knowingly or unknowingly impose upon and consequently influence the data (refer to section 4.4. on reflexivity in this chapter) (Langhout, 2006: 268; Brewer, 2000: 127).

#### **4.3.1. Selection for Interviews**

The researcher did not gain access to participants through their employers or taxi associations. Prospective participants were approached in a personal capacity and were asked to take part in the study. However, only taxi drivers were eligible for selection (see Table 4.3.2 below).

This is called judgemental sampling. In judgemental sampling, the researcher uses their knowledge or experience to select the participants. In this case, it is the researcher's understanding that only taxi drivers are suitable participants for the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 166-7; Brewer & Hunter, 2006: 93; Mann, 1994: 701).

Interviews and observations were employed to source out the relevant information from the participants. The researcher approached individual taxi drivers for the purpose of 'mobile workplace' observations. Individual informed consent letters were used to indicate the participant's commitment to participation in the study, as well as to show individual authorisation or permission to be interviewed and observed. Participants between the ages of 29 to 43 took part in the study. A total of ten interviews, with five from each research site, served as supplements to the observations that were carried out (see Table 4.3.2 Below).

#### **4.4. Data Analysis**

The interviews were audio-recorded because of the mismatch between the speed of writing and talking. The recorded data was transcribed directly after all prospective participants were interviewed. Recurring responses, events and activities from the interview process and observations were grouped into themes from which the findings and conclusions of the study were drawn (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 46; Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 159). Both interviews and field notes were coded manually following the verbatim transcription of all audio-recorded interviews, field conversations and observable events. Transcripts were printed, read and assigned alphabetic codes representing specific themes, while the data was organised through the 'cut' and 'paste' function using Microsoft Word.

Rubin and Rubin (2005: 201) define data analysis as:

... the process of moving from raw ... [data] to evidence-based interpretations that are the foundation for published reports. Analysis entails classifying, comparing, weighing and combining materials from the ... [field] to extract the meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of event into a coherent narrative.

For Huberman and Miles (1998), cited in Brewer (2000: 108), data analysis involves three sub-processes:

Data reduction (selecting units of analysis from the total universe of data); data display (assembling the information in some format); and conclusion drawing (interpretation of the findings).

Qualitative description takes centre stage for rich ethnographic explanations; significantly, the researcher should pick out key events in the field (Brewer, 2000: 111). Lofland (1971), cited in Brewer (2000: 111), states that ethnographic research should emphasise *inter alia* acts, settings and activities. According to Wolcott (1990), cited in Creswell (1998: 152), description is the basis upon which qualitative research is built and as a result, a detailed description of events and contextual settings guides analysis. This can be linked to the fact that analysis is intended to reflect the complexities of human interaction and the broader social processes that impacts on the “ethnographic locale” (Burawoy, 1998: 15; Marshall & Rossman, 2006: 155; Rubin & Rubin, 2005: 202). Collected field notes were reduced into aggregations, that is, the aggregation of situational knowledge into social processes (Burawoy, 1998: 15).

According to LeCompte and Schensul (1999: 2), analysis permits ethnographers to tell a story regarding whatever it is they research. The collected data was analysed deductively, or what Lofland (1971), cited in Hammersely and Atkinson (1995: 211) calls “observer-identified” analysis. Deductive analysis entails the choice of themes and then the sorting of the data into the themes which the data best fits. The themes of this study that emerged deductively were derived from the literature reviewed, the interview schedule and the theoretical framework of this study (Davies, 1999:196; Hammersely & Atkinson 1995: 210-11; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 60). Each theme was represented by extracts and field notes observations that presented a rich and in-depth description of the theme. Hammersely and Atkinson (1995: 210) and LeCompte and Schensul (1999: 46) qualify this approach by recognising that ethnographers work from a conceptual framework. However, Hammersely and Atkinson (1995: 210) caution against pre-judgments which might force the interpretation of the data into preconceived themes.

Item level analysis was an important part of this study. Item level analysis involves recognising those things in the data that must be coded and used as a foundation for the themes (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 68-9). Utilising Lofland's categories of acts, actors, activities and settings (Lofland, 1971, 1984 cited in LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 78), item level analysis allowed for a richer and more nuanced dissection of taxi drivers' world of work. The identification of actors, activities and settings proved useful for a deeper analysis in that it allows for identification of differences in the labour process and the influence of the context. Actors, activities and setting allows for a context sensitive comparison, for example the presence or absence of certain aspects of the minibus taxi industry in Jane Furse or Mamelodi can be accounted for, in this way.

4.3.2. Table 1: Table of Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Area	Work Experience	Marital Status	Bread Winner?	Family Composition
Lionel	Male	34	Mamelodi	8 years	Not married	Yes	Brother, cousin, girlfriend and a child
Madiane	Male	30	Mamelodi	2 years	Not married	No, girlfriend employed	Girlfriend and a child
Mputi	Male	32	Mamelodi	4 years	Not married	Yes	Girlfriend and a child
Thabo	Male	30	Mamelodi	3 years	Not married	No	Parents and one sibling
Thabang	Male	30	Mamelodi	6 years	Not married	Yes	Parents and siblings
Brad	Male	29	Jane Furse	5 years	Not married	No	Parents
Beckham	Male	33	Jane Furse	10 years	Married	Yes	Wife, children and an orphan child from the wife's side
Tshepo	Male	36	Jane Furse	10 years	Married	No, wife is a teacher	Wife and 2 children
Petri	Male	37	Jane Furse	3 years	Not married	Yes	6 siblings
Thato	Male	43	Jane Furse	6 years	Not married	Yes	Girlfriend and 2 children

#### 4.5. Ethical Considerations

To the extent that social research almost always involves human subjects, then the importance of ethical issues cannot be over-emphasised. According to Fine (1993), social researchers do not always adhere to the ethical and moral principles of social

research. In a rather provocatively titled article: *Ten Lies of Ethnography*, Fine (1993: 271, 275-77) shows how social researchers sometimes lie their way through research. Humphreys' (1970) research as cited in Cassell (1978: 173) is a well-documented case of deceptive research. For the purpose of this study, issues around informed consent and protection of participants' identity are deemed crucial and have been strictly adhered to. The researcher did not envisage any risks resulting from participation in this study. Here it should be noted that all the ethical requirements of the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities have been adhered to. This is because the ethical requirements of the University must be strictly met during the proposal phase of the intended research project and must also be strictly followed and thoroughly applied during the fieldwork phase, following approval of the proposal.

The globally-recognised need to protect human subjects against abuse by researchers has prompted the institutionalisation of research ethics. According to Thorne (1980: 284), the institutionalisation of research ethics was originally motivated by the need to protect patients from abuse by medical researchers. Consequently, informed consent, protection, voluntarism and confidentiality became non-negotiable prerequisites for social research (Cassell, 1978: 134-37; Thorne, 1980: 285-86). According to Anna *et al.* (1977), cited in Thorne (1980: 285), the notion of informed consent means:

[T]he knowing consent of an individual or his [or her] legally authorised representative, so situated as to be able to exercise free power of choice without undue inducement or any element of force, fraud, deceit, duress or other forms of constraints or coercion.

Accordingly, researchers are expected to offer a 'fair' explanation relating to the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the intended research. A 'fair' explanation requires the researcher to adapt the information to be understandable to participants (*The Belmont Report of 1979*, cited in the Guide to Research Ethics, 2003: 35). Such an explanation should take into consideration the different abilities, intelligence levels, maturity levels and language needs of the participants (*The Belmont Report of 1979*, cited in the Guide to Research Ethics, 2003: 35). This is in line with the three dimensions of informed consent: knowledgeability, voluntary participation and

competent choice (Thorne, 1980: 286). The former relates to the information to be shared with the participants so they are able to partake in research activities voluntarily and to make well-informed choices confidently, which are the second and third dimensions respectively (Thorne, 1980: 286).

The protection of human subjects is however, not limited to the attainment of informed consent. Concomitantly, researchers must strive to achieve an acceptable level of confidentiality. Broadly speaking, confidentiality relates to the following (the BSA, 2004 cited in Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charles, 2008: 417):

... [T]he principle of respect for autonomy and is taken to mean that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research will not be disclosed without permission.

To ensure the anonymity of participants' identities, pseudonyms were used instead of the participants' real names. Confidentiality was ensured by interviewing participants in their taxis or homes, where possible. Furthermore, the data collected from this research was used solely for the purpose of this study and will only be available to the researcher and the supervisor concerned.

The above-mentioned factors speak to ethical data management. Ethical data management references three issues: the ethical and truthful collection of reliable data; the ownership and responsibility of collected data; and the retention and sharing of collected data with colleagues and the public (Guide to Research Ethics, 2003: 22). Ethical data management guides the way that social researchers utilise and present their findings. Given that data analysis is often done in the privacy of the researcher's office, it is imperative to treat the data collected with care and sensitivity in order to protect the informants.

At times, it was difficult to keep the conversation between the researcher and those who consented to participate in the study because a taxi rank is usually in an open space. A letter of consent was explained in both English and any other vernacular language to ensure the participants' understanding of the contents. The researcher has a very good grasp of Sepedi and Setswana.

However, as with the many ethical dilemmas facing ethnographic studies, this study is no exception (for more on ethical dilemmas see: Kelman, 1972; Thorne, 1980; Wax, 1980). Irvine (1998) pointedly criticises the one-size-fits-all approach of the Institutional Review Board's (IRB's) requirements. Irvine (1998: 177) highlights how the notion of informed consent becomes difficult to apply in certain ethnographic studies. Similarly, Wax (1980: 281) persuasively argues that the notion of informed consent is impractical in group situations. As the researcher discovered, the target subjects (taxi drivers) were observed in relation to their everyday social interaction with other taxi drivers. However, such taxi drivers had not consented to the study or to be studied (Thorne, 1980: 292; Wax, 1980: 281).

The everyday labour processes and the real-life struggles of taxi drivers are shaped and influenced by the interaction with each other (see Chapter 2) and as such, a meaningful understanding of the everyday labour process of taxi drivers can only be understood within this context. Such a situation does not absolve the researcher of ethical obligation. However, one should appreciate the impossibility of informing each and every one of the taxi drivers in the situation that they are subject to an ethnographic observation (Thorne, 1980: 290; Wax, 1980: 281). To address the difficulties associated with informed consent, the researcher will reflexively account for the research process because of the above ethical complexities.

#### **4.6. Reflexive Research Engagement**

Reflexivity addresses, but is not limited to, the question of ethics, power relations, social position, identity, race, gender and knowledge production (Brewer, 2000; Cottrell & Parpart, 2006; Langhout, 2006). According to Kirby, Greaves and Reid (2006: 39):

Reflexivity, or engaging in a reflexive process, involves openly and honestly recognizing one's location and experiences and deeply considering the implications of one's power. [This is because] who you are and where you are situated do make a difference to the knowledge you produce" (Kirby *et al.*, 2006: 38).

The researcher invaded the participants' world of work by becoming what can be termed a 'permanent passenger' in the taxis of the participants. Despite the



researcher having thoroughly explained the purpose of the research in Sepedi and Tswana, most of the participants were sceptical about the true nature of the research. On the other hand, the researcher had to quell perceptions that what the researcher was doing is a panacea to the problems and harsh working conditions in the minibus taxi industry. The above-mentioned problems had an immense influence on the outcomes of the research process. The influence was twofold: on the one hand, it motivated and encouraged participants to take part enthusiastically and on the other hand, it generated suspicion in some respects.

The most common suspicion from the drivers was that I might be observing whether or not they observed traffic laws. Throughout the observation, a notebook was carried and field notes were jotted down. This exercise generated a lot of curiosity from the participants, such as:

“So if I don’t stop at a four way stop, do you write that down as well?” and  
“What are you writing in that little book of yours? I hope you’re not going to get us into trouble, are you?”

Brewer (2000: 87) reminds us that data recording devices (such as video cameras, tape recorders and notebooks) can at times be obtrusive and as such, it is always important to remind participants that what is being noted is no secret. Furthermore, some drivers were uncomfortable with the idea of counting daily checking (daily takings) in the researcher’s presence, which resulted in the drivers having to be constantly reminded about the adherence to ethics. Importantly, the assurance that the researcher did not know the taxi owner and did not even intend to know who the owner or employer was put most of the drivers at ease, particularly if they really believed that the researcher had no way of ever knowing the owner and was not interested in the first place.

Ellen (1984: 144) reflects on the stress and dangers of fieldwork. Violence and feuds over routes have, historically been a constant feature of the minibus taxi industry in South Africa (refer to Chapter 3). The constant fighting and conflict over poaching of passengers presented this researcher with moral and ethical dilemmas during fieldwork. Ellen (1984: 144) comments:

Field work may also involve, on the part of researcher or host, knowledge or behaviour which threatens the moral code, values or personal integrity of the researcher. Acquiescence, intervention, involvement, and evasion are all problematical in some way, [and] may create ... dilemmas and exacerbate field related stress. Some field situations may necessitate ... participation in socially disapproved, dangerous, illicit or criminal activities.

To some degree, constant fighting and minor scuffles, either over road rage or over passengers, are constant features of taxi drivers' daily work. The above-mentioned conflict happened on three separate occasions during the course of research, two cases during the fieldwork in Limpopo and one case in Mamelodi. Indeed, conducting observations from an ethically-informed decision of non-participation (or as an outsider) was not easy to abide by in practice during these three occasions. The dilemma was whether to intervene or to take notes of the scuffles. Tedlock (2000: 455) states that an ethnographer's interaction with their subjects involves moral choices. Even more difficult to say with certainty is the extent to which those drivers engaged in those scuffles counting on the researcher as 'backup' in the case of a fight. This is not to suggest that reckless driving is not part of daily life for most taxi drivers, but the problem is whether or not the decision to confront the other driver was influenced by the researcher's presence or not. Davies (1999: 3) addresses the same question:

On the one hand, we cannot research something with which we have no conduct, from which we are completely isolated. All researchers are to some degree connected to, a part of, the object of their research. And depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of the research are artefacts of the researcher's presence and inevitable influence on the research process.

With that having been said, the altercations revealed the nature of the industry. One such altercation happened when one of the local drivers confronted a long distance taxi driver who was suspected of poaching local commuters. A second local taxi joined the fray, at which point the researcher was called upon to attest to the allegations made by the participant (these allegations were that the long distance driver was indeed poaching local commuters). It was difficult to intervene because the long distance driver insisted that he was not poaching commuters as the passenger was only a friend of his who was going to Johannesburg with him. The long distance driver was accordingly reminded that he was only allowed to collect his

friend from the taxi rank where all long distance taxis get passengers and not by the side of the road.

In a far more illegal activity, the researcher's black pen was used to soften a traffic officer. Routine roadblocks seem to be the norm in Mamelodi. On such a day, the participant was driving without a fire extinguisher; however, the presence of a fire extinguisher is a legal requirement in South Africa. It was during the inspection of the vehicle that the officer noticed the black pen in the researcher's hand and asked if he could have it since he did not have a pen. Upon the researcher's refusal (the pen was being used for field notes), the participant taxi driver snatched it away, tossed it to the officer, told the officer with a smile that he would get the fire extinguisher and then drove away. In this instance, the researcher passively or actively participated in bribing a traffic officer, which is an illegal activity.

According to Davies (1999: 3-4), this uncertainty becomes even more pronounced for ethnographic research because of the long-term and sometimes intimate relations that the researcher develops with the participants. Therefore, ethnographers assist to construct the observations that become part of their data. For most ethnographers, textbook ethical prescription has always proved inadequate in dealing with the real-life fieldwork challenges (see section on ethics). Ultimately, the need to reflect back constantly on interactions with participants cannot be over-emphasised. The following chapter delves into the findings of this study and starts out with a discussion of the day in life of a taxi driver.

## **5. Chapter Five: The Minibus Taxi Industry and Labour Processes**

### **5.1. A Day in the Life of a Taxi Driver**

Brad, 29 years old, has worked as a taxi driver in Limpopo for the past five years. His day starts at 05:00 in the morning. He heads for the road near his house at 05:30 to get a ride with any one of his colleagues who is already working. After a 10 minutes' drive he gets off and walks a short distance to the owner of his taxi or his employer's place. By 05:50, the taxi hits the road and Brad is ready to start a long day of work. He drives straight to the taxi rank to check his position on the list (the position list will be discussed below).

On this specific day, the rank marshal shouts out that Brad's taxi is number three (the marshals usually shout out only the first ten taxis on the list). Brad and the researcher quickly have breakfast while waiting for the taxi to fill up with passengers. Being the festive season, it is exactly 11:00 when the taxi rank is departed with a full load after having collected the fares. Brad then heads for the filling station where he asks for R200.00 worth of fuel.

We make the whole 80 kilometre journey from the Jane Furse taxi rank to town (Groblersdal, the Afrikaans name for Grobler's valley) on the other side and Brad again stops for R200.00 worth of fuel and makes a U-turn. That side of the route belongs to a rival association, therefore the drive back is made without passengers and no picks-ups will be done until the rival association's patrol car (discussed in detail below) is passed. Brad prefers to drive very fast because of the festive season rush and therefore arrives back in Jane Furse at 12:40 for the second trip.

We eat lunch while waiting for the taxi to be called up to the platform and the rank marshal is bribed with a R10 note for a favourable position. The bribing of the rank marshal for a favourable spot on the position list is something that all taxi drivers seem to engage in. We leave the taxi rank platform at 13:30 for Groblersdal. Brad drives very fast, mostly about 120km/h to 180km/h. It must be kept in mind that the vehicle is a Toyota Quantum, which is much faster when compared to other taxis. The exchange of passengers takes place at certain points of the journey (this will be fully explained below) mostly because some of the other taxi drivers want to turn

around for some or other reason. After a 60 minutes' drive (from Jane Furse to Groblersdal), another U-turn is made to travel back to Jane Furse – this time with a couple of passenger pick-ups, unlike was the case with the first trip. Again, pick-ups only happen after passing the rival association's patrol car.

