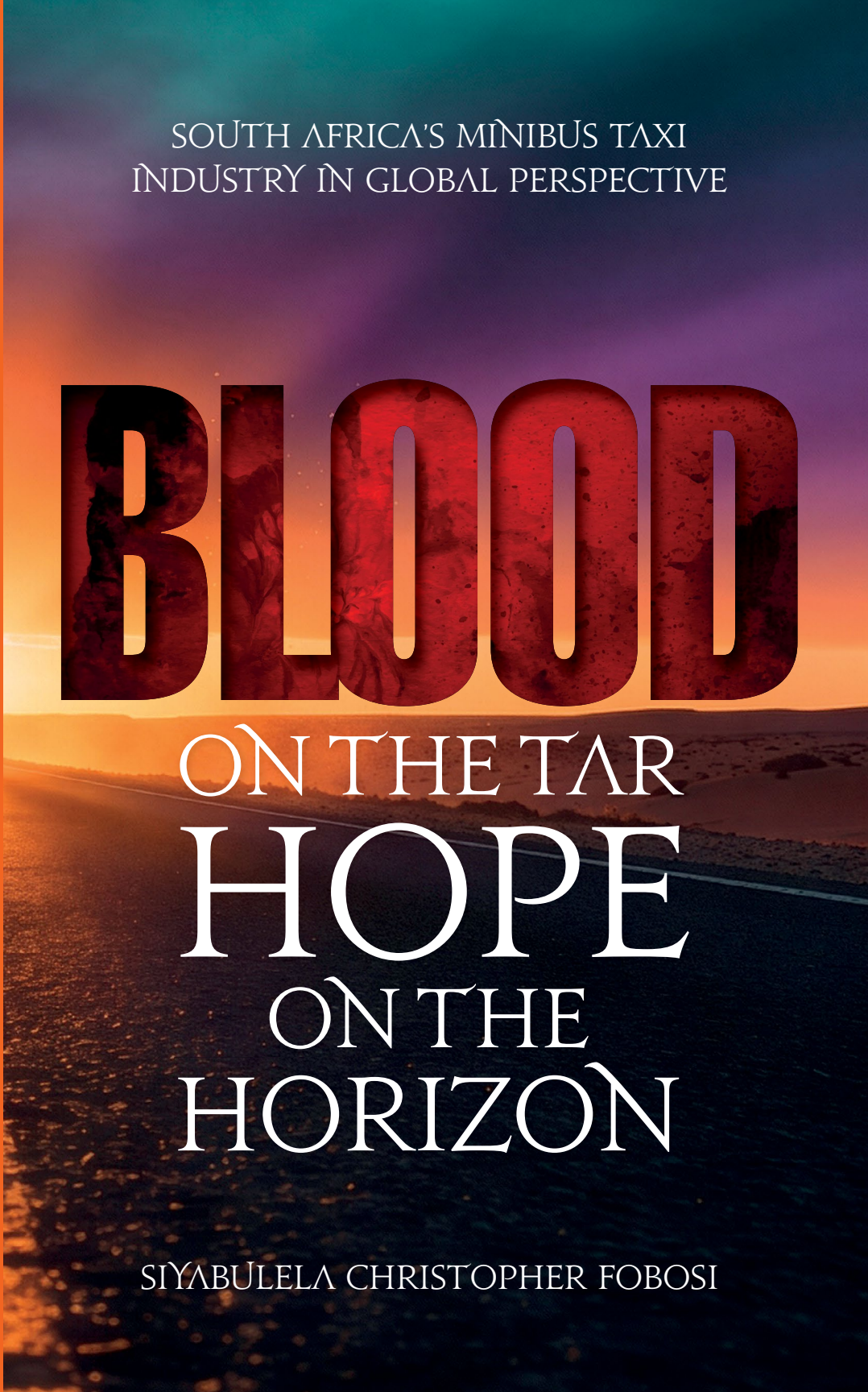

SOUTH AFRICA'S MINIBUS TAXI
INDUSTRY IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE
BLOOD
ON THE TAR
HOPE
ON THE
HORIZON
SIYABULELA CHRISTOPHER FOBOSI



Blood on the Tar, Hope on the Horizon: South Africa's Minibus Taxi Industry in Global Perspective

Siyabulela Christopher Fobosi

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Dedication

To the memory of my late brother, Dalindyebo Anthony Fobosi, born on 1 August 1980, who left this world far too soon on 2 July 2016.

