CHAPTER TWO

INTERPRETATION

HISTORICAL ORIGINS

MODERN PERCEPTION

FIG 4

FIG 5

FIG 6

9. CHAPTER 2- INTERPRETATION

BACKGROUND

The government policies of apartheid did not develop in isolation, but rather as a response to the increasing black political initiatives. "Segregation and apartheid assumed their shape, in part, as a white response to Africans' increasing participation in the country's economic life and their assertion of political rights" (info.gov: 2010). As a result, the government introduced legislation that legalized mass forced removals of black South Africans from economically advantageous areas of the city. The purpose of this was to further alienate the races, and additionally dis-empower the black populous. This sentiment, further compounded by the introduction of government's regulation of the job colour bar, geared at reserving skilled work for whites, additionally denied black workers the right to organize. This intention systematically de-rated black workers to third class citizens of the work force.

This methodology of structuring the social systems was the formative principal behind the forced removal of non-whites from economically active areas of the urban realm. The resultant effect of which, was the creation of racially designed locations, located on the outskirts of the cityscape. These locations where predominantly disenfranchised areas which often in addition to physical barriers had vast spatial barriers separating them from the city and other locations. This in turn meant that there was no direct access for non-whites to areas of economic activity. The prevailing issue was then, further compounded, by "legislation, which was consolidated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, 1923, which entrenched urban segregation and controlled African mobility by means of pass laws" (info.gov: 2010).

The summation of the above-mentioned circumstances led to the formation of a disjointed ecology, which lacked the empirical linkages required between the job space and the un-skilled workers it needed to sustain it. Although the premise of the construction of a juxtaposed city framework, served the needs of the government, it still needed to formulate a system that would help service its operational requirements. Thus, the emergence of a need for a public transport system geared at the transportation of unskilled workers to and from the locations to the city. In order to achieve their objectives, the primary modes of transport favored by the government

where the bus and train systems. This was due to that fact that they served more than the needs of the black migrant workers. This was made evident though their continued subsidization (SANTACO.2008).These modes of transport, where how ever less effective in transporting the masses as they lacked the infrastructural capabilities needed to permeate the dense fabric of the townships.

Queue the proliferation of the taxi industry among the townships, and all transportation facets of the black populace. The endeavor was further escalated by the economical advantages the system offered the everyday users. Secondary attributes, which lead to the success of the industry as a whole, was that it was an industry solely owned, managed and used by the black population.
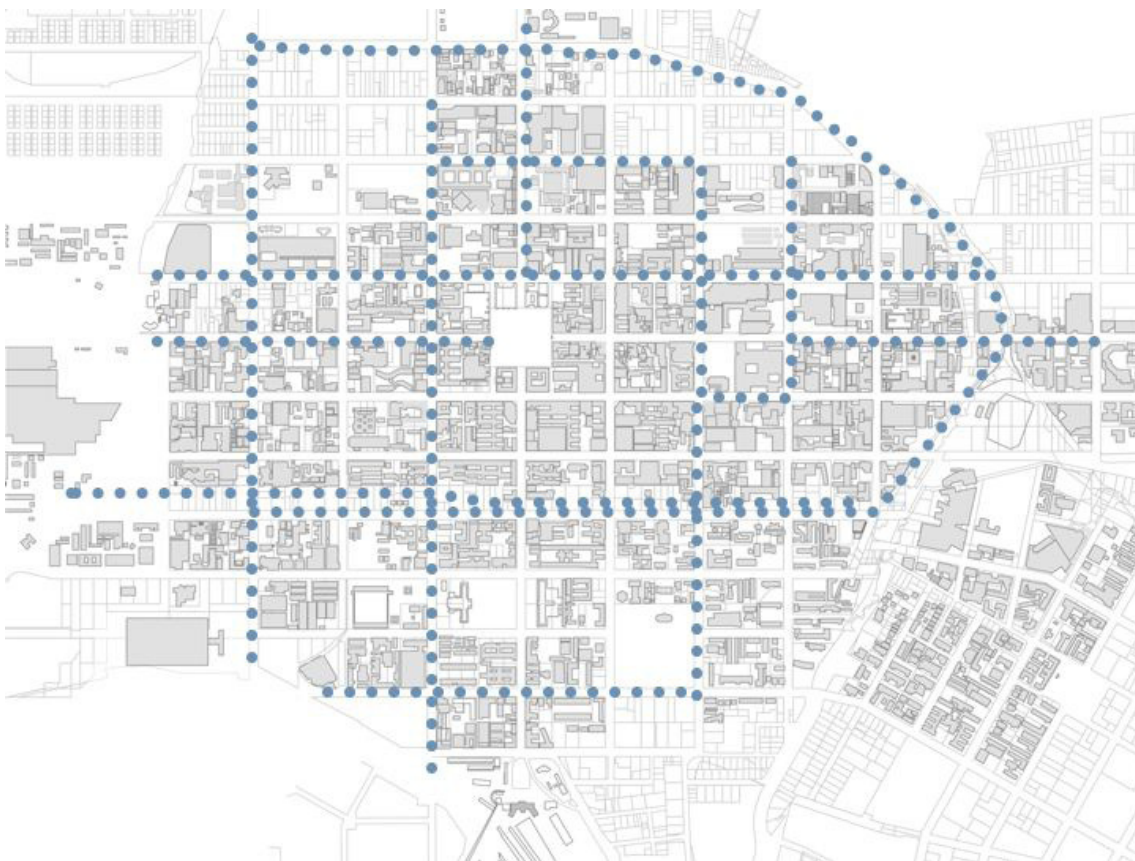