It is 15:30 when the taxi sets off for a third trip from Jane Furse to Groblersdal. However, this time the whole journey is not completed and the passengers are handed over to another taxi to complete the journey. Another U-turn is made and the taxi heads back to Jane Furse, following yet another R200.00 refuel – this time not for the 80 kilometre journey, but for start-up the next day. At 18:00, Brad finishes off and heads for the owner or employer's place. Brad has made R1150.00, excluding the R600.00 spent on petrol. Brad pockets R150.00, as *lekouso* (a practice of pilfering see Section 5.4.1.1. below).

Thabang, 30 years old, has been a taxi driver for six years. His day usually starts at 04:00 in the morning. After a quick shower, Thabang leaves his house in Lusaka (Lusaka is one of the many different sections that make up the township of Mamelodi) at 04:15 and catches a taxi to collect his own vehicle.

Mamelodi has high crime rates; therefore, most taxis are parked in one place called *leshaka*. As such, many taxi drivers have to make a quick trip to *leshakeng* to collect their taxis every morning. *Leshaka* means kraal or an enclosed space. This is a designated place where taxis are parked overnight. Owners or employers pool money together to secure such a place, which is normally fenced off by means of a wall or corrugated iron sheets. A guard watches over the place for security reasons. From *leshakeng*, Thabang drives back to Lusaka to start transporting passengers from Lusaka to Denneboom – Mamelodi's main commuter hub for road, rail, local and long distance travel. The distance between Lusaka and Denneboom is in the region of 26 to 30 kilometres.

Thabang's first trip from Lusaka to Denneboom normally starts at around 05:15. Thabang has to endure extended travel time because of the morning rush and as such, trips are not done as quickly as one would like them to be. It is 06:50 when the second trip from Lusaka to Denneboom is registered. Thabang turns back in the

direction of Lusaka, picking up three passengers that alight before reaching Lusaka and as such, a U-turn is made to go back to Denneboom. Thabang thinks it prudent to make a U-turn because there are many passengers going in the opposite direction (towards Denneboom). This time, Thabang picks up nine passengers going to Denneboom. Denneboom is reached at 07:50. It is 07:30 and another U-turn is made in the direction of Lusaka, five passengers are picked up going to Lusaka. Yet another U-turn is made to go back to Denneboom by 08:40, this time with thirteen passengers on-board the taxi.

It is 10:00 when Thabang decides to 'bind'. Binding refers to waiting for full loads at the taxi rank, as opposed to driving up and down in search of commuters, which is referred to as 'floating'. Binding is largely practised by those who drive thirteen to fourteen seater taxis. This is because for those driving the smaller Toyota Ventures and Condors, binding is counterproductive. Thabang binds from 10:00 in the morning until 13:45 when finally he leaves the taxi rank with a full load destined for Lusaka. The taxi returns for another load at 16:50. At this time, the position system ceases to function because of the sheer number of passengers at rush hour. Thabang gets his third and final load at 18:40 and stops for the day at 19:15. From there, Thabang drives to *leshakeng* to park the taxi for the night and then catches another taxi home. He arrives home at around 20:00 or 20:20. As with the morning rush, the afternoon rush extends the travel time considerably. See the photographs below, illustrating binding taxi at the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi.

**Figure: 1.**





**Figure: 2.**



**Figure: 3.**

Figures 1, 2 and 3 depict binding taxis at the Denneboom taxi rank in Mamelodi Pretoria. Photos by author: 10/11/2011.

Whilst binding is the only option in Jane Furse, Limpopo, there is an alternative to binding in Mamelodi, Pretoria – floating. This will be examined further below.

Like Thabang, Lionel is a taxi driver in Mamelodi. It is Sunday and Lionel starts work at 07:45. He is 34 years old and has been a taxi driver for 8 years. In contrast to Brad and Thabang, Lionel only has a 10 minutes' walk to the taxi owner or employer's place. Lionel's employer keeps his taxis at his yard together with some of the owners who also park their taxis there, as opposed to using *leshaka*. For the first trip of the day from Lusaka to Denneboom, only nine passengers are picked up and only two passengers are picked up on the return trip to Lusaka. R100.00 petrol is put in on the way back to Denneboom at 08:55 and nine passengers are again picked up. A U-turn is made and Lionel heads back to Lusaka at 09:35. A quick stop at *sekerong* (see a detailed discussion of *sekerong* below) en-route to Lusaka is made from 09:40 to 09:45. One passenger is picked up from *sekerong* and another five are collected along the way.

It is 10:15 when Lionel makes a U-turn from Lusaka to Denneboom, he is there at 10:50 with sixteen passengers picked up along the way (the taxi is a 14 seater vehicle, so the number includes drop-offs and pick-ups). Lionel then realises that the rear left tyre has a puncture and makes a quick call to inform the taxi owner. Lionel then drives to a nearby 'Fix a Flat' stall to get the tyre fixed. The person at the stall informs Lionel that he needs a new tyre. Lionel makes another call to the owner. Lionel then gets into another taxi destined for Lusaka to get a spare wheel. It is 13:45 when the new wheel is finally fitted. Lionel pays the person at the stall R40.00 for his labour and then has lunch after not having eaten since the morning. Lionel is back on the road to Lusaka by 14:05 and makes a quick stop at *sekerong*. Here he manages to collect three passengers and nine more along the way. A U-turn to Denneboom is made at 14:25 and the taxi arrives there at 14:55 with nine passengers on-board.

Lionel takes a short break to have a cool drink and is back on the road by 15:20. Lionel arrives back in Lusaka by 16:50, after picking up eight passengers on the way there. A return to Denneboom is then made, but this time with only four passengers picked up along the way. Lionel pays R90.00 to refuel the taxi and starts to bind at



the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) (South Africa's largest Christian denomination) which is half way to Lusaka. Lionel gathers a full load from the ZCC by 17:30 and drives all the way to Lusaka. After the entire load has alighted, Lionel stops because the temperature gauge indicates that the engine is overheating. Lionel then stops for 15 minutes to replace the hot water in the radiator. It is 18:05 when the engine roars back to life, but only after several attempts. The taxi arrives back at Denneboom by 18:45, picking up eight passengers along the way. Lionel orders a pizza from Romans Pizza for his family and he heads back to Lusaka after a R40.00 refuel for start-up the next day. At around 20:10 his cellphone rings with his son asking about his whereabouts. Lionel finishes work at 20:40, after a 10 minute walk from the owner's house and then he arrives home.

## **5.2. Notion of Work and Work Practices**

The above extracts from a day in the lives of Brad, Thabang and Lionel give us a sense of what it is like to work as a taxi driver. The main purpose of this study is to present the labour process characteristic of the minibus taxi industry as one of the many obstacles to the current efforts aimed at regulating the minibus taxi industry, with particular emphasis on the working conditions and protection of workers by legislation. The study depicts the everyday labour process distinctive of the minibus taxi industry as an embodiment of local conditions (for a discussion of spatial position, refer to chapter 3) and is thus incompatible with the traditional standard employment relations (SER) approach to work.

The broader context in which the industry operates has been explored in Chapter 3, with reference to issues of space. This chapter attempts to show the link between this context or space and the actual work experiences of taxi drivers. The unpacking of the working conditions of taxi drivers requires a nuanced understanding of what it means to be a taxi driver within the South African (macro) context and how the working conditions unfold in different locales (micro context) of South Africa. Writing on the changing nature of work within the context of globalisation, Theron (2005: 296) convincingly argues that the failure of the South African legislative framework to respond to new forms of work can be attributed to the traditional standard employment relations (SER) that the *Labour Relations Act* is premised upon. According to Theron (2005: 296), our current labour regulatory framework is

premised upon the following: full time employment, it is assumed that employees work on the premises of the employer and employment is expected to continue for an indeterminate period.

While the minibus taxi industry has not been adversely affected by the changing nature of work brought upon the world of work by globalisation, the very nature of the work distinctive of the minibus taxi industry is incompatible with the *Labour Relations Act's* approach (South Africa, 1995) to work and work regulation. For instance, the above extracts from the day in a life of a taxi driver demonstrate the difficulty associated with the regulation of the working hours in the minibus taxi industry. Based on the work experiences of taxi drivers, the working conditions of taxi drivers cater more to the needs and demands of the commuters, rather than conform to the rigidity of regulations such as those demanded by the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997).

Socioeconomic conditions, travel patterns and the history of South Africa have greatly shaped and to some extent, reinforced the implicit influence of commuters' travel demands on the minibus taxi industry, as opposed to legislative requirements. Inevitably, the day-to-day labour activities of taxi drivers are, arguably, the embodiment of the context of their work (see Chapter 3).

### **5.3. Making out: Binding, Floating, Baiting, *Matlapa* and *Sekerong***

Burawoy (1979: 52-4, 57-8) refers to the various ways in which workers are able to do their jobs, in spite of restrictive management or hostile workplace conditions, as "making out". In the South African context, Pakhathi (2005) has referred to "*planisa*" to describe how mineworkers 'make out' underground, by literally 'making plans'. In this section, ways in which taxi drivers 'make out' are explored, specifically: binding, floating, baiting, the exchange of *matlapa*, and *sekerong*.

For obvious reasons, the minibus taxi industry is an industry that is solely dependent on commuters because commuters are the only source of both wages (for taxi drivers) and profit (for taxi owners). The following can be gleaned from the field notes collected: both these parties (drivers and taxi owners) rely solely on commuters for their livelihood. It is understood that the daily labour process application (that is the

intensity and duration of the work) is to a large degree centred on commuters' travel demands.

The taxi rank is an important part of the minibus taxi industry because it largely serves as a commuter hub. As the taxi ranks play such an important role (a commuter congregation point) in the minibus taxi industry, it is tightly regulated and controlled as an access point for passengers. Every morning, the taxi drivers drive straight to the taxi rank to check on their position. There is a mutual understanding among taxi drivers that the taxi rank is to be shared equally and fairly. The taxi rank is ultimately directly linked to daily takings and weekly or monthly wages as it provides full loads of passengers for the taxis with less expenditure on petrol.

The above-mentioned reasons mean that taxi rank usage is regulated by way of a rotation system which ensures fairness and egalitarian use by those concerned. The rotation system ensures fairness by the writing down of the last two digits of every vehicle's registration number on a piece of cardboard box called the position list. This process of writing down each vehicle's registration number is repeated every time the taxis make a return to the taxi rank following departure from the rank with a full load. As a result, a self-regulating wheel that is overseen by the queue marshal is created. Positions are assigned on the platform in this manner.

The occasional tussle between taxi drivers, usually over who is supposed to follow whom on the position list, impressively highlights the central role played by the taxi rank. The waiting period at the taxi rank controlled by the position list to an important degree speaks to the competition on the road which can be explicitly linked to the working hours of taxi drivers. Sometimes one can go three weeks without using the taxi rank at Jane Furse and only a few hours at the Mamelodi taxi rank. Competition, petrol prices, the time of year (time of month, mid-year or December period), fares and local conditions all contribute to a taxi driver's day of work.

The labour process in the minibus taxi industry is organised in such a way that one's chance of making profit is inherently linked to how other taxi drivers perform on the road, that is what time they start work, what time they finish off and how fast they can drive. Observations reveal that the profitability of the taxi rank is ultimately about

being able to control commuters – that is ensuring that commuters make use of the taxi rank as a point of departure, as opposed to waiting by the side of the road. This issue requires solidarity, as well as a sense of collegiality, among taxi drivers. Another way of ensuring that passengers use the taxi rank is by the prohibition of pick-ups at least a kilometre radius from the taxi rank. However, taxi drivers do not always abide by these rules for reasons linked to the payment system in this industry.

In Limpopo Province there is a long-standing feud between the Nebo Taxi Owners' Association (which controls the Jane Furse taxi rank) and the Groblersdal Taxi Association (GTA) (which controls the Groblersdal taxi rank). The standoff started in 2005 after confusion over the position list. Consequently, relations between the two associations broke down. As a result, the two associations station patrol cars in the vicinity of their respective taxi ranks to mark their territory and to indicate to the rival association that from that point on they cannot pick up passengers.

Every taxi association has a patrol car that is used to 'police' the roads for both pirate taxis, long distance taxis that poach local commuters and those who illegally poach commuters in the vicinity of the taxi rank. For instance, all the taxis that belong to the Nebo Taxi Owners' Association (indicated by a blue sticker) are expected to make U-turn and remain empty from the Groblersdal town. They also cannot pick up any passengers until they drive past the patrol station. The reverse is the case for the Groblersdal Taxi Association (GTA) (marked by yellow stickers) when in Jane Furse. Any taxi from either side that enters the other association's territory with a passenger that they are going to travel back with (which was the case with the researcher); the taxi driver has to inform the other association's patrol unit because of this understanding.

Depending on the local conditions, some taxi drivers do not utilise or have taxi ranks. Evidence collected mainly in Mamelodi, Pretoria points out that in certain instances floating is preferred over the use of taxi ranks. Again, one of the participants who took part in this study in Limpopo could not use the taxi rank as his taxi was banned from using the taxi rank by the Nebo Tax Owners' association. However, this is the

exception to the rule because all other taxi drivers at Jane Furse taxi rank have access to the facilities as such many prefer binding over floating.

In Mamelodi taxi drivers who prefer to float drive up and down the whole day from morning until evening and mainly use *sekerong*, T-junctions and four way stops as pick-up points. *Sekero or sekerong* literally means 'scissors' in English and is used to refer to a situation in which one taxi cuts off another, preventing them from picking up a passenger. It happens in some situations that a taxi can fail to stop immediately as and when a passenger indicates that they want to board and as such, the taxi may stop a few feet away from the passenger. Another taxi may come from behind and stop right in front of the passenger. Conveniently, the passenger will then get into the second taxi. This situation is referred to as *sekerong* because the second taxi coming from behind cut off the passenger and prevented them from boarding the first taxi which they had initially beckoned to stop. In most cases, the above scenario ends with a tussle between the two drivers.

*Sekero* can also refer to a designated place situated a few meters or kilometres away from the taxi rank. Again commuters are 'cut off' from accessing the taxi rank. Mostly, *sekerong* is indicated or marked by a patrol car that is stationed. The principal purpose of *sekerong* is to encourage commuters to make use of the taxi rank as opposed to waiting for taxis by the side of the road when near the taxi rank. However, it seems commuters do walk all the way to *sekerong*, particularly during off-peak periods where taxis at the taxi rank can take from 30 to 45 minutes in Mamelodi and 45 to 60 minutes in Limpopo to fill up. In Mamelodi, *sekerong* is normally preferred by those who drive smaller taxis, such as the eight seater Toyota Ventures and Condors. Anyone caught poaching commuters in the vicinity of the taxi rank will be fined R60.00 and if this fine is not paid all four inflation/deflation tubes are removed from the wheels. This rule applies in Mamelodi particularly because the practice of poaching is rampant. It is however, not clear what the penalty in Limpopo is.

As is the case with the taxi ranks, *sekerong* has its own 'pseudo-marshals' who do the touting for the taxis that utilise *sekerong*. One can refer to these marshals as 'pseudo-marshals' because they are not really rank marshals in the true sense of the

word. However, one recognises the role that they play as being similar to the role played by taxi rank queue marshals. These ‘pseudo-marshals’ are usually unemployed youths who offer their ‘shouting’ services for anything from 50c to R5.00 as a reward, depending on the number of passengers who have been convinced to board the taxi.

The following photographs picture *sekerong* in Mamelodi. The two photographs show a Toyota Venture (Figure: 4) and Toyota Condor (figure: 5) getting passengers from *sekerong* while the bigger taxis, a Toyota Quantum and the Chinese-manufactured Inyathi pass by. A closer look reveals a pseudo-marshal standing behind the open door of the Toyota Condor and touting.

**Figure: 4.**





**Figure: 5.**



Figure: 4 and 5 depicts one of the intersections that is used as sekerong in Mamalodi Pretoria. Photos by author: 10/11/2011.

The working day of these taxi drivers is long and very exhaustive with the drivers making around twenty trips a day on average, depending on the distance of the trip. These trips include ten to twenty five minute breaks in between (usually two) and in some cases, no breaks are taken at all. The following is a journal-like description, from the researcher's field notes (thus, it contains colloquial language and a first person perspective) of how such a day unfolds:

*Monday, 27 December 2010:* We started work at around 05:50. We made four trips travelling from Jane Furse Taxi rank to Groblersdal (approximately 80 kilometres), with a couple of U-turns in between Groblersdal and the Jane Furse taxi rank. We ate while driving because every minute counts. At the end of the day (we finished at around 16:00), we had spent R900.00 on petrol and had R900.00 for checking. Evidently, the influence of the festive season was at play in this situation and while talking to Beckham, he revealed that during the rest of the year it was very difficult to

make even R500.00 a day. One thing that my observations point to is that taxi drivers have no traditional tea or lunchtime breaks that are supposed to be 30 minutes or one hour as per the law.

The day-in-the-life-of-a-taxi-driver discussion that this chapter starts out with makes the lack of traditional breaks clear and evident, especially as pointed out by Lionel's case. It points to the pressure associated with the loss of time in any given working day. In most cases, directly after having eaten, taxi drivers hit the road, if not eating while driving. Sometimes the vehicle fills up quicker than expected and as such, forces the taxi drivers to abandon their breaks and get back to work. The festive season and end of the month weekends seem the hardest periods during which to take breaks for many taxi drivers. The 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 was such a day and we were literally forced to eat hot pap (porridge with beef) in less than 15 minutes because of the last minute shopping rush that was taking place on that day.