This monograph is for you, Dalindyebo. It has been more than a decade in the making, and not a day has passed that I have not felt your absence. You were taken before I could show you what this work would become, before I could tell you that the long hours, the late nights in the library, the endless cups of coffee, and the countless interviews conducted in taxi ranks from East London to Johannesburg would one day take shape as something meaningful. But you knew, didn't you? You always believed in me, even when I doubted myself.

Your life was a lesson in quiet dignity. You faced struggles that I can only now begin to understand, and you did so without complaint, without bitterness, without ever asking for recognition. You taught me that strength is not measured by what one accumulates but by how one carries oneself through adversity. That lesson has guided every page of this work.

The minibus taxi industry, which forms the heart of this monograph, is filled with people who remind me of you. Hard-working people. Overlooked people. People who wake up before dawn and return home after dark, who carry the weight of the economy on their shoulders but receive none of the credit. People who are essential yet invisible. That is the world that you knew, and that is the world that I have tried, in my small way, to honour through this research.

I hope that somewhere, in whatever lies beyond, you can see what you meant to me. I hope you can see that your life was not forgotten. This monograph is not for the politicians or the policymakers alone. It is for you, Dalindyebo. It is for the workers. It is for the ones who never get thanked.

Rest in peace, my brother – Maya, Magwa, Ntande!!!! You are loved. You are missed.

Author's Note on the Research Guiding This Monograph

This monograph draws on research conducted over more than a decade. The foundation was laid during Master's research at Rhodes University (2012-2013), supervised by Professor Kirk Helliker, which examined the labour process in East London's minibus taxi industry. That study introduced the concept of the "decentralised labour process" and documented the gap between labour legislation and on-the-ground realities. The Doctoral research at the University of Johannesburg (2018-2020), supervised by Professor Siphelo Ngcwangu and Professor Ashwin Desai, extended the analysis to Johannesburg, examined the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme's impact, and developed the theoretical framework of "regulated precariousness" that informs this monograph's analysis of state failure.

The author is grateful to the National Research Foundation, the HSRC Labour Markets Intelligence Partnership, the Ernst and Ethel Eriksen Trust, and the University of Johannesburg for funding that supported the underlying research. Subsequent post-doctoral research at the University of Fort Hare, including participation in the SANTACO Western Cape Peace Summit (2024) and the Inaugural National Transport Conference (2026), has refined and tested the policy proposals presented here.

To my amazing wife, Anesipho [Siphathise] Klaas-Fobosi, thank you for your unwavering support throughout this long journey. Your patience, encouragement, and belief in this work have been my anchor. This monograph would not have been completed without you by my side.

All interview data cited in this monograph were collected under ethical protocols approved by Rhodes University (2012), the University of Johannesburg (REC-02-156-2017). Participants are identified only by role, location, and year to protect anonymity, with additional precautions taken to prevent identification of drivers who disclosed the practice of *imali yesokisi*.

A Note on Reading this Monograph

This monograph is intended for a diverse audience. Policymakers and regulators will find detailed institutional and legal analysis in Chapters 4, 6, and 11, including specific proposals for legislative reform and subsidy frameworks. General readers and industry practitioners may wish to focus on the qualitative material in Chapters 1, 5, and 7, which draws extensively on interviews and ethnographic observation. Academics and researchers will benefit from the comparative analysis in Chapters 2 and 3, as well as the methodological appendix. Each chapter is designed to stand alone, but the argument cumulatively builds towards the peace framework presented in Chapters 10 and 11. Readers seeking an immediate overview of policy recommendations may turn directly to the seven-year road map in Chapter 11.