FIG 7-Taxi routes around Pretoria CBD

11. CHAPTER 2- INTERPRETATION

PRESENT VIEW

The prevailing ideology behind today's taxi industry is of one that is, immensely under regulated, operates under no higher authority, and "although it only accounts for 4.5% of the total vehicle population, is involved in 8.6% of all collisions" (NDoT, 2001). As such, taxis carry 65% of the 2,5 billion annual passenger trips in the urban environment and serve as the base-load public transport carrier, both during peak and off-peak transport times. The industries proliferation of the countries thoroughfare has led to South Africa's road's being rated among the most dangerous in the world, with accidents claiming the lives of no fewer than 10 000 people every year (Govender, Allopi, 2006: 101). This alarming stat is primarily due to the taxi industry continuation to flaunt traffic regulations, which are dually difficult to enforce due to the industry's informal nature, and the inept nature of the countries enforcement agencies.

Due to the nominated regulation councils, inability to express a prominent authoritative presence, the taxi industry has developed a renegade temperament that operates on its own terms. Unlike any other professional body or anthology of expertise, the taxi community does not rely on any unions or regulatory body in order, to civilly voice their grievances. Instead, they choose to follow a non-conformist methodology, devoid of mediatory attributes that lead to the formulation of amicable resolutions with whichever party they may be in conflict with. This in turn has led to a number of violent outbursts by the industry in which numerous civilians have been injured or killed, because of the absence of a deliberation platform. This in addition, has been made evident by the amount of in fighting within the industry for lucrative transportation routes. It is clear that some form of accountable body that has a larger public presence than SANTACO needs to be developed in order to represent the industry at grass rout level. The negation of which could lead to further bloodshed and decline in confidence in the industry as a whole. Evidence of which is seen by the recent protests the taxi industry has had with the introduction of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. This is primarily because "the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system would see over 500 taxis being removed from the first trunk route, to be introduced in Johannesburg between Soweto's Orlando and Coca Cola Park (Ellis Park) in central Johannesburg by June 1. (According to an SA National Taxi Council briefing on Monday)". (http://roadsafety. wordpress.com: 2009). Governments planned expansion of the BRT systems to other parts of the country, could similarly be met with the same opposition.

FIG 8

FIG 9

With the industry prominent role in South Africa's transport system, and its estimated economic value of more than R16, 5 billion annual turnover (arivealive:2010), the government has begun to recognize its magnitude and importance to the nation. As a result, the government has undertaken definitive measures to transform and restructure the industry. Of the most publicized initiatives, is the Taxi Recapitalization initiative. This policy aims to:

• The systematic introduction of safe and comfortable vehicles for taxi commuters through scrapping allowance which will be an incentive for taxi operators to hand in, on a voluntary basis, the very old vehicles for decommissioning (arivealive:2010).

• The economic empowerment of the taxi industry through a package of business opportunities that the Recapitalisation Project affords the Taxi industry to participate in nationally through the SATACO structures as well as at the level of the provincial co-operatives (arivealive:2010).

There has however been some opposition to the incentives, as was made evident by The Human Sciences Research Council. They reported that the majority of South Africans support plans to replace the current taxi fleet with new and safe vehicles. Only

FIG 10

FIG 11

28% of commuters who regularly use the service are opposed to the recapitalisation program. About 50% of those opposed to the recapitalisation plan did so in the belief that it would increase unemployment and result in higher crime levels (arivealive:2010).

Among the least known proposals is the Minibus Taxi Awards. The aim of this proposal is to encourage professionalism, safety and efficiency in this sector (arivealive:2010)

The continuation of this ominous approach to conducting their method of operating has left a repugnant taste in the mouths of all stakeholders, being the commuters who have to share the motorway with the taxi drivers and the passenger that travel with taxis on a daily basis. The fact that "65% of all commuter trips are undertaken by minibus taxis" (Govender, Allopi, 2006: 100) serves as an indication as to the prominence of the taxi industry in South African transport structures. Thus, there is a need to unsoil the image of the industry as a whole and give it the structured prominence that it so needs, but that does it in a manner that does justice to its innate social nature.