*Tuesday, 28 December 2010:* We started work at 06:00 and after endlessly driving up and down, we finally parked at 13:51 until 14:36 because the driver needed to take a power nap. It was a really hot day and after sitting in the taxi with the hot engine for hours, we needed the rest. Because we were floating, we made U-turns whenever there were a couple of passengers going in the opposite direction. In certain instances, we drove very fast or very slowly depending on the situation on the road. Normally we drove slowly if there were a couple of taxis ahead of us to create enough space between ourselves and the taxis ahead. The opposite applied in cases where there were one or two taxis behind us. The day's work finished at 18:50 with R1100.00 as checking

Other than speeding up or slowing down, another strategy employed by taxi drivers is what I call the 'bait strategy'. The 'bait strategy' relates to the situation in which a taxi driver will be forced to pass one or two passengers who are waiting on the side of the road so that a pursuing taxi stops. This is done for two reasons: firstly, taxi drivers employ the bait strategy as way of creating distance between themselves and a taxi tailing them and secondly, taxi drivers make use of the bait strategy if there is a popular passenger waiting spot ahead. The bait strategy is employed largely as a response to the stiff competition on the road.



The bait strategy is more of a gamble for most taxi drivers, particularly if one is being tailed by a Toyota Quantum as many participants pointed out. This gamble is due to the fact that a Quantum can stop to pick-up a passenger, and proceeds to race past you and get to the popular stop first. The monopoly of space plays such a crucial role in as far as checking is concerned. The possession of a monopoly of a particular distance in between you and a taxi behind you and another taxi in front of you means the names and the appearances of the taxi do not matter. This monopoly takes away the bargaining power of passengers for that moment. The importance of monopoly of space is linked to the fact that many commuters are choosy in terms of what taxi they board. Many Toyota Quantums operating in South Africa are new because many were introduced only in 2005. Further they are considered by many commuters to be spacious and comfortable as a result Toyota Quantums are preferred over other minibus taxis.

Another survival strategy that taxi drivers make use of is to accept or give away 'rocks'. Developed into an everyday practice – what Burawoy (1998: 15) refers to as social processes. The researcher has termed this practice 'rocky relations'. *Matlapa*, or rocks, is a term used in Limpopo to refer to a situation whereby a taxi driver passes his passengers on to another driver to complete the journey while they turn back or take another direction. Such exchanges takes place in Mamelodi, but I have never heard them being referred to as *matlapa*. Such passengers that are exchanged are called *matlapa* (or rocks) because it is implied they become a burden or 'too heavy' for the other taxi and as a result, the taxi is unable to complete the journey.

Rocky relations take place due to one of the following reasons:

- The taxi has only two or three passengers and the driver realises that he will then make the journey at a loss;
- It is late and the driver wishes to finish for the day; and
- The taxi has broken down.

Whatever the reason, the passengers do indeed become a burden. 'Rocky relations' is a survival strategy because both drivers usually get something out of the exchange. For instance, a taxi travelling from Jane Furse to Groblersdal with three passengers at a fare of R32.00 each might exchange the passengers as rocks and the driver doing the exchanging can get as much as half of the total money, depending on how much of the journey he has already covered. However, with drivers who have established good working relations, rocky exchanges can take place for free. In some instances, rocky relations can yield good returns – particularly those exchanges between long distance taxis and local operators. Broadly interpreted, rocky relations are a way of ensuring that passengers reach their destinations, irrespective of whether the original taxi broke down or ran out of fuel. Rocky relations are the embodiment of the extent to which taxi drivers are willing to establish good working relations for the sake of their clients and for the good of the industry. The significance of these relations, over and above being a survival strategy for taxi drivers, is that they are interlocked with cooperation among taxi drivers, passenger satisfaction and convenience. These rocky relations can also be interpreted as the existence of an informal feeder system that is inherent to the minibus taxi industry.

One can see from this discussion that taxi drivers have to take considerable initiatives in their hostile working conditions. They have developed a number of strategies to 'make out' over time. In the following section, making out is explored in relation to a number of themes that emerged from the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2.

#### **5.4. The Minibus Taxi Industry: Nuts and Bolts**

From the literature reviewed, the interview schedule, observations made and interviews collected, the following eight broad themes and sub-themes emerged:

- the labour process as a social product;
- the mobile workplace;
- work control and consensus;
- an employment thread;

- unionisation;
- a 'jockeyrist' career;
- leisure versus subsistence; and
- family and community as peripherals.

### **Labour Process as a Social Product**

Guided by the literature reviewed (see chapter 2), the purpose of the observation of the nature of work distinctive of the minibus taxi industry, in two different provinces and different locales (urban area and rural to semi-urban area), was informed by the need to understand how the daily labour process unfolds in varying conditions. The prevailing socioeconomic conditions motivate work organization in the minibus taxi industry. Whilst the labour process might be homogeneous, the daily application (that is, the length of the working day and the intensity of the working) of such a labour process varies according to the local conditions. It is important to take into account that a taxi driver's day of work is affected by (to various degrees) the following factors:

- the day's performance;
- the vehicle; and finally
- spatial influence and the socioeconomic conditions.

A brief discussion of the above-mentioned factors is provided below.

### **Lekouso and Daily Performance**

A taxi driver's daily performance is linked to two important issues: firstly, *makhanda* or *lekouso* (pilfering) and secondly, wages. Historically, a central part of a taxi driver's income in the industry has been the practice of *lekouso*, as noted by both Mahlangu (2002) and McCaul (1990). Surprisingly, as a form of pilfering, *lekouso* or *makhanda* is a proud and open employment benefit that exists in this industry. Significantly, *lekouso* is not guaranteed rather one's ability to pilfer is linked to how one performs on the road. Further, performance is also tied to space.

*Lekouso*, or its absence, is a reflection of a particular spatiality. Taxi drivers actually envy each other based on the amount they can accumulate daily as *lekouso*.

It is also something to brag about to each other. A driver at the Nellmapius platform was heard bragging to another driver (who operated the route from the Denneboom Taxi rank to Willows): “Ah *lena a lediselo*” or in English: “Ah you guys don’t get *lekouso*” (field notes). The driver who plied the route from Denneboom to Nellmapius implied that his route was more profitable than the other one and that he was able to pilfer parts of the ‘checking’. If it is easier to make targets set by taxi owners, it is also easier to ‘cream off’ parts of the takings for the day. This also explains the intense competition over certain routes between taxi associations.

When asked whether the taxi owners or employers were aware of this practice, all of the participants indicated that the owners knew about it, particularly the owners who formerly worked as taxi drivers. Indeed, participants pointed to taxi owners who had used their pilfered money to buy their own taxis. According to participants, taxi owners know about the practice because *lekouso* is considered part of the industry and therefore it is not considered as illegal or as stealing by the driver. Petri reasons that:

Expecting us not to put some of the money aside for ourselves is unrealistic because there is no way one can work with water and not have even a single droplet of water drop on them (Petri, 31/12/2010).

However, for some of the participants there are more compelling reasons for *lekouso*. Beckham states that because he wakes up at home every morning, he is more or less acquainted with the situation at home. Therefore, every evening when he finishes work he knows if he needs *lekouso* to, either buy meat (or whatever is needed) for that evening’s supper. However, if the situation allows, Beckham claims he hands in all of the day’s takings. For most of the drivers, *lekouso* is a means of making ends meet. Petri reports that he has his own target of R75.00 during the off-peak season and R150.00 for the December period. Fundamentally, it is important to recognise the fact that *lekouso* is intrinsically linked to how one performs on a given day.

In Chapter 3, it was mentioned that the payment of taxi drivers can be through remuneration of a set quota or payment can be according to a percentage of the takings. The majority of the participants in this study operated on percentages and

usually received between 20 and 25 percent of the takings. Given this percentage payment system, the majority of taxi drivers recognise the fact that they cannot afford to underperform for two or more consecutive days, particularly those who are paid on a weekly basis. If taxi drivers fail to meet implicit or explicit targets, much pressure is put on them. Consequently, a taxi driver will start work very early in the morning, at around 04:00, and work until around 18:30 in Limpopo or until between 19:30 and 21:00 in Mamelodi, Pretoria. The need to earn something for themselves out of a day's work motivates taxi drivers to put effort into their work.

As the above extract on pilfering shows, there are taxi drivers who have personal daily targets, as well as the targets of their employers, to meet. Ultimately, such a situation has a direct bearing on a taxi driver's length and intensity of the working day.

### **Working Hours and Daily Takings**

One of the principal objectives of the current legislation is to regulate the number of working hours in the minibus taxi industry. The findings of this study reveal that working hours are intrinsically linked to the daily takings or business profits (in capitalist language) and *lekouso*. The returns per load are very instrumental in this regard – without a doubt, the daily takings trump limitation of the number of working hours. The case in Mamelodi is instructive in this regard and while the Jane Furse case forms an important part of this study, the daily checking and working hour's relationship was difficult to ascertain because it was not always easy to follow the returns per load. It was difficult to follow the returns per load because of the length of the route and the number of pick-ups and drop offs that take place during the journey.

In contrast to Mamelodi, the Jane Furse to Groblersdal route stretches for approximately 80 kilometres and as such makes it impossible to follow because of the different prices along the route. The fare system on this route is R6.00 for every trip not extending beyond any village in which the passenger boarded the taxi. The fare then increases by R1.00 for every village travelled through. In essence, a local trip costs R6.00 and the whole journey from Jane Furse to Groblersdal costs R32.00.

In Mamelodi, the local fare is R7.00 for the route Denneboom to Mandela and anywhere in between the two. This fare increases by 50c when travelling from Denneboom to Lusaka and the RDP zone (RDP is name for one of the sections that makes up the Mamelodi Township). At R7.00 a fare, a full load from Denneboom to Mandela yields R98.00 for a 14 seater Inyathi or Amandla minibus taxi. The capacity of Toyota Quantums varies between 13 and 14 seats. For the purpose of this discussion, the eight or nine seater Toyota Ventures and Condors will be excluded. Reason being that it is clear that these two vehicles will not be used as taxis for much longer when one takes into consideration the government's efforts to formalise this industry.

Most taxi drivers have no choice but to work long hours because they work in an industry that is heavily dependent on peak periods. For the minibus taxi industry, a peak hour period is mainly from 04:00 in the morning to 08:00 late morning and again from 16:00 to 19:30 in the evening. However, these peak hour periods are not universal to all areas of South Africa. The spatial socioeconomic difference in South African can be used to account for this peak period variations. The morning peak hour period normally yields R294.00 for three full loads from Lusaka to Denneboom. This figure can go up to R320.00 when pick-ups are factored in. In most cases, these taxis return empty to Lusaka because the morning traffic is usually one directional. By the end of the morning peak, the majority of taxi drivers would make anything from R180.00 to R200.00 after filling up for the off-peak struggle. Most taxi drivers retreat to the taxi rank (binds) and wait for the afternoon peak period. This decision is largely based on a calculation of the returns because the off-peak period is a gamble which most drivers are not willing to take. For the majority of taxi drivers the off-peak period can result in losses due to money spent on petrol.

The same routine will be followed in the afternoon when commuters return from work between 16:00 and 19:00. Taxis that leave the taxi rank from 16:00 would, on average, make three to four trips with R70.00 spent on petrol to refuel for every trip, which would result in a daily checking of anything between R400.00 and R550.00 when added to monies accumulated during the morning peak period. A taxi driver's day of work is tied to a number of factors that impact greatly on daily takings. Of

significance here, is the undeniable impact of the travel time during peak periods. Observations indicate that the Denneboom to Lusaka trip, which would normally take 20 minutes, was considerably extended – by anything from 40 to 45 minutes travel time during peak periods because of high traffic volumes. It is during high traffic volumes that the majority of taxi drives resort to unconventional driving skills, this in order to make daily checking. Furthermore, some taxi drivers do push themselves a little more so they can have something to take with at the end of the working day.

### **The Vehicle**

Observations indicate that there are three types of taxis operating on the Jane Furse to Groblersdal route in Limpopo and nine types of vehicles operating locally in Mamelodi, Pretoria.

In Limpopo the Chinese-manufactured Inyathi, Toyota Quantum and Toyota Siyaya are used. In Mamelodi the Toyota Quantum, Venture, Condor and Siyaya are used, as well as the Chinese-manufactured Inyathi, Amandla, Foton View, Sisbuyile and Ndlovu (see figure: 6-15). All of these different makes of taxis come with various advantages and disadvantages that may have an effect on the working day of taxi drivers. An external factor, which serves as a disadvantage for all those who drive the new taxis (the Toyota Quantums, Inyathi and others), is that of the monthly instalments that taxi owners pay for some of these taxis.



**Figure: 6.**



Figure: 6 depict the side view of a Toyota Quantum. Photo by author: 2/17/2012.

**Figure: 7.**



Figure: 7 depict the front view of a Toyota Quantum. Photo by author: 5/13/2012.

**Figure: 8.**



Figure: 8 depict the side view of a Toyota Siyaya. Photo by author: 3/31/2012.

**Figure: 9.**



Figure: 9 depict the front view of a Toyota Siyaya. Photo by author: 5/13/2012.

**Figure: 10.**



Figure: 10 depict side view of a Toyota Venture. Photo by author: 3/31/2012

**Figure: 11.**



Figure: 11 depict the front view of a Toyota Venture. Photo by author: 3/31/2012.

**Figure: 12.**



Figure: 12 depict a holistic view of a Toyota Condor. Photo sourced from the internet 01/08/2012.

**Figure: 13**



Figure: 13 depict the side view of a Toyota Condor. Photo by author: 31/08/2010



**Figure: 14**



Figure: 14 depict the side view of the Chinese manufactured Amandla. Photo by author: 4/21/2012.

**Figure: 15.**



Figure: 15 depict the front view of the Chinese manufactured Amandla. Photo by author: 5/13/2012.

Of all the vehicles mentioned, the Toyota Quantum yields the biggest return for a number of reasons.

The majority of commuters prefer a Quantum over all other taxis on the road as a Quantum is considered to be faster and more spacious in comparison to the other taxis. However, because of its price tag, a Quantum is expected to earn much more money than any of the other taxis are expected to earn. This requires Quantum drivers to put a little more effort into their work, but it also makes work a little bit more difficult for those who have to compete with a Quantum for passengers on the road because of its popularity. However, it should be noted that there is varying popularity of the different vehicles in different locales. For example, the Chinese-manufactured taxis did not seem very popular in Limpopo when compared to the Toyota Quantum and Toyota Siyaya taxis. This is because Toyota's Quantums and Siyaya still dominate in numbers. This difference in popularity relates to both usage and ridership of the vehicles.

The Chinese-manufactured taxis are very dominant in Mamelodi, to the extent that their popularity has overtaken both Toyota Condors and Ventures. It is however not clear what influences the popularity of a particular taxi in a given locale, for example whether the difference in popularity can be attributed to affordability or commuter preference. However, commuters' influence over the labour process is conspicuously notable.

### **Spatial Influence and Socioeconomic Conditions**

Observations and interviews carried out in both provinces reveal mainly one thing in common about the minibus taxi industry in these areas – the central importance of commuters. Commuters drive the sustenance of the minibus taxi industry. This can be seen in the influence that commuters have on the minibus taxi industry. The minibus taxi industry and its relations with commuters is revealed in the prevailing socioeconomic conditions' (space) influence over the availability of commuters, travel times of commuters and ultimately availability of transport and the duration, as well as the intensity of the working day for taxi drivers. The following discussion demonstrates the minibus taxi industry's tendency to align itself with local conditions.

Observations of working hours and formal conversations held with participants in Limpopo indicate that the majority of taxi drivers start work around 05:30 in the morning, including on Mondays. The observations reveal the following information:

- Monday 20 December 2010: work is started at 05:50 in the morning and finished at 18:00.
- Tuesday 21 December 2010: work is started at 05:40 and finished at 18:55.
- Monday 27 December 2010: work is started at 05:50.
- Tuesday 28 December 2010: work is started at 06:00.

When asked why the taxi drivers mainly started work at about 05:30, Brad replied by saying: “The majority of commuters around here start to travel around six in the morning, unlike where you come from” (referring to Pretoria, a formal conversation held in the taxi between the researcher and the driver)

In contrast, observations in Pretoria reveal the following:

- Saturday 11 June 2011: work is started at 07:30 after the driver failed to wake up at 05:30 because he had the flu.
- Tuesday 14 June (2011): the taxi has a full load by 05:20 in the morning and work is finished at 19:15 (It is important to note here that to have a full load by 05:20 suggests that the taxi had been on the road from about 04:45) .

Furthermore, for most taxi drivers in Mamelodi, Sunday is still a day of work. It appears as though churches are more centralised in Mamelodi, in comparison to churches in some parts of Limpopo, and as such churchgoers to some degree ensure that Sundays are still productive days for taxi drivers. Waiting by the gates of the two ZCC churches for passengers can produce a full load for a taxi to any given direction on a Sunday afternoon. Furthermore, observations point to the fact that in Mamelodi floating is a standard work practice. Most of the smaller taxis, such as Toyota Ventures and Condors, rely on floating rather than using the taxi rank because conditions allow this. It is found that while Lionel floats in a bigger taxi (an Inyathi), this practice is an exception to the rule, rather than normal practice. Lionel attributes his continued floating to the fact that he drove a Toyota Venture for too many years and as such he is used to the practice of floating to the extent that he still floats in a 14 seater Inyathi, which is contrary to the norm.



The above findings regarding times to start work are in agreement with those of the *National Household Travel Survey* (Department of Transport, 2003: 119). For the purpose of this study, the work trips starting times made in the two provinces examined (Limpopo and Gauteng Province) will be highlighted in the table below

Table 2: Table representing the percentage of work trips made at certain times in each province. Information is taken from the *National Household Travel Survey* (Department of Transport, 2003).