Executive Summary

This monograph interrogates one of South Africa's most paradoxical sectors: the minibus taxi industry. Valued at over R50 billion annually and relied upon by millions of commuters daily, it is simultaneously indispensable and deadly. It provides the backbone of public transport, especially for low-income communities, yet it is plagued by violence, regulatory weakness, and exploitative labour practices. This study asks how such a vital industry came to be associated with bloodshed, and what pathways might lead towards peace.

The analysis begins with the historical legacy of apartheid-era deregulation. In 1987, the state abandoned its role in providing affordable public transport, legalising minibuses without providing an adequate regulatory framework. The result was a fiercely competitive environment in which territorial dominance, rather than state oversight, became the organising principle. Violence, thus, became institutionalised as a method of economic regulation, with rival associations fighting over routes and ranks.

South Africa has a relatively good track record of implementing its transport policies. Over the past twenty years, the nation has demonstrated willingness and ability to finance ambitious transport infrastructure. The run-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup saw world-class infrastructure delivered against impossible deadlines. Institutions have been created, programmes have been piloted, and commitments to an integrated public transport network have been made on paper.

Yet, in 2026, the country faces what some have called a "success trap." Diminishing returns on transport investments are evident. The backlog in public transport infrastructure and services now stands at the equivalent of 5% of GDP per annum. Even with consistent investment, it will take a minimum of seven years to turn the situation around. The most painful symptom of this trap—the one that fills news headlines and mortuaries—is the violence in the minibus taxi industry.

This monograph confronts a profound paradox. The taxi industry is a major economic force. It moves seventy per cent of South Africa's public transport users. It generates nearly a billion rand per day. It is the indispensable engine of economic life. Yet, in the eyes of the law, it remains "informal." In that gap—between formal law and informal reality—a vacuum is created. Into that vacuum steps informal, and often violent, governance. Associations become states unto themselves. Disputes are settled not in courtrooms but with hitmen.

This is not a failure of the industry alone. This is a systemic aporia—a fundamental deadlock in the post-apartheid governance model. This monograph answers three questions: What strategic interventions are required to support this reform agenda? What is the role of government and industry? What are the building blocks for a cohesive framework to transition to a sustainable future?

Comparative insights from other countries further enrich the analysis. Kenya's cooperative *matatu* models, Tanzania's licensing reforms, and Colombia's attempts at integrating *colectivos* into formal systems show both the pitfalls of top-down interventions and the potential of collaborative approaches. These international experiences highlight that informal transport systems across the Global South share common dynamics of precarity, competition, and violence—but also that reform, while difficult, is possible.

The central contribution of this monograph is a comprehensive peace framework. Built on four pillars—collaborative regulation, labour protection, association empowerment, and community-centred governance—it seeks to move beyond reactive policing and failed formalisation schemes. Central to this framework is the proposed National Taxi Peace and Development Authority, a permanent platform for dialogue, conflict resolution, and joint planning.

Ultimately, the monograph argues that peace in the taxi industry is both urgent and possible. It is urgent because commuters' lives and livelihoods are at stake, and because continued violence undermines trust in state institutions. It is possible because lessons from within South Africa and beyond

demonstrate that informal transport systems can be restructured when reforms are collaborative, inclusive, and grounded in lived realities. The taxi industry, far from being a marginal sector, is a mirror of South Africa's broader struggles with inequality, state weakness, and contested authority. To build peace here is, therefore, not only a transport policy goal but a national imperative.