Province	Percentages of work trips (%)				
	Before 06:00	06:00 to 06:29	06:30 to 06:59	07:00 to 07:59	08:00 or later
Western Cape	11.2	13.4	20.9	40.8	13.8
Eastern Cape	12.3	11.9	17.7	45.6	12.6
Northern Cape	8.7	9.1	22.2	49.4	10.6
Free State	13.8	14.1	19.2	40.7	12.2.
KwaZulu Natal	25.0	18.5	19.7	28.9	8.0
North West	29.2	17.6	15.8	27.3	10.2
Gauteng	20.8	17.8	17.8	13.3	12.2
Mpumalanga	28.6	14.3	19.8	26.7	10.6
Limpopo	18.9	17.4	24.4	30.3	9.0

The pronounced differences in the percentage of work trips starting times in the two cases (in Limpopo (Jane Furse) and Gauteng (Mamelodi)) reflect the respective social spaces (social forces) present in each of the provinces. Burawoy (2009: 203) notes that these social spaces or forces are chief impetuses that shape the labour processes in a given locale. Rainnie *et al.*, (2010: 303) (refer to Chapter 2) note the propensity for local conditions to filter into the shop floor. Consequently, local conditions should be utilised as a tool to guide the regulation of work. While the Sectoral Determination, Taxi Sector of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997) explicitly notes the employer's premises and the taxi rank as workplaces, not all local conditions allow access to the taxi rank.

## Mobile Workplace

An assertion largely based on the observations of daily labour activities of taxi drivers is that arguably, taxi drivers do not necessarily engage in any form of work on the employer's premises and or at the taxi rank that is directly related to their work as taxi drivers (refer to Chapter 3). Observations done at the two taxi ranks, namely the Jane Furse Taxi Rank, and the Denneboom Taxi Rank, show that queue marshals are the actual labourers at taxi ranks, not necessarily the taxi drivers. For most of the time, taxi drivers can mostly be observed sleeping, sitting in their taxis or simply playing cards at taxi ranks while marshals shouts out, "Mandela, RDP Zone last one, last one, Mandela last one" (these are some of the sections in the Mamelodi township). Formal conversations with some of the drivers point to the fact that most of the taxi associations have queue marshals whose work is to assist passengers at the loading platforms.

Queue marshals are responsible for ensuring that commuters know which taxi to get into and which taxi is heading in which direction. The queue marshals also open and close doors for the passengers. It is actually punishable (in the form of a fine) at the Nebo Taxi Owners' Association for a driver to be inside the taxi while passengers are getting in. Queue marshals are hired and paid (around R350.00) by the associations, as well as R2 or R5 coins that each driver gives to the queue marshal for procuring a full load. This practice of taxi drivers giving the queue marshal R2 or R5 coins is apparently encouraged by most associations because of the realisation that the associations pay queue marshals very little. Drivers are therefore encouraged to give the queue marshals a R2 or R5 coin for their effort.

For the majority of taxi drivers, the actual work starts upon entering the vehicle and not necessarily at the taxi rank itself. In the case of Jane Furse, the driver is responsible for collecting the fares, whereas at Mamelodi, the passenger occupying the front seat performs this duty. In Mamelodi the driver ultimately does nothing more than just drive upon entering the vehicle, and this is the standard procedure.

It is the argument of this study that the definition of a workplace as defined in *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*; (sectoral determination 11 Taxi sector Part H: (South Africa, 1997:16) (see Chapter 3) is insufficient to cover the minibus taxi

industry. The interviews, supplemented by observation endeavoured to comprehend what is it that taxi drivers do when they are at work, and at what point during their daily activities do they consider themselves to be at work and where their place of work is.

This is how Brad described being at work as a taxi driver:

My work involves waking up every day early in the morning. From there I make my way to the taxi rank to get passengers and if there are no passengers at the [taxi] rank then I hit the road in search of commuters. I then ferry them from point A to B, and this I do ... seven days a week (Brad 22/12/2010).

Most of the participants had a convergent understanding of what it means to be at work – that is carrying out the actual labour process. However, extensive probing was required when it came to the question of the definition of the workplace. Responses varied from the employer's place, the taxi rank, the vehicle and the road as workplaces. Tshepo understands his place of work as the following:

Every morning when I wake up and saying I'm going to work I head to the taxi rank. So I think the taxi rank is my place of work. The taxi rank is my place of work and the minibus is my work. There would be in certain instances where I would consider the vehicle to be my place of work, like in situations where I don't get to use the taxi rank for one reason or the other (Tshepo (24/12/2010)).

Beckham understands his place of work as the following:

This is my place of work [the vehicle]. I consider the rank to be more like a bus stop, it is just a place where I go to get commuters or where I park the taxi whenever I want to eat or drink. I use the rank only when my position allows, other than that I am in the vehicle most of the time. So the vehicle is my place of work Beckham (28/12/2010).

It seems taxi drivers have multiple workplaces as Tshepo and Beckham's extracts reveal. On the other hand, for Brad a workplace is defined by doing what ensures his wages, but the minibus taxi is nothing more than an enabling tool in that process:

[The] Taxi rank, however, I'm only at work when I'm inside the vehicle ferrying passengers from point A to B ... The manner in which the minibus taxi works, it is more like I'm at work only if I have passengers in the vehicle because being at work and not having any passengers in the vehicle means nothing since I will not get paid. So being at work is all about being inside the vehicle ... being at work is when I'm on the road ferrying passengers. I

however do not regard the vehicle as [a] workplace. It is more like a tool that I use to execute my duties, it's just like a shovel (Brad 22/12/2010).

Evidently, most of the participants accord the taxi rank the workplace status simply because it is a place where taxi drivers converge and spend most of their day. Brad's comment indicates that, for taxi drivers the actual work takes place only when they are in the vehicle; however, because the taxi does not fit in with the societal conception of a workplace, it is then relegated as an enabling tool only. In addition, the road itself featured repeatedly in taxi drivers' understanding of a workplace, which can be seen in Lionel's statement:

Ok, when I wake up I head to the owner's place to collect the taxi ... No, that's where I collect the taxi and after I drive around in search of commuters. I think the streets, [or] the road will be my place of work (Lionel 12/06/2011).

For Madiane his workplace is represented by the two places where he collects commuters:

Denneboom to Mapius [Nellmapius, one of the local townships]. I go to the taxi, get into the taxi and head to the taxi rank. Look my job involves transporting commuters from point A that is Mapius [Nellmapius] and point B being Denneboom, so Mapius [Nellmapius] to Denneboom is my workplace (Madiane 07/09/2011).

For Mputi, his workplace is the road:

My workplace is on the road, to search for commuters and driver them to their different destinations ... You must remember that what we do is to ferry passengers that we get on the road ... The taxi rank is more like a platform (Mputi 09/07/2011).

Clearly, for taxi drivers, a workplace is understood in terms of 'what' they do rather than the 'where' they do it. Lionel, Madiane and Mputi's extracts clearly demonstrate this pattern very well. The same understanding of a workplace, as shared by Lionel, Madiane and Mputi, holds true for Thabo:

My workplace is the taxi itself, or the spot that I occupy daily. It is east, Lusaka that is where I am going to get my first load because every morning when I leave the house for work I go to Lusaka. I start my work from Lusaka and head to Denneboom (Thabo 07/09/2011).

Thabang's conception of the workplace is the following:

The taxi belongs to the owner. I work for him with his vehicle. But my job is in the vehicle because if I do not get in to the taxi I won't get paid. So my work is when I am in the car. If I am not in the taxi that means I am not working (Thabang 14/06/2011).

If anything, these extracts complicate and heighten the need to clearly define a workplace for taxi drivers. These extracts demonstrate the extent to which taxi drivers understand their place of work in relation to what they do, that is the labour process. Thabang's comment is telling in this regard. The current definition of a workplace in the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, particularly the Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector, part H (South Africa, 1997: 16), is an indication of the failure of the South African legislative framework to break away from standard employment relations and the existence of the 'shop floor' for all workers in all sectors of the labour market.

Brad's comment alludes to the fact that there is no work to be done by taxi drivers at the taxi rank. The narratives of these taxi drivers make it explicitly clear that being at work for them is fundamentally about having passengers in the vehicle. This is tied to the notion of work control that employers or taxi owners seek to exercise over their drivers. In the absence of the supervisory role as traditionally practised, the minibus taxi industry requires a different approach to the supervision of work.

### **Work Control and Consensus**

Motivated by the impracticality of the supervisory role as we know it, taxi drivers are arguably supervised through the daily targets or quotas that they are required to achieve. This can be attributed to the fact that for most taxi owners, the only proof of work performed on the part of their employees is the daily checking as discussed by Brat:

Some of the owners make it explicit from the start that you can't bring anything less than R400.00 [daily and] they make it known that anything less than R400.00 [daily] is unacceptable ... (Brad 22/12/2010).

For the majority of the taxi owners, a percentage system is the only solution to ensure that taxi drivers do not steal their monies because many taxi owners suspect their taxi drivers of pilfering (or *lekouso*). This is commented on by Thato who states:

All I can say is that in this industry you earn what you have worked for ... which means you will earn based on what you have accumulated. The harder you work the more you will earn (Thato, 29/12/2010).

While the majority of the participants pointed to the fact that they did not have specified targets to meet on a daily basis, they did however indicate that anything less than R200.00 is unacceptable and as such, they always strove to earn something around R200.00 as a minimum (note that this amount is only applicable to Limpopo). Some of the drivers interviewed had not been told how much they should earn on a daily basis by the taxi owner; however, tacitly, the drivers seem to know what amount is unacceptable. Beckham comments on this:

...I do not have targets to meet but you can tell by the way he [the taxi owner] talks that certain amounts are not acceptable (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

Petri (31/12/2010) also comments on this:

... [H]e [the taxi owner] is usually dissatisfied with something like R200.00, that kind of an amount leads him to assume I do not want to work or I am stealing his money (Petri, 31/12/2010).

It seems that being formally informed of a target is, to a large extent, a mere formality. Taxi drivers are expected to be reasonably business-minded and as such, they must be realistic in what they consider a good daily checking. Brad explains his situation in this way:

No, I do not have targets, all I do is to work ... I do not have targets, but yes there is a certain amount that one knows is not enough. Let's say for example I bring in R300.00 today and the next day and there is bound to be a problem right there ... There is no uniform amount. It differs according to the kind of vehicle one drives, for example with a Toyota Quantum R400.00 is a daily minimum and you can't bring anything less than that ... for [a] Toyota Siyaya [it] is R300.00 while Inyathi is only R200.00 (Brad, 22/12/2010).

Over and above the daily targets as a form of work control, the above also reflects the current financial burden carried by the taxi owners or employers with regard to the new taxis, such as the Toyota Quantum. Brad's assertion that "you can't bring anything less than that [R400.00]" seek to highlight the extent to which taxi owners pass the financial burden to their drivers. According to Thabang and Lionel, taxi owners constantly remind them that the taxis are bought on credit and as such the

drivers cannot afford not to meet their daily targets. The reality of this matter is however acknowledged by a number of participants because they have seen a number of taxis being repossessed. While the participants acknowledge that taxis can be repossessed and have they had seen this happen, they still feel the targets are at times unreasonable. Lionel however works hard because he is told the taxi was bought on credit:

That would be the day I'm fired. The car I'm driving is on credit that is what I'm told, so if I bring in less money the owner will fail to meet his monthly instalment, fail to subsist and fail to pay my wage, so it is important that I work hard to bring in a reasonable checking. So the money that I bring in should be able to meet the above mentioned needs plus maintenance (Lionel, 12/06/2011).

On the other hand, Brad and Petri have different views on the issue of having to meet targets. For them, targets are not just about the three needs that Lionel refers to. When asked for his opinion on having to meet targets, Brad says:

.... [O]n the one hand it is because they [the taxi owners] think we might start to be lazy to perform and as such affect their profits. Because now our pay would be guaranteed, most of us would not push ourselves this hard. I think that is the reason why our pay is performance based. For me, if we had monthly wages most of us would not be pushing themselves this hard knowing our payments are guaranteed (Brad, 22/12/2010).

Petri is of the opinion that:

My target motivates me to put in the extra effort because I am aware that if I do not work hard I will not meet my own targets. So if I do not put in the extra effort, that means I might end up with nothing for that day. My target requires me to put in extra two or one hour into my work day (Petri, 31/12/2010).

When asked if he thought that the same could be applied to his colleagues, Petri (31/12/2010) replies: "It goes for all of us". Clearly, targets are owners/employees' priority in as a way to ensure the profitability of the business. Drawing on Burawoy's notion of consent (Burawoy, 1979:30) (see Chapter 2), notwithstanding the long hours that taxi drivers have to put in, it seems that they have an interest in the rewards that the targets offer, taxi drivers recognise the importance of targets and consciously direct their efforts to achieve these targets. Important to note here is the point that at times taxi drivers have own individual targets (*lekouso*) to meet. The jostling and hustling that take place both on the road and at taxi ranks are the direct ramifications of this reward system.



Technically, taxi drivers are put under surveillance by the employers by having to meet targets and this is an attempt by taxi owners to ensure productivity. Similarly the percentage system is designed to regulate the working day of taxi drivers. Both the target and percentages systems in the minibus taxi industry addresses the longstanding questions often asked by those in managerial positions, such as: 'How do you get workers to work?' This question becomes pertinent in industries where the nature of the work inherently militates against the supervisory role that is often used as an instrument of enforcing productivity. Of significance is the fact that observations reveal that taxi drivers can make anything in the region of R300.00 to R1000.00 per day. The amounts presented here take into account the impact of the region and the time of the year.

Taxi drivers are at mercy of the taxi owners or employers as they are exposed to the harshness of the labour market and a lack of legislative protection. Taxi drivers consequently face a constant fear of losing their jobs should they fail to perform.

### **5.5. Threads of Employment**

One can describe the relationships between taxi drivers and taxi owners as 'threads' rather than formal contracts of employment. This is motivated by the fact that threads are sometimes strong and elastic and at other times, they are brittle and thin. The findings of this study converge with those of the literature reviewed (see Chapter 3) with regard to the employment insecurity that the majority of taxi drivers face. All the participants that took part in this study pointed to the fact that by being a taxi driver, every night when they park the taxi at the taxi owner's place might be the last time they sit in the driver's seat of the vehicle. Beckham's comments paint a graphic picture of this situation:

I tell you now that it might happen that tomorrow when I go to work I might not find the vehicle in the garage. If you ask you're more likely to be told that someone is doing a special trip with it, even worse you might not be paid for the days that you have already worked for. You look around and you realise there is nothing you can do, you are powerless, this person is rich and you are just a mere taxi driver and if you do not have anyone powerful to fight for you then the situation is hopeless (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

Beckham's account highlights the extent to which legislative protection can potentially provide taxi drivers with recourse against the taxi owners' tendency to act with impunity. Many studies confirm the malpractice within the minibus taxi industry (see Chapter 3).

### **Legislation**

On paper, taxi drivers have been employees from around the 1980s in accordance with the stipulations of the *Basic Condition of Employment Act of 1983* (McCaul, 1990: 91, see Chapter 3). Theoretically, taxi drivers are entitled to all the benefits enjoyed by those defined as 'employees', but regrettably, the situation on the ground depicts a different picture. According to Brad, Lionel, Thato and Petri the lack of protection really makes taxi drivers vulnerable to all sorts of abuse by the taxi owners or employers. Brad comments that:

First, we are not registered, meaning no UIF [Unemployment Insurance Fund] and secondly there is no job security. It might happen that tomorrow when I get to work I'm told the car has been taken to the mechanics for regular check-ups and that's it - I'm jobless. They'll say return later to collect all the monies owed to you while the car gets fixed so that you don't feel constrained to look for greener pastures. That is why I'm saying this job is different because I don't think such things happen in other industries (Brad, 22/12/2010).

No, I'm not covered. The only law that covers me is Road Accident Fund because I'm even in possession of a certificate, but the laws that cover employees in South Africa don't cover us. I think being without a union is a contributory factor because I mean, we are still given our wages in envelopes (Lionel12/06/2011).

For Lionel, receiving his wages in an envelope is an important indicator of the taxi drivers' current working conditions. Wages given in an envelope indicate that no money has been deducted from the wages for any funds, which in itself speaks to issues of being registered as an employee. Thato's comments shows that taxi drivers are exploited:

We come to work even if we are sick, it is not easy to take days off. If it was leave with pay it would be easy and even important because then one can go on leave without having to worry about the salary (Thato, 29/12/2010).

In the absence of legal protection, taxi owners have a significant leverage in relation to taxi drivers. This exposes the taxi drivers to more exploitation and in some instances abuse. If one is forced to go to work when one is ill, it is not only

dangerous for one's health, but it also can lead to road accidents and loss of human life in the process. This situation is exacerbated by employment security concerns, as indicated by Petri:

Yes we do have security concerns. You start getting worried the minute you do not perform, that hey, I might lose my job (Petri, 31/12/2010).

The job insecurity experienced by taxi drivers is a major worry and it affects all other aspects of their social lives. Consequently, these constant worries inconvenience other spheres of taxi drivers lives and as such, some drivers are even afraid to enter into long-term financial debts and to take leave.

### **Insecurity and a 'Gentlemen's Agreement'**

One important aspect of the minibus taxi industry is the extent to which the employment thread holds the two parties together. The thickness or thinness of any thread that connects two objects together is a determining factor in the existence of a relationship between the objects. The findings of this study indicate that without legislation to bolster the thread between taxi drivers and their employers, the employment relationship between these parties is held together by a very thin thread.

The narratives of these taxi drivers suggest that taxi owners or the employers are aware of the vulnerability of these taxi drivers. The evidence collected in the two provinces points to an attitude by the taxi owners that they are 'untouchable'. Beckham says that:

... [S]ome of them [the taxi owners] refuse to give days off. If you tell them you want one or two days to rest they will tell you that means you're tired of your job (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

I mean right now the situation is such that we live on hope. Every morning when we wake up to go to work we are just hoping that you find the minibus waiting for you, you never know because sometimes you might meet the minibus on the way full of passengers while you're on the way to collecting it (Brad, 22/12/2010).

Thato also emphasise taxi drivers' vulnerability:

Very easy, easy, easy. That is always with us and it is not even surprising anymore, it just happens and in some instances you don't get informed of the reasons why. It speaks directly to the need to formalise the minibus taxi industry. People should get registered, none of those things happen, people just work under verbal agreement and whenever one of the parties feel tired of the other party they just part ways without any consequences (Thato 29/12/2010).

Thato's description highlights the extent to which taxi drivers remain vulnerable and at times are at mercy of their employers. Furthermore, a feeling of helplessness can be deduced from the above comment. Lionel describes his employment situation as the following:

Yes, generally, this issue of records is problematic because even now there is nothing that proves that I work for my employer. My employment can be terminated at any time; it might happen that tomorrow when I go to work I might not find the taxi, having been taken by someone else. Things like gentlemen's agreement that is, entering into agreements without actually signing anything you just talk things over while standing by the gate and that's it. This kind of arrangement complicates issues. In most cases the owners are concerned with profits, they do tend to be problematic because for them the agreement is primarily performance based, so as long as you're performing you fine. The problem becomes the day you come back from work and you say to him there were no passengers on the road today, right there and then, the gentlemen's agreement will be nullified on the spot and you're fired (Lionel12/06/2011).

Thabo also points out that:

If you are lucky, you will work [one] whole full year with one owner. My brother, according to my knowledge, [the] majority of people who work in this industry are family men, so we expect, let's say for example I work in this industry for 30 years, if I get fired tomorrow I won't have anything to show that I have been employed for over 30 years. The 30 years that I have been working I should have something to show for it. We don't have blue cards to start with, no UIF, no pension fund. We work hand to mouth (Thabo 07/09/2011).

The above comments from Lionel and Thabo reflect the degree to which taxi owners or employers disregard workers' rights that are enshrined in the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997* (South Africa, 1997). These comments also show the extent to which taxi drivers actively lay claims to those rights, which speaks volumes about their current working conditions. Furthermore, the above comments highlight the inhumane treatment that taxi drivers are subjected to by taxi owners. The employment insecurity experienced by taxi drivers on a daily basis impacts on their social lives as fathers, uncles, brothers and community members in general.

## 5.6. Community and Family as the Periphery

According to Sapsford (1981: 28), labour market participation takes place at the expense of leisure, while leisure takes place at the expense of income. Compounded by the 'pay as you work' system, taxi drivers are forever attached to their work with a corrosive impact on their social lives.

Examining the working conditions of taxi drivers in Los Angeles, United states, Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 5) note the following:

- Taxi drivers work an average of 72 hours per week, sometimes putting in 18 to 20 hours per day driving in Los Angeles traffic.
- The long working hours of taxi drivers leave very little time to spend with their children leading to de facto single parent households in many important respects.

To a large degree (without disregarding variations), Blasi and Leavitt's findings (2010) compare well with the current situation in South Africa. Reporting on his findings, Mahlangu (2002: 82) touched on the social life aspect of taxi drivers working in the minibus taxi industry, though only in passing:

Working fourteen hours a day contravenes the provisions of the Basic Conditions of employment Act. Moreover, it could have [a] negative impact on the family life of a driver.

Taxi drivers are forever attached to their jobs because they are not paid minimum wages and fear losing their jobs should they go on leave. This attachment is a way of securing both their employment and wages. Lionel indicates that taking days off is always risky because he might lose his job. Lionel also indicates that whenever one needs to take some days off, the taxi owner or the driver will look for someone to be a stand-in. He however cautions that should the stand-in driver bring in more money, it might mean the end of employment for the original driver:

That might mean the end of you because the stand-in driver might bring in more money [checking] than you and that can spell trouble for you in as far as employment is concerned .... I normally bring in something between R400.00 to R500.00 daily so anything from around R600.00 to R650.00 can lead to my dismissal (Lionel, 12/06/2011).

Consequently taking days off is discouraged by this malpractice. Ultimately, taxi drivers are, more than anything else, just workers.

### **Jockeyist Career, Community and Family Life**

This study, similar to those done previously (see Chapter 3), reveals that taxi drivers have extremely limited time for a social life as can be seen in the following excerpt from a conversation with some of the taxi drivers who took part in the study:

In this industry we are told we cannot have leave days or a day off because the taxi, we are told is a jockey – underwear and as a man you cannot be without underwear that is what the owners are saying to us (a conversation with taxi drivers at Jane Furse Taxi rank,(Field note 20/12/2010)).

Explicating the underwear example above, Brad comments why he does not have time for a social life in the following extract:

I work seven days a week, i.e. Monday to Sunday for more or less fourteen hours every day. And I don't get off days; the only time I am off is when I am sick or the vehicle needs to be fixed. I don't really consider that to be an off day because as soon as the vehicle breaks down I must then take it to the mechanic and as soon as it is fixed I hit the road. If it happens that it is already late I park and continue the next day. Sometimes I fake illness in order to get off days because other than that one would be working all the time (Brad, 22/12/2010).

More and more people are forced to spend the greater part of their adult life attached to paid work, as is shown by Beckham's comment:

Right now if you ask me, it is as if my entire extended family stays in Johannesburg. I take a long time to see my relatives, even the people that I stay in the same house as it is not always easy to see them on a daily basis. I leave the house around five to collect the taxi and will return the taxi around five and when you get there you do not just park the taxi and go home, you still need to calculate your checking and you will be home around eight because from the owner's place I still need to travel back to Pokwoane (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

Thabo also provides reasons for the lack of a social life:

There isn't much time to spend with family except the Sunday that I have mentioned. I don't have leave so Sunday is the only day were I get to spend time with the family. I normally start work around 4am and knock off at 7pm. By 8pm I'm already asleep, as soon as you get home all you want to do is to eat and go straight to bed, nothing else. There is no time to chit-chat with family, you're tired you just want to eat and go to bed (Thabo 07/09/2011).

The conversations held with the taxi drivers at the taxi rank are a further indictment on the attitudes of the taxi owners or employers with regard to legislation and the social wellbeing of their employees. The analogy of the taxi as a form of underwear tellingly highlights the fact that taxi drivers have no life outside of work. Without actively claiming the protective measures offered by legislation, taxi drivers remain, first and foremost, workers – stripped of social life and leisure activities:

... So one never gets to do anything with the family. When they go to church you are not there, funerals you are not there, you are never there as a family member. [It] Is like the taxi becomes the only friend you have. Your social life becomes a taxi, simple as that (Brad, 22/12/2010).

Even for those who get Sundays off, they contend that this is not enough, as indicated in the conversation with Tshepo:

I start work at 06:00 until 17:00 six days a week [one of the taxi drivers listening in on the conversation interjects and says: “seven days, not six. The rules of this industry dictate that we work seven days”]. I don’t have leave but I don’t work Sundays and holidays. Sundays I don’t work at all (Tshepo, 24/12/2010).

Yes, my work has implications for my family life, because being a taxi driver one does not have enough time to spend with one’s children. As I have indicated before, I only get to be with my kids when I am off work. Like during holidays. This is the thing, I do not have leave, and I only have off days, meaning I only get to see my children on Sundays or public holidays which is not enough (Tshepo 24/12/2010).

Of all the drivers spoken to, only Madiane was content with his family life. It seems that work demands of Madiane’s fiancée are well synchronised with his, which can be seen in the following comment by Madiane:

My case is that I knock off at 8pm and I can see my child. And sometime during mid-morning when it is not that busy I do go home spend some time with my wife, drive her to the taxi rank and then come back to continue with my daily work. In my case it is really different, I’m not that negatively affected as the others are in that respect. But I think for some it does impact them negatively, Sunday your wife wakes up early cleans the house and prepares to go to church and you can’t because you have to go to work (Madiane 07/09/2011).

However, the same cannot be said about Thabo’s experience:

Let’s just say Sunday, because sometimes during the week, midday is not that busy so one does get an opportunity to go home but when you get there, the child is at crèche and the wife is not there as well so it is actually useless, because you don’t get to see the family.



Otherwise you are going to have to take an off day which you're not going to get paid for (Thabo 07/09/2011).

Being part of the service sector, the work schedule of taxi drivers, is exacerbated by the lack of protection by legislation and as result does not generally allow for participation in certain social activities. This lack of family life is motivated by the fact that certain leisure and family activities can only be performed at certain times of the day and on certain days of the week, which results in taxi drivers being unable to fulfil certain social roles. The following is how Beckham sums up his work experience: "We work for Satan". This comment gives an indication of the severity of the situation.

An incident recorded in field notes that occurred on Sunday 12/06/2011 while working with Lionel might help to clarify Beckham's feelings about his work situation:

Following a rear tyre puncture, we had to extend our working hours a little bit for that Sunday so that we can cover for the lost time spent trying to get the tyre fixed [Refer to the section "A Day in the Life of a Taxi Driver"]. As a result we worked late into the evening and at around 20:10, the first born of Lionel called his father inquiring about his whereabouts at that time on a Sunday night. Upon ending the conversation on the phone, Lionel told me that was the son who was preparing to go to bed. Because the next day [Monday] was a school day and he wanted to see his father before he went to bed. He knew his father wouldn't be there the next morning when he woke up. The boy actually wanted pocket money from his father, but also to see him, because they did not see each other that day, except a few times when we drove past him playing with his friends in the streets. But because he does not know the taxi his father drives, technically the son did not see his father the whole of that day (Field notes, 12/06/2011).

The taxi drivers in this study seem to be forced to choose work over their families. Exacerbated by job insecurity, many find themselves in a weaker position against their employers. While the majority of taxi drivers wake up at home every morning, spending time with their family members seems to be an insurmountable task, as explained by Brad:

... Firstly we leave home very early in the morning: normally around five in the morning. Furthermore I knock off work at 19:00 and still have to catch a taxi home and in most instances get home around 20:00 in the evening. By then some of my family members have

already gone to bed, meaning I leave in the morning while everyone is asleep and come back after they have gone to bed (Brad, 22/12/2010).

By extension, taxi drivers are community members. Within most African communities, being a community member entails being literally a part of that community, that is to say that one must be seen to engage in community activities, such as community meetings, funerals, weddings and any other general community ceremonies. Beckham reflects on his community life prior to being a taxi driver and tells of how he has always been someone who was heavily involved in his community – having sung in the community choir as well as organised soccer tournaments for young boys in the community. Beckham's absence from his community is currently noticeable because of his previous involvement in the community and he comments that:

Hey, our work does affect us because a number of people have told me specifically that I do not attend funerals, weddings and so forth. We are being projected as people who do not want to associate with the community, the way they put it is like we look down on people. They say we must not expect to see them at our houses the day we also have funerals and/or weddings. Should it happen that they see me attending a funeral or a wedding at someone else's house they take it as if you are choosy about whose funeral and/or wedding to attend. They ask why you are only attending so and so's funerals or wedding, they take it as if you are using the social status of various families as a determining factor in as far as attendance is concerned. And I sometimes try to explain to some of them that it is not because I am choosy but that the kind of work I do, does not always allows one to take days off as and when one wishes (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

For most people, daily biological sustenance is inextricably linked to their labour market participation. It then proceeds from this fact that many of the working class citizens of South Africa are then confronted by the intractable consequences that follow their labour market participation. For taxi drivers, the issue of leisure becomes secondary to work.

### **Leisure versus Subsistence**

In the book *The Labour Market Ate My Babies*, Pocock (2006: 47) states that the majority of people sell their time and effort for money.

Given the payment system used in the minibus taxi industry, for taxi drivers the saying: 'time is money' poignantly describes their situation. When asked if taxi

drivers ever get time for leisure activities (such as spending time with friends or taking the family out for a Sunday lunch) Brad replies:

... (A)nd if I'm off it means I forfeit that day's earnings and every subsequent day's that I'm off. So here the policy is simple: no work no pay. We want to and would love to spend time with our families, but the pressures of work do not allow it. Time is everything in this industry because an hour's off can make a lot of difference with regard to daily checking. There is not even time to watch soccer, the only time I get to watch soccer is when the match is at night other than that there is no time for leisure activities (Brad, 22/12/2010)

It is the festive season right now, and many people are on holidays to enjoy some time with their families while we are on the road. Unless the owner says on the first of January do not come to work, then that means you have to be at work (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

Thato reflects on the paradox faced by taxi drivers in relation to the festive season:

You have to understand that everyone have certain social roles that they are required to fulfil, maybe over a weekend be it the need to attend weddings, funerals or just attending family ceremonies. I will give an example of the festive season, for most of us there is no time to spend with our families during the festive season, because that is actually a peak period for this industry. That is the busiest time of them all. Sometime the whole festive season can go by without one getting an opportunity to spend some time with the family. When it comes to the issue of family life, the impacts are really corrosive. Ironically, the festive season is the time of the year when everyone needs to take a break but for taxi driver that is when work days intensifies. I will give you an example, there are people who work until the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, when those people knock off work all they want to do is rush home, let's say you are driving long distance from Johannesburg to Limpopo, you drive all the way here and make a U-turn back to Johannesburg and by the time you get there it is the 25<sup>th</sup>, so that means you've actually had your Christmas on the road (Thato, 29/12/2010).

[Interviewer:] *You mention that some owners have relief drivers, so how does it work, do those drivers taking days off get paid for those days, or what is the situation?*

No, no, no! The money goes to the one who worked for those days. So what I am saying is that they [the drivers who go on leave] get leave without pay (Thato, 29/12/2010).

Thato's comment indicates that taking days off is possible in some situations; however, this would be based on financial calculations because being off means receiving no pay.

The current working conditions in the minibus taxi industry set the industry apart from other industries and forms of work. This difference is framed by all of the participants, through reference to lack of legislative protection. Lionel indicates the differences in the taxi industry in the following extract:

Yes, my work is different; let's take the example that in South Africa employees must work eight hours per day. But here that doesn't apply, I mean every morning I start work ahead of everyone else but knock off after everybody else. Let me say, those are serious matter[s] that will always require one to attend to, however as you're busy attending those matters that means your wage is also in attendance because you're not going to get paid. When the time comes for you to be paid, that's where the problem is, if you attend a funeral so does your wage. I don't even have time to watch soccer, I know there are instances where you have soccer matches being televised at 8pm but still one cannot watch such matches. For someone who wakes up at around 4am every morning it becomes really difficult to watch such matches. The only thing you want to do when you get home is to go straight to bed (Lionel12/06/2011).

Thato's comment is attested to by the fact that the researcher worked with Tshepo until the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 2010 and up to the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2010 with Petri, which shows that Thato's comment is true. Thabo shares the same sentiments with Lionel. Thato states that other than Sunday there is no other day to spend time with his family because in most cases he gets home exhausted and after a quick shower he eats and goes straight to bed.

Given the socioeconomic conditions of the majority of the working class citizens in South Africa, the current situation of taxi drivers point to the extent to which workers' bargaining power is diminishing, particularly for those workers working without legislative protection. The 'pay as you work' approach entrenched in the minibus taxi industry leaves the majority of taxi drivers with little choice between work and social life. Furthermore, the high unemployment rate in the South African labour market could explain taxi drivers' sense of powerlessness in relation to their employers. Ultimately, the need to subsist takes precedence over everything else.

Blasi and Leavitt (2010: 21-22), in an examination of similar issues in the United States of America, note that the majority of taxi drivers interviewed show a similar leisure versus subsistence conundrum. All the cab drivers in the United States are self-employed; however, they face similar challenges to those faced by their South African counterparts (Blasi & Leavitt, 2010: 21-22):

Somewhere in your brain it always tells you that another hour done, no income, no income ... the bad part is if you take a day off to enjoy life, in your brain, you know it costs you so much. I want to take two days off, it's going to cost me \$150, plus whatever money you spend not working.

Fundamentally, a taxi driver's time off work is measured in monetary terms. This can be attributed to the fact that taxi drivers earn only what they have worked for and as a result, daily life becomes work-centred as Petri (31/12/2010) comments: "You can only have quality time the day you are fired". Through the exposure to such harsh working conditions, one could expect taxi drivers to organise and collectively lay claim to the protective rights offered by legislation.

### **5.7. Unionisation**

Mahlangu (2002: 65) reports on the findings of a study conducted on the minibus taxi industry in Pretoria and observes that none of the taxi drivers who took part in this study belonged to a trade union because of owing to a variety of reasons. Mahlangu (2002) further notes that both the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) and the National Taxi Drivers' Organisation (NATDO) were foreign to the taxi drivers interviewed. Potentially, unions and any form of worker organisation can gain greater benefits for the working class as such it is rather curious that taxi drivers remain largely unorganised.

One observer who has been following trade unionism in South Africa for the past 25 years, Buhlungu (2010: 16) notes the success of the labour movement in winning battles for workers in the workplace. However, for taxi drivers, any form of a workers' organisation seems antithetical to the minibus taxi industry. Tshepo remarks on the issue of trade unions:

No, I do not belong to any trade union. The reason I'm not a member of a trade union is because it hasn't really crossed my mind to join one. Also maybe because in the ten years that I have been working in this industry I have never heard anything about trade unions or worker's organisation. Not in this industry (Tshepo 24/12/2010).

Beckham also comments on worker organisations: "No, the only thing that stands out as an organisation in this industry is the association itself" (Beckham, 28/12/2010). Of all the drivers interviewed, only one belonged to a workers' organisation. When asked if he was a member of a trade union or any form of workers union, Thato replied:

I can safely say I am one of the members of our executive ... Drivers' executive ... I am member of an executive of our association's drivers. Let's say the executive of the

association is the management of the association, we are the management of the drivers. Whenever the association wants to engage the drivers, they talk directly to us, they communicate with drivers through us. If there are issues around conflict or announcements the association conveys those issues through us to the drivers (Thato, 29/12/2010).