The labour process itself is fundamentally decentralised. Unlike formal transport modes where management exercises direct control, minibus taxi owners and drivers operate within a fluid arrangement where drivers possess significant autonomy over daily operations but bear corresponding risks. This decentralisation, documented extensively in the author's earlier research in East London (Fobosi, 2013) and Johannesburg (Fobosi, 2020), means that traditional employer-employee controls are absent. Drivers make minute-by-minute decisions about routes, speed, and passenger loading, with their income tied directly to performance. This arrangement, while appearing to grant autonomy, in fact externalises risk onto workers while owners retain profit. The decentralised labour process is thus not an incidental feature but a structural mechanism that perpetuates precarity and complicates regulatory enforcement.

The minibus taxi industry is both indispensable and deadly. The paradox is not accidental but structural, rooted in apartheid-era deregulation and sustained by weak governance. The industry moves 70% of public transport users but receives no subsidy, creating zero-sum competition that institutionalises violence as a mode of economic regulation. The Introduction that follows establishes the global context for this paradox, demonstrating that South Africa's experience is not unique but part of a wider pattern of informal transport conflict across the Global South.

Introduction: From South Africa to the World

The South African minibus taxi industry is not an isolated phenomenon. Across the Global South, urban transport systems are characterised by informalisation, precarity, and conflict. Minibuses in major South African metropolitan centres like Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, and Port Elizabeth have their counterparts in Nairobi's *matatus*, Dar es Salaam's *dala-dalas*, Manila's *jeepneys*, Bogotá's *colectivos*, and Kampala's *boda-bodas*. These systems share a strikingly similar paradox: they are at once indispensable to everyday mobility yet marked by instability, weak regulation, and recurrent violence. As Cervero and Golub (2007) argue, informal transport has become "the lifeline of developing cities," but one riddled with contradictions.

By situating the South African case within this global context, this chapter demonstrates that the challenges of taxi violence, contested regulation, and worker precarity are not uniquely South African. Instead, they reflect broader dynamics of urban governance in contexts where the state is absent, fragmented, or unable to meet the mobility demands of rapidly urbanising populations (Klopp & Mitullah, 2016). The aim is not to minimise the specificity of South Africa's history, but to illustrate how the lessons learned here can be replicated globally.

Across cities of the Global South, informal transport systems emerged as grassroots solutions to inadequate state provision. During apartheid, deregulation in 1987 created a pathway for South Africa's minibus taxis to thrive (Fobosi, 2019). Similarly, in Kenya, the *matatu* industry developed as a response to underfunded bus and rail systems, with operators stepping into the vacuum left by weak municipal services (Mitullah, 2003). In the Philippines, the *jeepney* — a repurposed American military vehicle — became the backbone of urban mobility when formal buses could not meet demand (Cervero, 2000).

A first shared trait is flexibility. Operators adapt routes and schedules daily based on passenger flows, something state-owned

systems struggle to match (Behrens *et al.*, 2016). A second trait is accessibility, as informal transport penetrates areas that formal buses or trains neglect. For commuters in low-income settlements in Cape Town, Soweto, Kibera (Nairobi), or Quezon City (Manila), these vehicles are often the only viable option.

But alongside flexibility and accessibility comes precarity. Drivers and conductors work long hours under commission-based systems, mirroring the *imali yesokisi* practices that I have documented in South Africa (Fobosi, 2025a). In Dar es Salaam, *dala-dala* drivers report hiding earnings from owners to ensure that they have something to take home (Behrens *et al.*, 2016). In Manila, *jeepney* drivers face daily quotas from vehicle owners, echoing the R1,000 target common in Johannesburg. These shared dynamics reveal that informality is not merely a local accident, but a structural feature of transport economies under neoliberal and exclusionary governance regimes.

The violence endemic to South Africa's taxi industry is often portrayed as exceptional. Yet comparative analysis shows that it is part of a wider pattern. In Nairobi, *matatu* wars erupted throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, as rival cartels fought over lucrative routes (Mutongi, 2017). In Manila, violence between *jeepney* associations has periodically flared, often linked to competition for passenger flows along busy corridors (Claudio, 2017). In Latin American cities such as Bogotá, *colectivos* have clashed both with state authorities seeking to formalise them and with rival operators defending their "territories" (Gutiérrez, 2010).