Strangely enough, all those drivers who operate from the same taxi rank (Jane Furse Taxi Rank) as Thato claimed ignorance of the drivers' executive as a workers' organisation. This is reflected in the following responses around the question of representation during disputes with employers. Beckham, Brad, Tshepo and Petri all report making use of the local sheriff or the association itself whenever they experienced disputes with their employers. Beckham notes that:

You have to stand up for yourself, and if maybe you are afraid of him [the taxi owner] you always get one of his friends to go talk to him on your behalf (Beckham, 28/12/2010).

Whereas Brad notes that:

We normally take our grievances to the office. We complain to the executives whenever we have disputes regarding payments or any work related matters that we are quarrelling with. And if the association is reluctant to act against their member we take the matter to the sheriff. In most cases he [the sheriff] advises us to take the matter to the labour court where you'll be required to sign some forms that we take back to the sheriff and the sheriff writes a letter to the owner informing him or her to pay and that is how we get our money quicker (Brad, 22/12/2010).

Petri (31/12/2010) comments:

I take my problems to the association ... the chairman

Tshepo supports Petri' claim, he indicates that:

What we do is complaint to the office, people like the chairman and secretary of the association are able to help us with such matters (Tshepo 24/12/2010).

Even though many participants report disputes to the associations, they are not convinced about the association's abilities to deal with some of their problems satisfactorily. According to Thabo and Thabang, the association is not always the best option as far as disputes are concerned. This can be attributed to the fact that many taxi associations double as both 'player and referee'. Thabo remarks that:

... if you have a problem that needs to be resolved by the association, because those guys are owners and know each other the decision is more likely to be in favour of the owner than the driver (Thabo 07/09/2011).

Thabo's remarks indicate that without their organising into a union or any forms of taxi drivers' interest group, the majority of taxi drivers are disadvantaged. Thabang comments that there is a need for taxi drivers to have an alternative form of organisation that taxi drivers can report their grievances:

Ehh, our situation would improve because we also would have somewhere to run to during disputes because currently we don't have anywhere to go when we are being treated unfairly by owners. You must remember that the office upholds the association's laws, not those passed by the government, and I don't even think that they are that effective in addressing our problems. We just report there for procedural requirements nothing else (Thabang 14/06/2011).

Owing to this problem of lack of representation, some of the drivers recognise the need to have drivers on taxi associations' governing committees and disciplinary committees (DC) during deliberations around employment disputes. Mputi observes that:

No, they are not drivers they are owners, we have recently sat down and talked about this issue of not having any drivers sitting on the DC (Mputi 09/07/2011).

Thabo (07/09/2011) also notes:

And we have raised this issue before to say can we have a driver who represents us during disputes and we were told that owners are the employers not the other way round. Sometimes when we have these meetings if one of us raises a thorny issue, you'll be told you can't raise such issues because you have no input on matters concerning employment, only employers can have a say. I have experienced that myself, I was told I'm not an owner, so because of that we have accept whatever it is they tell us (Thabo 07/09/2011).

In general, participants acknowledge that they do not bother themselves with issues around unions and unionisation. However, most of the participants are aware of the problems affecting them. Brad adds that they are indeed aware of the problems affecting them and the industry as whole, but that, at the moment, their biggest challenge and concern is that of employment security. In his attempt to make his fellow colleagues conscious about unions and their benefits, Thabo points employment security out as one of the major obstacles against unionising:



The thing is that if you appear to be knowledgeable and raise issues with the committees they end up badmouthing you to the owner and telling him to fire you. They project you as this problematic person and you end up working under pressure ...Owners, they go and badmouth you to their colleague, to say get rid of this person. That I have experienced it, I have even seen it with other drivers as well. So you end up shutting up because you want the job. Who else is going to employ you if you were fired under such circumstances? The first one will fire you, and let's say the second one employs you, the committee is going to say no, not that one, we will help you look for a driver if you can't find someone else. So you end up being quiet, except if you and the owner get along very well then it becomes the case of every man for himself (Thabo 07/09/2011).

Thabo's comment above refers indirectly to the issue of fear. According to Thabo, fear is an obstacle for both parties (drivers and taxi owners alike):

We are in the process of getting ourselves organised under a union. It is not easy given that ours is very individualistic and we are more often than not on the road which makes it a bit difficult for all of us to be in one place at one time. But we are busy trying to get our members unionised. Right now I do not think there are any other reasons hampering our unionisation process. It is just a matter of extending an invitation to the union to meet with us and then enlighten our members with regard to all the benefits associated with being a member of a trade union. Well some of them do warm up to the idea while others still needs a bit of education around this issue so we need to be patient with them ... Fear, they are fearful because of the rumours that if they join a union they will lose their jobs. *Le beng moshomo le bona ba nale letshogo, letshogo la bona le tliswa ke taba ya gore banagana gore gerakaba le Union re tlile go tsea taolo ya moshomo go bona* [Owners themselves might not like this union thing because some might actually perceive it as way of trying to take away their power of controlling the labour process in this industry]. The majority of taxi owners still need to be educated around some of these issues; they still need to be told the importance of registering a driver for instance. *Babang ba bona banagana gore geba karegistara diteraeba batlile go lahlegelwa ke taolo ya moshomo, kganthe go registara teraeba gonoragore re tlogela mokgwa wa go dira dilo ka molomo rathoma go dira dilo ka semolao* [Some of them think that if they register their drivers they will lose control over the labour process while in fact registering a driver is just a way of moving away from verbal agreements and introducing formalised employment relations] (Thato, 29/12/2010).

Taxi drivers do recognise the benefits of a union. For instance, Lionel says that:

I think being without a union is a contributory factor because I mean, we are still given our wages in envelopes (Lionel12/06/2011).

Evidentially, union benefits are known and are well-recognised by taxi drivers. However, the narratives of these drivers point to a lack of collective agency that can be utilised as a mobilising tool. There is some evidence of individual agency that seems to negate collective agency.

### **Individuated Agency**

Out of the ten participants interviewed for this study, only one is actively trying to get his colleagues unionised; however, it would be sociologically improper to depict taxi drivers as passive victims. Rather, what the data reveals is a sense of individuated agency. Most of the participants are actively acting in their own interests and not collectively, as one would expect.

Brad and Beckham report that they take their grievances to the association's offices and if the association fails to address those grievances, they report them to the local sheriff. Even in the face of the 'every man for himself' mentality that is adopted in the minibus taxi industry, taxi drivers individually claim and defend what they believe to be their rights. Thabo's comment is telling in this regard:

I think our major challenge is the fact that in this industry every owner hires his drivers himself as result of which we don't experience the same problems. The problems that I experience with my owner don't necessarily apply to the next driver. If for example, the hiring was done centrally by the association's offices; so that each and every owner who needs a driver approaches the association's offices we would know the conditions of our employment. I have met one driver who told me he was registered for UIF so it means it happens here and it is possible (Thabo 07/09/2011).

According to Lionel, individualism seems to be part of the minibus taxi industry: There is no reason, I think it is the nature of this industry, I think it has an element of individualism. It is like there is every-man-for-himself kind of a mentality that runs in this industry (Lionel12/06/2011).

Similarly, Tshepo refers to the same individualism as being a contributing factor against unionisation.

The opportunity to sit down as a group is not always possible because taxi drivers are forever driving in and out of the taxi rank. Consequently, for most taxi drivers, a comfortable relationship with the taxi owner is more than enough to retreat into an individual corner and go on with life. Those who experience problems take action, but perhaps it is the victimisation and fear (mentioned by Thabo and Thato) that is a mitigating factor against collective action. Moreover, for those who do not see their future in the industry, what happens in the industry is none of their business because their actions are directed somewhere else. Madiane is of this opinion and explains:

... Like with myself I'm not planning on staying in this industry for long, I'm just trying to make a living while sending out curriculum vitas so I don't have to bother myself with things like joining a trade union. So for those who are here to stay maybe because of age or whatever reasons can join trade unions but not me. I still have dreams; I'm still searching for greener pastures (Madiane 07/09/2011).

Clearly, self-perception plays a very crucial role here. Individual actions are motivated by individual circumstances and the understanding of one's own position in relation to others. A conversation with one of the drivers during fieldwork reveals that some of the drivers in Mamelodi (particularly those who drive from Denneboom to Nellmapius) have started to enlist the services of a lawyer somewhere in the Pretoria CBD (Central Business District).

5.7.2. Table 3: Table of Comparison between Mamelodi and Jane Furse

Themes	Mamelodi	Jane Furse
<b>1. Labour process as a social product</b>	Customer base is dense, but high competition and high pressure is present. Alternative modes of transport: cabs, buses and trains	Customer base is sparse with less intensity in the working day. Alternative modes of transport are buses.
Type of vehicles used	Toyota: Quantum, Siyaya, Venture and Condor Chinese-manufactured vehicles: Inyathi, Foton, Amandla, Ingwe and Ndlovu	Toyota Quantum and Siyaya are the majority when compared to the Chinese-manufactured vehicles.
Spatial differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates in an urban area.</li> <li>Passenger exchanges take place between local-to-local taxis and town (Pretoria CBD) to local taxis.</li> <li>Ply a shorter route.</li> <li>Make use of major intersections as alternative pick-up points.</li> <li>Floating is an alternative to binding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operates in a rural to semi-urban areas.</li> <li>Passenger exchanges take place between local-to-local taxis and long distance (for example Pretoria to Jane Furse) to local taxis.</li> <li>Ply a longer route of <math>\pm 80</math> kilometres.</li> <li>Make use of popular waiting points leading out of communities.</li> <li>Binding remains popular.</li> </ul>
Daily performance	Determines remunerations and drivers are paid according to the percentage system or have targets to meet.	Determines remunerations and drivers are paid according to the percentage system or have targets to meet.

Working time	Work starts at 04:00 and finishes at 19:30.	Work starts at 05:30 and finishes at 18:30.
Length of the working day	Work $\pm$ 16 hours per day.	Work $\pm$ 14 hours per day.
<b>2. Nature of agency</b>	Engage in pilfering which is subjectively understood to be an employment benefit. Rocky relations.	Engage in pilfering, which is subjectively understood to be an employment benefit. Rocky relations.
<b>3. Mobile workplace</b>	Daily labour confined to the vehicle, the taxi rank or waiting by major intersections and <i>sekerong</i> .	Daily labour confined to the vehicle and the taxi rank.
<b>4. Work control and consensus</b>	Control through daily checking. Paid weekly (targets or percentages).	Control through daily checking. Paid monthly (targets or percentages).
<b>5. Employment thread</b>	Largely vulnerable and insecure.	Largely vulnerable and insecure.
<b>6. Community and family life</b>	Lack of social life and family time.	Lack of social life and family time.
<b>7. Unionisation</b>	Lack of union interest.	Talk of unionisation.

In the discussion up to this point, the focus has largely been on similarities between the two areas. In keeping with the comparative method employed in this study, the differences will now be expanded upon. Heretofore it has been assumed in both academic and popular discourse that the minibus taxi industry is homogenous. This section seeks to tease out the often subtle, but analytically significant variations that exist in this industry.

Sociologically, these differences can be linked to how taxi drivers experience their work on a daily basis. The important variations here are those that relate to the geographical spaces linked to the two cases – that is Mamelodi (an urban area) and Jane Furse (a rural to semi-urban area). The spatial differences noted here influence and impact on issues of commuter density, length of the routes and how work is

practised. For example, while floating is an everyday work practice in Mamelodi, it is limited in Jane Furse. A number of reasons can be offered in relation to this point. Firstly, the limited commuter population in Jane Furse makes floating less attractive. Secondly, the length of the route, taken together with a sparse commuter base means floating can be counterproductive. In contrast to Jane Furse, in Mamelodi floating is spatially encouraged. This is due to a dense commuter population that makes the major intersections an alternative commuter pick-up points to binding at the taxi rank.

These spatial differences not only impact on the labour process, but they also impact on the work-family balance of taxi drivers. Observations indicate that taxi drivers in Mamelodi work longer hours ( $\pm 16$  hours) than those in Jane Furse ( $\pm 14$  hours). Furthermore, these variations carry challenges for taxi drivers in relation to unionisation, particularly those drivers in Mamelodi. Importantly, the success of policy application will rest on its ability to address and harmonise these differences.

## **5.8. Conclusion**

The Post-1994 Government has sought to improve the working conditions of the majority of the working class population of this country. A concerted effort by the government has seen improvements in working conditions of previously excluded workers, such as domestic workers and farm workers. However, it has been revealed by the findings of this study that labour law has failed to provide the required protection for the majority of taxi drivers.

With particular emphasis on the nature of work, it is evident that the one-size-fits-all approach to work regulation is in fact ineffectual. Without a doubt, the current status quo works chiefly to the benefit of the taxi owners or employers. It can be inferred from this that for most taxi owners or employers, keeping the status quo is in their best interest. Importantly, the current state of affairs in the minibus taxi industry calls into question the ability of taxi drivers to collectively mobilise and become agents of the change that they want to see happen. It is in light of the above statement that Burawoy's notion of "consent" (Burawoy, 1979: 85) and labour geographers' concerns with space should be taken into consideration. Clearly, the understanding

the minibus taxi industry should be guided by the actions and/or the lack of action by those concerned.

If space is an important factor in consenting to exploitative employment relations, then ultimately any attempt at regulating such employment relations should take into account the spatial influences affecting decisions taken on the 'shop floor'. If the protective ambit of the law fails to be conversant with the practicalities of everyday labour practices, then arguably, such laws pay lip service to issues of protection. If everyday labour practices are the embodiments of their broader social context, then such a social context should be instructive of the form and scope of labour protection.

Notwithstanding the importance of changing certain work practices in order to effectively improve the working conditions of those concerned; such changes should not contradict the fundamental aspects of the work practices. Labour law has failed to provide protection for taxi drivers. A contributory factor to this current state of affairs is partly because in certain instances, the law seems to work against the very industry that it seeks to regulate (see Chapter 2).

As reported by some of the participants, it is unthinkable to expect a taxi driver to work eight hours a day as according to some of the participants it is unrealistic (if not impossible) to expect a taxi driver to make enough checking if they only work from 8:00 to 16:00. Over and above the need to meet targets (for those who have targets to meet), if taxi drivers work more hours, it has direct benefits in the form of *lekouso* for most taxi drivers. Furthermore, broader structural factors are of significance in the understanding of both the length and intensity of the working day in the minibus taxi industry.

The data point out that any attempt to understand the minibus taxi industry should be broadly framed in terms of social context. The variance in working hours and daily checking apparent in the two cases (Limpopo and Gauteng) is a clear demonstration of the social context. Undeniably, the working day is driven by the spatial influences prevalent in a given locale. Therefore, logic dictates that every business should take into account the demands and prescriptions of its market – this becomes even more



pronounced in a capitalist economy. However, the market dictates have come at a great cost for taxi drivers. The impact of taxi drivers' daily work has filtered through into the private sphere of their lives because of a lack of legislative protection. The implication of this has been the creation of workers devoid of a meaningful social life. Exacerbated by employment insecurity, the choice between family time and work comes at a great price for taxi drivers. This is due to the fact that each of the two choices (that is, work or family) carries great sacrifices. Consequently, many taxi drivers have failed to strike a balance between these two aspects of life, with the result that one choice (largely work) takes precedence over the other (family).

For taxi drivers, work and family life are diametric opposites. While many taxi drivers try to attend to important family matters, community matters (such as meetings) are secondary to taxi drivers' work. Understandably, many taxi drivers report that they cannot afford to lose wages when attending community funerals, weddings and general ceremonies. In many African communities, participation in community ceremonies of any kind is an important aspect of social life.

Even more concerning is the fact that unionisation, at present, seems to be antithetical to the minibus taxi industry. However, it seems the failure of the South African unions to adapt and creatively devise ways of reaching out to those previously marginalised has hampered their efforts to organise the minibus taxi industry effectively. This situation is aggravated by the attitude of the majority of taxi drivers towards unions. While the taxi drivers acknowledge and recognise the benefits associated with unions, they do not seem too keen to join them. The majority of the participants reported that they found the industry in an ununionised state and did not see why they should bother with unionising if they had found the industry in that state.

Furthermore, an element of individualism seems to be a mitigating factor preventing unionisation. The majority of taxi drivers take care of their own individual problems and as such, they do not see the need for any form of collective action. Moreover, to the extent that some taxi drivers do not have a physical workplace seems to compound the situation. Being constantly in transit, taxi drivers do not always get the chance to gather as workers and discuss their employment problems. Therefore,

new and innovative forms of organisation by unions to counter the impacts of the above situation will be required.

Ultimately, failure to understand the nature of work that is intrinsic to the minibus taxi industry has ensured the continuation of exploitative employment relations in this industry. This exploitation stems from the fact that, without protection, this group of workers has remained vulnerable and weak in relation to the taxi owners or employers.

## Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

### 6.1 Introduction

The incompatibility between the current legislative stipulations of the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997) and the nature of the work that is intrinsic to the minibus taxi industry has ensured that, to a large extent, taxi drivers have continued to be excluded from the labour laws of South Africa. The literature suggests that taxi drivers' daily work is characterised by exploitative labour practices. This exploitation happens despite the fact that taxi drivers are employees and therefore, like all employees in South Africa, are entitled to certain employment benefits. Clearly, labour law has failed to protect certain categories of the labour force in South Africa.

This lack of protection by legislation can be attributed to a number of reasons, such as the failure to respond to the changing nature of work, incapacity of the department of labour and the failure to understand certain industries (see Chapter 2). Broadly, this study has endeavoured to shed light on the interplay between the nature of work, formal protection, and family and community life of taxi drivers. Posed concisely, the study has examined: what is the nature of work for taxi drivers? Another question examined is: given the nature of work, do market regulations provide for employment security in the minibus taxi industry? Yet another question examined is: how does the interaction between the nature of work and legislative protection impact on the family life and community activities of taxi drivers?

This study has sought to bring to the fore the importance of understanding the daily labour process in the minibus taxi industry. In light of the current government-led efforts to formalise employment relations in the minibus taxi industry, this study has explored the implications of regulation in the minibus taxi industry with regard to the nature of work specific to the minibus taxi industry. Marxist theorists and labour geographers argue that the labour process is a social product. Therefore, any form of external intervention on the shop floor should take into account the social influences that filter down into the shop floor and influence work organisation.

## 6.1. Key Arguments

According to Marx, humans are biological beings and thus humans direct their labour efforts chiefly to achieve biological subsistence (Marx, 1970: 47-8). The separation between those who own the means of production and those who sell their labour power denotes that the latter group, in most cases, engage in labour under terms dictated by the former group (Marx, 1930: 793). Those who own the means of production are often driven by the need to accumulate profit and therefore the terms of employment set by those who own the means of production are often exploitative and inhumane.

While the foregoing is almost always an undeniable fact, according to Burawoy (1979: 27) workers are not passive subjects of managerial control over the labour process. While workers are the weaker party, they are actively involved in shaping and influencing the decisions of management – a process labour geographers term “making geographies” (Herod, 2001: 2, 15-16, 18, see Chapter 2). Burawoy (1979: 85) argues that inherent to any form of work is the notion of consent on the part of the workers. While pointing to the emergence of the labour regimes structured around consent, Burawoy maintains that within any employment relationship there exist power imbalances. These inequalities in power often take the form of coercion on the part of the employers. This power imbalance, Herod (2001: 15) highlights as constraint imposed upon labour by capital.

Thus, the need for legislative intervention is of fundamental importance to level the playing field between the two parties (employers and employees). However, it is imperative for such a legislative framework to factor in context. Rainnie *et al.*, (2010: 303) capture the importance of context very well with the notion of spatial embeddedness. Consequently, the minibus taxi industry should be understood contextually, within its ‘space’ (space in this study is used broadly to refer to geography, economy and the industrial sector). The spatial location of the minibus taxi industry has implications for the nature of the work and work organisation that prevailing in the minibus taxi industry. Massey (1995: 54) teaches us that space is a key factor because it elicits a context-sensitive social response.

The historical particularities and trajectory of the spatial patterns in South Africa are of tremendous impact on the application of the labour process in the minibus taxi industry (Massey, 1995: 54). Thus, the minibus taxi industry calls for a context-sensitive approach. The labour process in the minibus taxi industry is largely a reflection of the broader socioeconomic factors in South Africa. Evidently, the labour process in the minibus taxi industry is driven by local conditions. Therefore, a taxi driver's hours of work are aligned with the travel times of the mostly working class commuters in South Africa. The incompatibility between the nature of the work distinctive of the minibus taxi industry and the current South African legislative framework will be illuminated with reference to arguments advanced by both labour process theorists and labour geographers.

The nature of work intrinsic to the minibus taxi industry is considered broadly in relation to the family and community life of those concerned. The relationship between legislative protection and the lack of family time is instructive in this regard. The current working conditions in the minibus taxi industry have great implications for taxi drivers' social lives. This finding is convergent with the notion of time-based conflict as set out by Jeffery and Beutell (1985: 77). Time-based conflict is conflict between work and family time. In the absence of key employment-related benefits (such as leave), the majority of taxi drivers are unable to fulfil certain social roles. According to Kanter (1984: 114), this situation is exacerbated by the fact that certain social roles can only be performed at certain times of the day. For Pocock (2006: 4), the commodification of social life has motivated current labour market participation and has resulted in corrosive impacts on the family. The majority of the working class population are faced with a capitalist juggernaut and have no alternative means of subsistence, outside of selling their labour power in exchange for wages. Thus, labour market participation takes place at the expense of social life and leisure. This lack of alternative means of substance can be linked to the concentration of the means of production in a few hands.

A context-sensitive understanding of the minibus taxi industry was informed by the methodological choices employed in this study. If workers' understanding of the nature of the work and spatial positioning are important factors in the prevailing work

conditions in the minibus taxi industry, then the arguments of the post-Bravermanian labour theorists and labour geographers should be considered (see Chapter 2).

## 6.2. Discussion of Findings

A central concern to Marx and later to other Marxists (such as Braverman) is the notion of work control. The concept of control has always been a fundamental component of work within a capitalist society. Capitalists are concerned with profit and therefore control of the labour process becomes a necessity rather than an appendage. Daily takings substitute the overseer in the minibus taxi industry because of the impracticalities of the supervisory role as traditionally practised. However, it must be added that the form of control discussed here, resonates with Burawoy's notion of consent (1979: 27) and Friedman's concept (1977: 106) of responsible autonomy. Both concepts acknowledge workers' direct involvement in the labour process (see Chapter 2). Analytically, the above concepts are very important to understand work and labour process application in the minibus taxi industry. In addition, the study shows how drivers develop strategies to 'make out' (Burawoy, 1979: 57-8). To that extent, 'making out' is linked with responsible autonomy that allows taxi drivers to strategies around their work day.

Observations reveal that the minibus taxi industry tends to gravitate towards market demands, as opposed to adhering to legislative requirement. At the heart of this insubordination is the fact that, fundamentally, the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997) is directly against the very nature of the minibus taxi industry. Burawoy (1979: 85) accentuates that the way that the manner in which the daily labour activity is organised is motivated by the desire to achieve benefits for both parties. Taxis seem to make money only when on the road and when ferrying passengers – this means that taxis should be on the road at the times of day when commuters travel in large numbers. The nature of work in this industry is such that the minibus taxi industry should align itself to commuter travel demands in order to meet the interests of both the workers (in the form of wages) and that of the capital (in the form of profit).

The above seeks to demonstrate the extent to which the hours of work arguably indicate consent. Notwithstanding coercion, the degree of consent that exists in this

industry is reflected in the minibus taxi industry's ability to attain a certain amount of stability. In the absence of formalised regulation, informal verbal consent over the terms and conditions of employment is critical for the existence of employer-employee relationships. The informality of this consent is expressed in the 'gentlemen's agreement' referred to by one of the participants (see Chapter 5). This 'gentlemen's agreement' replaces or exists in the absence of formal employment contracts. Fundamentally, this informal consent is chiefly about reward distribution between the two parties. Coupled with informal consent is the notion of responsible autonomy.

While informal consent can be attributed to the informal working conditions that prevail in the minibus taxi industry, responsible autonomy is necessitated by the nature of work in the minibus taxi industry (see Chapter 2 and 5). Responsible autonomy refers to the extent to which workers are allowed to exercise control over the labour process (Friedman, 1977: 106). Motivated by the impracticality of around the clock supervision, taxi drivers are thus in control of their working day. Without the supervisory role, taxi drivers' day of work is controlled monetarily. This suggests that, contrary to Friedman (1977: 106), taxi drivers are not necessarily incorporated ideologically, but rather materially. Taxi drivers do not carry with them their employers or taxi owners' mission statements that exist at an ideological level, but the biological need to survive.

Hence, a taxi driver's autonomy is linked to material rewards. This autonomy is reflected in the decisions regarding when to start work and what time to finish work (see Chapter 5). The foregoing points to the fact that taxi drivers have to strategise around their working day. These strategies are a reflection of their control over the labour process –that is, strategic autonomy. The decision to float or to bind arguably rests with taxi drivers (see Chapter 5). However, such autonomy is inherently linked to control. That is, while taxi drivers wield control over the labour process application, how they carry out their working day is linked to the employers or taxi owners' demands.

The participants of in this study highlight the fact that their work is mostly easy during peak periods. Furthermore, observations indicate that without disregarding the



impacts of high traffic volumes, morning and afternoon trips are on average easier for taxi drivers. There are inherent benefits to working during peak periods, such as guaranteed returns and in most cases, taxi drivers do not have to drive around in search of commuters. Therefore, peak periods (that is, either the morning or afternoon) are preferred by drivers for obvious reasons. As a result, legislating against these hours of work has proved ineffectual and counterproductive. While the minibus taxi industry has been responsive to the legislative requirements in other respects, (such as the registering of drivers – although not many), there have, however, been no progress on the issues of times to start work, times to finish work, overtime pay and paid leave.

The complexity of pinpointing a workplace for taxi drivers is illustrative of the nature of the work in this industry. The interviews present an even more complex myriad of what constitutes a workplace for taxi drivers. Often, taxi drivers' understanding of their workplace is reflective of societal thinking. This thinking is also reflected in the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector, part H (South Africa, 1997: 16), which stipulates that a workplace has to be a fixed physical space. The findings of this study suggest that there are two categories of taxi drivers: those who bind (using the taxi rank) and those who float (rarely making use of the taxi rank); however, these two practices are not mutually exclusive.

As have been the arguments in the literature on the changing nature of work, externalised workers work on the premises of the core business therefore, the premises of the core business should be regarded as their place of work (Theron *et al.*, 2011: 69-70). Implied here is the fact that workers' workplaces are where the actual work takes place. Being part of the service sector, the majority of taxi drivers' work starts upon entering the vehicle. Arguably, to the extent that the current legislation makes no reference to the taxi as a workplace, those taxi drivers who float have no workplace. The nature of work in this industry, compounded by the payment system, points to the fact that taxi drivers are considered to be at work only when they are on the road ferrying passengers. This is attested to by the fact that most of the participants in this study understand their place of work in relation to what they do, as opposed to understanding their place of work as a fixed physical space.

Over and above the legal implications inherent in this argument, the above demonstrates the degree to which the current legislative framework has failed to understand the minibus taxi industry. Anecdotal evidence further reveals that there are routes that have no taxi ranks at all. This complicates the case of the minibus taxi industry even further. The issue here is legislation, such as the *Occupational Health and Safety Act No. 85 of 1993* (South Africa, 1993) and the *Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act No. 130 of 1993* (South Africa, 1993) (see Chapter 3). One can contend that the current *Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997*, Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector (South Africa, 1997) needs to be conversant with the minibus taxi industry. This is informed by the fact the nature of the work in the minibus industry mitigate against the ‘cut-and-paste’ approach to legislation. While recognising that this is inherently a legal argument, the loopholes in the above legislation present an opportunity for sociological interpretation. Concepts such as ‘premises’ and ‘place’ are severely insufficient to capture the workplace for the minibus taxi industry. The sectoral determination (Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, Sectoral Determination 11, Taxi Sector South Africa, 1997) designed to regulate the minibus taxi industry is out of tune with its intended sector. Arguably a vehicle cannot adequately be addressed by notions such as premises or place.

The majority of taxi drivers exist outside of legislative protection, work without employment contracts and are thus exploited. Of significance is the extent to which failure of legislation has not only failed taxi drivers, but their families as well. Moreover, the prevailing payment system has ensured that taxi drivers are forever at work with no time for their families and leisure. This is clearly expressed by Sapsford’s argument (1981: 28) that leisure, in most cases, takes place at the expense of earning wages. The lack of leisure and family time is further exacerbated by the ‘pay-as-you-work system’ and Sapsford’s argument (1981: 28) therefore rings true for the majority of taxi drivers.

The current working conditions endemic to the minibus taxi industry mean that the majority of children grow up, arguably, in single parent households. Furthermore, the hours of work make it difficult for most taxi drivers to spend time with their families and to attend to community matters. It is important to point out that the majority of

taxi drivers have a lot of free time during off-peak periods. Unfortunately, as Kanter (1984: 114) points out, a lot of time that is out of sync with the rest of the family is useless. This is referred to as time-based conflict (see chapter 2). Both interviews and observations reveal that off-peak periods do present taxi drivers with time to engage in other activities; however, off-peak periods are normally when children and other family members are at school or work. Consequently, the mismatch that exists between taxi drivers' world of work and their families continues to perpetuate family life conflict that taxi drivers experience.

The festive season, which is a peak period for the minibus taxi industry, is a clear example of this conflict. For this industry, the festive season makes good business sense. According to Pocock (2006: 4, 7), the commodification of social life, that is the extent to which everything is available through the cash economy, means that many people will spend the greater part of their adult life attached to the labour market. The 'pay-as-you-work' situation of many taxi drivers makes their situations dire. Taxi drivers' vulnerability, compounded by employment insecurity, has implications for their social life. At play here is not the question of time-based conflict, but rather protection. That is to say that taxi drivers' social lives do not necessarily suffer as a consequence of time-based conflict, but that their ability to strike a balance between work demands and a social life is tied to the lack of legislative protection.

While the concept of 'time-based conflict' allows for an analytical understanding of taxi drivers' lack of social life, if it is stretched further, it becomes clear that something else is a contributory factor. Thus, employed as an analytical tool, time-based conflict reveals very little of taxi drivers' work-life balance. A more context-sensitive approach is required. Thus, taxi drivers' lack of family time cannot merely be attributed to a mismatch between their hours of work and family life, but rather their lack of family time should be framed within a context of vulnerability that can be attributed to a lack of legislative protection.

Arguably, all workers experience time-based conflict at one point or the other during their adult working lives. However, what distinguishes other workers from taxi drivers is the question of labour law. Implied here is the argument that without legislative protection, taxi drivers are compelled to work most, if not all, of the year with little or

no time for their families and friends. Time-based conflict, framed in this way, becomes more pronounced. Moreover, taxi drivers' lack of participation in community matters means that they may face social exclusion in certain instances. Within many African communities, weddings and funerals are deemed community matters and as such, every member of the community is expected to attend and even contribute labour, if required. Mostly, attendance of weddings, funerals and other ceremonies is based on reciprocal relationships within African communities. Therefore, the vulnerability of this group of workers is multiple. Without a doubt, the nature of the work intrinsic to the minibus taxi industry, compounded by lack of legislative protection, can account for the above situation.

Despite concerted efforts by the government to regulate and enforce labour law compliance, the minibus taxi industry remains largely informal. This aspect of the industry has received much academic and public attention and this issue is only reiterated here to highlight the extent to which the informality of the minibus taxi industry permits labour and capital to make geographies.

The question of employment contracts drew out interesting responses from some of the participants. While many consider taxi drivers vulnerable of a lack of employment contracts, for some taxi drivers not having contractual obligations gives them the freedom to choose and change employers as and when required. For example, as pointed out (see discussion of the vehicles above), the vehicle plays a very important role in the execution of the labour process in the minibus taxi industry. Thus, the informality of the minibus taxi industry allows taxi drivers to sell their labour power to the highest bidder. That is to say, many taxi drivers prefer new and well-maintained vehicles; therefore, a lack of contractual obligation permits the space for taxi drivers to seek and change vehicles (or employers).

However, there are drivers who have established long working relationships with their employers. The informality of employment relations has important sociological insights into the understanding of the minibus taxi industry (see the concept of 'informal consent' discussed above). Here, the pendulum swings in both directions, delivering in the drivers' corner freedom of choice and for employers, the power to determine the employment conditions, which carry no contractual obligations.

On the other hand, the informality of the minibus taxi industry allows other job seekers to use the industry as a transitory platform while searching for greener pastures. This speaks directly to labour geographers' argument that in certain situations labour's geographies can condition those of capital and vice versa (see Chapter 2). The agency referred to here, encompasses two of Kartz's categorisations of agency, which are resilience and reworking. Resilience refers to acts of getting by, while reworking relates to efforts directed at improving one's material conditions. Acts, such as *lekouso*, rocky relations and other work strategies employed by taxi drivers to circumvent difficult working conditions (for example, floating and binding) can be explained by the above categories (Kartz, 2004, cited in Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2010: 216).

In light of the criticism directed at labour geographers for their failure to adequately flesh out agency, the researcher qualifies reworking and resilience to constitute forms of agency in this context. Understood within a context of informality, there is a need to acknowledge taxi drivers' capabilities to use the informal nature of the industry to their advantage in order to improve their material conditions. Intertwined with resilience, reworking ensures the social reproduction of taxi drivers on a daily basis. This study reveals that a relationship exists between making enough checking for the day and starting work at certain times of the day. That is to say taxi drivers start work at particular times of the day in order to earn enough checking for that particular working day. Therefore, it is only rational for taxi drivers to start work during periods of high demand.

The foregoing, over and above being the nature of the work, is revealing of something else – the extent to which taxi drivers are rational and calculating beings. This is making geographies of labour. Of significance here, is the practice of *lekouso* (pilfering). For the majority of taxi drivers, *lekouso* is a way of making ends meet, even if it does not necessarily mean they would fundamentally alter their material condition through this practice. The fact is Taxi drivers engage in *lekouso* for their own survival as workers in a capitalist society (Herod, 2010: 16). This agency is reflected by the fact that taxi drivers have largely opposed the government-led smart card initiative. The use of smart cards would mean passengers would no longer have

to pay fares in cash. While the issue of smart cards was not directly addressed in this study, media reports have however shed light on the issue. *Lekouso* remains a point of conflict between the two parties and as a result, some taxi owners set targets for drivers as a measure of quelling the practice. The logic behind this is that since one has a particular amount to achieve daily, it becomes difficult to steal money. However, the success of this anti-*lekouso* measure remains in doubt as many taxi drivers actively seek to benefit from the labour process in more ways than one. Combinations of floating, engaging in rocky relations, making use of *sekerong* and the taxi rank at particular times of the day (which is strategic autonomy) are some of the ways in which taxi drivers ensure that *lekouso* is part of everyday life in the minibus taxi industry.

It is important to adopt a context-sensitive approach to understand agency. Certain actions are both pragmatic and realistic, but only when contextualised. Thus, a sector-sensitive approach to agency is important as certain industries permit particular actions. To associate agency with only collective action or fundamental changes of employer-employee relations is tantamount to exaggerating workers' power against that of capital. We should guard against the dangers of 'universal agency', that is to say the understanding of agency to be only collective action or action that brings about fundamental changes. An argument can be made for what the researcher has labelled 'pragmatic action' – that is, an understanding of agency in relation to its context.

This need to contextualise agency is because certain industrial sectors provide workers with sector-influenced constraints. These sector constraints are important in understanding what is realistically pragmatic in a given space. Therefore, workers embedded in a different milieu should not be expected to emulate the actions of those in another context. Such an approach is sociologically futile and analytically counterproductive.

The findings of this study point to the fact that the labour process characteristic of the minibus taxi industry is an embodiment of its context. Thus, the application (that is the duration and intensity) of the daily work is reactive to and not directive of local conditions – this is what Massey (1995: 54) refers to as a context-sensitive social

response. As the minibus taxi industry is a part of the service sector, the labour process in this industry is commuter-centred. Indeed the findings of this study indicate that taxi drivers in both Limpopo and Gauteng start and finish work at different times. Significantly, none of the working hours in these two provinces has shown a tendency to gravitate towards legislative stipulations.

According to Rainnie *et al.* (2010: 304), any form of work regulation should be sensitive to the spatial positioning of any given industry. This is accentuated by the fact that particularity of space calls for certain social responses (Massey, 1995: 54). In accordance with Massey's arguments (1995: 54), the findings of this study indicate that the application of the labour process varies across the two provinces. This variation relates to the intensity of the labour process and the duration of the working day. The manner in which the labour process is structured on the shop floor is indicative of broader structural forces.

The current literature in South Africa has successfully pointed out that the hours of work in the minibus taxi industry are in conflict with legislative requirements. Simply put: taxi drivers work more hours than is legally permissible. As pointed out, the number of working hours varies from province to province. To be sure, observations in Jane Furse (Limpopo) reveal  $\pm 14$  hours of work per day, compared to 16 or more hours of work per day in Mamelodi (Gauteng). If interrogated further, this fact should be understood in relation to the space and nature of the work in the minibus taxi industry.

Indeed observations show that local taxis in Mamelodi make anything between R180.00 and R280.00 (these amounts exclude money spent on petrol) during the morning peak period (04:30 to 07:30) and they have the potential to earn between R450.00 and R600.00 during the afternoon peak (16:00 to 19:00). The above illustrates to the need to adopt spatially-sensitive approaches to regulation because as labour geographers have shown, space matters. A spatially-sensitive approach is necessitated by the existence of uneven spatiality, which has roots in apartheid's uneven development (see Chapter 4).



The manner in which space is used here permits an understanding of heterogeneity in relation to the labour process that is distinctive of the minibus taxi industry and other sectors. This unevenness has a profound influence over the daily labour process and the application of a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to regulation. Transport improvement planning and strategy documents that come from the Department of Transport (DoT) seem to recognise and acknowledge this spatial unevenness, albeit somewhat tacitly. This is reflected in the *Public Transport Strategy* (Department of Transport, 2007), which in its infrastructure development plans makes a distinction between rural, metropolitan and urban areas (refer to Chapter 3).

Despite being one of the few labour-intensive industries in the country, the minibus taxi industry is yet to witness full-scale workers' unionisation. At the time of conducting fieldwork, there were talks of unionisation in Limpopo but this is yet to materialise. While taxi owners do hold meetings with drivers, such meetings have proved to be nothing more than employer-employee communication. The data reveals that drivers, individually, fight their own battles in this industry. Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2010: 217) have rightly lambasted labour geographers' propensity to associate agency with collective action only, which is a rather myopic approach to understanding workers' action. This myopic approach is because of the fact that labourers' activities are conditioned by those of capital and as such, certain actions ensure survival in particular spaces (pragmatic action).

If one draws on the notion of space, it is clear that the minibus taxi industry's spatial embeddedness has, to a larger degree, constrained collective agency. A number of reasons can account for this state of affairs: firstly, the benevolence of some of the taxi owners and secondly, the different ways of engaging in the labour process (floating and/or binding). The ability of some taxi drivers to establish good working relations (informal consent) with the taxi owners ensures that taxi drivers remain fragmented as a group.

While floating is yet to become the norm in Jane Furse, in Mamelodi floating has taken root and this difference is largely spatial. Moreover, the situation is made difficult by the fact that taxi drivers are very mobile for obvious reasons. However, the taxi rank remains a critical point for collective action. Such collective action could

include 'downing tools' at a taxi rank, particularly in Jane Furse where floating is non-existent and can certainly get the message across to the taxi owners. Importantly, such actions should be strategic and well-coordinated to have maximum impact, more so because taxi drivers have no symbolic power to draw on given their acrimonious relationship with the South African public.

Theoretically, strike action by taxi drivers might backfire in light of the fact they have on symbolic power to draw from. Alternatively, one gets the sense that taxi drivers should opt for an in-house terminology that might not agitate the taxi owners. That is, taxi drivers should form a 'drivers' association', as opposed to a union, which is a term often linked with labour militancy. As one of the participants pointed out, many of his colleagues are not willing to join or form a union for fear of victimisation. As taxi drivers have been almost immune to collective action taking place in other industries, the use of something closer to their world of work as a rallying point might succeed. The researcher is of the view that taxi owners might be willing to engage with taxi drivers who are members of an association as opposed to a union, as in the case in both Kenya and Ghana.

A day in the life of a taxi driver points to the extent to which taxi drivers are vulnerable as workers, members of communities and family members. In the case of Lionel and Brad, in particular, the reality of their vulnerability is highlighted. The incident with Lionel's son (refer to A Day in Life of a Taxi Driver above) points to a boy who misses spending time with his father.

On the other hand, Brad's driving behaviour makes him prone to road accidents. Driving at speeds of 120-180 kilometres per hour can be characterised as reckless. However, in this case Brad's reckless driving points to work pressure. Taxi drivers are not only exposed to abuse by employers, but their families are left vulnerable without legislative protection. Lionel and Brad cases illustrate a group of workers who are vulnerable both as employees and citizens. The approach adopted here allows for a holistic understanding of taxi drivers, not only as workers, but also as members of communities and families. Policy and the theoretical implications of this study are considered below.

### 6.3. Policy Implications

The findings of this study reveal that industry-specific regulation is important, if not a necessity. Clearly, the one-size-fits-all approach to regulation has dismally failed to improve the working conditions in the minibus taxi industry. Even more important is the fact that labour legislation aimed at the minibus taxi industry might have to consider provincial and intra-regional particularities in its approach. These spatial differences are important for effective regulation. To be sure, the fact that taxi drivers in Mamelodi start work before 05:00 in the morning means that employers must, by law, compensate their drivers for overtime work. This demonstrates the extent to which the minibus taxi industry is spatially differentiated.

As the data has shown, the above situation will give rise to one of the following scenarios:

- Scenario 1: taxi owners might resist compensating taxi drivers for work performed before 05:00 on grounds that such is the nature of work. To some extent, resistance is already evident as it has been argued that both taxi owners and taxi drivers benefit from the informality of the minibus taxi industry.
- Scenario 2: those operating in Mamelodi might argue that it is not necessarily that the taxi owners in places like Jane Furse are compliant, but that they are spatially advantaged.

On a theoretical level, both of the above scenarios are possible in the sense that the nature of the industry is such that both taxi owners and taxi drivers derive material rewards from peak periods. Thus, taxi drivers engage in work when conditions are favourable as opposed to when legislation permits. This also raises a question of uniformity due to the fact spatial variations have a bearing on the relevance of certain aspect of legislation in different locales. For example, observations brings to the fore the fact that the majority of taxi drivers at the Jane Furse taxi rank starts work at about 06:00 in the morning when compared to 04:30 in Mamelodi. As such taxi drivers at Jane Furse taxi rank starts to work as per legislative requirements. Noteworthy here is the fact that both the Mamelodi and Jane Furse variations can be explained by reference to Massey's notion of social response (Massey, 1995: 54).

Because of the differing contexts, the Jane Furse and Mamelodi's social responses vary.

In the final analysis, it would become problematic to fragment the minibus taxi industry legislatively based on spatial difference. Further, there seems to be no incentive for the minibus taxi industry to formalise, especially in light of the informalisation onslaught on formal employment. How this problem is to be resolved remains to be seen. For possible practical solutions, see the recommendations (Section 6.5). Some of the findings of this study have proved to be anomalous to the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical implications of the study will now be addressed.

#### **6.4. Theoretical Implications**

According to Marx's predictions (1978: 11-8), exploitative working conditions will inevitably lead to a workers' revolution. While Marx's predictions have proved to be correct in many instances, this is yet to be the case in the minibus taxi industry. Granted, there have been attempts to mobilise taxi drivers in many parts of the country, however with limited success. This, however, does not in any way suggest that taxi drivers are a group of docile individuals.

The interviews collected in both provinces paint a different picture. While taxi drivers have failed dismally to mobilise collectively as a group, evidence indicates that most taxi drivers are very active on an individual basis. Many of the taxi drivers interviewed report taking matters involving non-paying taxi owners to either the association offices or to the local sheriff (in the case of the Limpopo Province). Taxi drivers are conscious of the fact that they are exploited, however this has yet to awaken their class-consciousness on a broader collective scale.

The case of the minibus taxi industry calls for a new theoretical approach to the theorisation of work, a new theory to incorporate issues of space and individual social positions. This is motivated by the fact that, while taxi drivers might come across as a homogenous group of exploited individuals, there exists variations around employment conditions.

The multiplicity of employers in this industry also undermines a collective mobilisation of drivers. The fragmented nature of employers makes it difficult, if not impossible, for taxi drivers to identify collectively as ‘us’ (workers) against ‘them’ (employers). This difficulty is because of the varying terms and conditions of employment that exist in this industry. Furthermore, the issue of space, as fervently argued by labour geographers, is a pertinent one. Space here denotes the geographic, economic and industrial sector. These spatial factors have implications for workers' subjective understanding of their situation together with possible solutions to get out of such situations.

Historically, the minibus taxi industry has never been collectively or effectively unionised. A combination of factors might account for this situation: the violent nature of the industry and fear. Again, in light of the current unemployment rate in South Africa, taxi drivers might be pragmatic about their circumstances. Furthermore, the benevolence of some taxi owners compounds fragmentation among the drivers.

Heretofore, labour geography has yet to take root as an analytical tool in the understanding of work in South Africa. This study has demonstrated that combining notions of space and agency can offer a nuanced understanding of a labourer's everyday work struggles. Furthermore, the minibus taxi industry remains largely under-theorised, particularly with regard to issues of employer-employee relations. Theoretically, this aspect of the minibus taxi industry can offer important sociological insights on the failure of the drivers to mobilise collectively. By placing space at the centre of analysis, a nuanced understanding of the differences between the two cases was allowed. Furthermore, the two cases indicate that the understanding of certain working conditions requires a spatially-sensitive approach. In this way, one begins to appreciate the intricate link between work and communities. Therefore, a holistic approach to understanding work is required – that is, work organisation does not unfold independently of its surroundings.

## **6.5. Recommendations**

In conclusion, a number of suggestions in relation to improving the conditions of employment in the minibus taxi industry are provided.

This study has demonstrated the importance of the intersection between regulation, space and the nature of work. Clearly, certain characteristics of the minibus taxi industry mitigate the successful application of the current legislation. The ‘cut-and-paste’ approach to the minibus taxi industry has failed dismally. There needs to be an innovative and context-sensitive approach to the minibus taxi industry in order to bring this industry in line with other industries in South Africa successfully.

There is a need to acknowledge that certain things might need to change in this industry if it is to be effectively regulated. Firstly, the industry is solely dependent on commuters as a source of revenue. The minibus taxi industry is guaranteed business during certain times of the day, while at other times it is a struggle to find commuters. Therefore, legislating against these times, while also expecting the employers or taxi owners to meet minimum weekly wages as stipulated by legislation is bound to elicit resistance, not only from employers or taxi owners, but also from taxi drivers. It is the opinion of the researcher that the issue of working conditions can be addressed effectively when the minibus taxi industry is subsidised. Currently, taxi drivers work long hours out of financial necessity. Due to the payment system in this industry taxi drivers’ remuneration is based on daily checking and daily checking is dependent on the availability of commuters. This overreliance on commuters has negative implications for the working conditions in the minibus taxi industry. Arguably, subsidies can positively impact on wages and profits and bring about improvements with regards working conditions in the minibus taxi industry. Secondly, spatial difference and the fragmented nature of employers make it difficult to implement legislative requirements evenly. Thirdly, the manner in which the industry is currently organised needs to change.

One of these options can work for South Africa. Perhaps an adoption of the current model that exists in some of the more developed countries like the United States will aid the situation. Taxi bosses can be encouraged to pool together to form companies and then rent out the taxis on a hire basis to drivers. In these instances, the state intervenes by controlling fare prices and the amount that companies can charge drivers. This control prevents companies charging drivers too much and also prevents drivers passing the burden to commuters in the form of fare charges. In this

case, labour relations will cease to exist in the minibus taxi industry as the taxi drivers will be self-employed. On the downside, however, commuters will have to carry the financial burden of petrol prices. This is because most of the associations increase fares after two to three years as opposed to responding to petrol prices. Secondly, taxi owners can be encouraged to go the route of co-operatives and run formal businesses with employees. The feasibility of the second option is in doubt given the level of competition on the road. Whatever the solution, the minibus taxi industry requires new and innovative ways of thinking if formalisation is to be achieved.



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## **Appendix 1.**

### **Interview Schedule.**

Dear Participant

My name is Mpho Mmadi and I am a student in the department of sociology at the University of Pretoria doing my Masters degree in Industrial Sociology and Labour studies. I am studying the work experiences of taxi drivers and how the nature of their work impact on both family and legislation implementation. I appreciate your agreeing to participate in this study and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to interview you. As a way of insuring that you remain anonymous, your name will not be recorded for this interview, however I would like to ask for your permission to record our interview conversation. Furthermore you are free and welcome not to answer any question of the interview that you do not feel like answering and have the right to stop or completely withdraw from the interview at any point. I will begin the interview by asking a few personal questions followed by questions relating to your work experiences. You are welcome to ask for clarity on any question that you do not understand. Thank once again for agreeing to this interview.

### **Part A**

Demographic data

1. Age

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2. Are you married

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3. Can you please describe in detail your household composition



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## Work Experience

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7. How many days do you work per week

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8. Are you entitled to leave

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9. Do you think your work is different to other forms of work If yes how

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10. Do you have daily or monthly targets to meet, If yes how much If no what is the arrangement. (observe daily targets)

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10b who decides on the amount (observe strategies used to meet targets if any)

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11. Are you a member of a trade union or any workers organization If no why

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12. Where is your place of work

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13. Are you or do feel covered by labour legislation? If no why do think this is the case

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14. Do you think labour legislation can have an impact on your daily work activities and in the industry as a whole If yes why do you say so

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15. Did you notice any changes (except the vehicles) in the minibus taxi Industry following the taxi recapitalization programme. If yes what kind of changes did you notice

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16. Do taxi drivers have employment security concerns. If yes why. If not why

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17. Do you have a contract of employment. If no why.

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18. Do you think labour legislation can impact on such employment security concerns, If yes how

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## **Part C**

Family life

19. Do the kind of work that you do have an impact on your family? If yes in what way

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20. Is the family economically stable

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21. Beyond being an economic provider, are you involved in your family in other way e.g. being there for emotional support

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22. How many times a week do you spend time with your children, wife or any other family members

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23. How many times a week do you get to do family activities with your family members e.g shopping or having dinner together

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24. Are you able to attend to family matters and emergencies. e.g child birth, sick children or funerals? If no, why

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25. Do you have time for leisure activities, e. g watching soccer with friends

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## **Part D**

### Community life

26. Do you think the kind of work that you do have an impact on your community engagements If yes in what way

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27. Are you able to attend to community activities e.g meetings

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28. Is there any else that you wish to tell me about your work and the minibus taxi industry in general

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Observation (Field) Notes:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

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## Appendix 2

### Letter of Free, Prior and Informed Consent.

My name is Mpho M. Mmadi from the University of Pretoria. I am conducting a research project as part of the fulfillment of a Masters Dissertation in industrial sociology and labour studies (MSocSci) at the University of Pretoria, department of Sociology. My dissertation is titled: "Mobile Workplace: work Conditions and family life of taxi drivers". I would therefore like to ask your formal permission take part in a non-participant observation and interviews about the 'everyday work experience of a taxi drivers'.

**Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary.** You can choose not to be involved. If you do agree to participate in the study, you may chose to stop you participation at anytime or not give your comments when you do not feel like commenting. I would like to ask your permission to tape record our conversations. Anonymity is assured; this means that your real name and identity will not be revealed in this dissertation, pseudonyms will be used instead. Your transcribed responses together with field noted will be stored for up to 15 years after the completion of the study. During the study, your consent form will be kept separately from your transcribed answers. The information you contribute in the interview will be integrated with comments of others and analyzed to offer a general understanding of the everyday work experience of taxi drivers in relation to their protection by labour legislation: that is, the extent to which their labour activity is compatible with legislative requirement. At the end of the study there would be no way of linking comments to participants. If you agree to participate in this study I would request that you please sign the consent form in the space allocated below indicating that you are a willing informant in this study. If you have any questions about any aspect of this research, during the course of the study of even later, I can be conducted on the following numbers 072 2963 812.

Thank you

Mpho M. Mmadi

FORMAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT of CONSENT.

I.....on this day  
of.....2011, agree to be interviewed as well as observed  
for a research project about the everyday labour activities of taxi drivers. I  
understand that I will be asked questions regarding how I think my work affect my  
family life and implementation of labour legislation in the minibus taxi industry.

Signed:.....

Date: .....