What unites these cases is the role of territorial control. Routes are not simply corridors of mobility; they are revenue streams. In an industry without subsidies, each passenger fare is fiercely contested. As in South Africa, disputes quickly escalate from verbal warnings to violent confrontations, creating cycles of retaliation that draw in communities and commuters. Violence, thus, becomes not an aberration, but a mode of economic regulation in the absence of legitimate state authority (Goodfellow, 2015).

Associational politics further intensify this. South Africa's South African National Taxi Council (SANTACO) and National Taxi Alliance (NTA) mirror the factional rivalries of *matatu* savings

and credit cooperative organisations (SACCOs) in Kenya or *jeepney* unions in the Philippines (McCormick *et al.*, 2015). These organisations provide a degree of order but also institutionalise competition, making associations quasi-political actors whose disputes spill into violence.

Across these global systems, drivers and conductors inhabit precarious positions. In Uganda, *boda-boda* riders often work without contracts, pay daily fees to vehicle owners, and rely on community self-help groups for survival (Mutiso & Behrens, 2011). In Manila, *jeepney* drivers stage strikes to resist fare policies, pooling resources to survive days without income (Claudio, 2017).

These practices are in alignment with South Africa's *imali yesokisi*, which I have conceptualised as a form of *everyday resistance* (Scott, 1985). Workers resist exploitation not through formal unions or legal channels - often inaccessible - but through subtle acts of defiance that allow them to reclaim dignity and income. This survivalist resistance is global, linking South African taxi drivers with informal workers from Manila to Nairobi.

Governments oscillate between repression and reluctant tolerance of informal transport. In South Africa, the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme (TRP) attempted to formalise fleets but faced mass resistance (Fobosi, 2019). In Nairobi, the government introduced the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in 2018, seeking to displace *matatus*, but found itself in conflict with entrenched cartels (Klopp *et al.*, 2019). In Bogotá, the TransMilenio BRT sought to integrate *colectivos*, yet exclusion and resistance led to ongoing clashes (Ardila-Gomez, 2004).

The common lesson is that top-down formalisation often fails. Without genuine collaboration, reforms are perceived as threats to livelihoods. As Becker (2004) argues, informality cannot be reduced to a binary; it exists along a continuum shaped by contested processes of regulation and resistance.

The story of South Africa's minibus taxi industry is a deeply paradoxical one. It is a sector of immense economic and social importance, a multi-billion-rand powerhouse that forms the very backbone of daily public transport for millions of South Africans, especially those in low-income communities. Yet, it is also a sector synonymous with bloodshed, violence, and

profound precarity. This monograph interrogates this paradox, moving from a rigorous diagnosis of the historical and structural factors that have institutionalised violence to a normative proposal for a more peaceful and sustainable future. At its heart, this is a study that confronts the realities of a vital industry and asks: how did it become so deadly, and what pathways might lead towards lasting peace?

The analysis begins with a fundamental premise: the violence is not random or a result of mere criminality. It is a predictable outcome of a dysfunctional system, where economic competition and political control are inextricably linked. The roots of this crisis are embedded in the historical legacy of apartheid-era deregulation, a state-led abandonment of its transport responsibilities that created a vacuum for conflict. The violence that plagues the industry is not an aberration; it is a feature of a system where dominance over routes and ranks, rather than market principles or state oversight, became the primary organising principle. This monograph is organised into twelve chapters, each of which builds upon the last, moving from a dissection of the problem to an envisioning of a solution.

Original Contribution of This Monograph

This monograph makes three distinctive contributions to the literature on informal transport, labour precarity, and conflict resolution. First, it offers a synthesised analytical framework that integrates historical institutionalism, political economy, and labour process theory to explain the persistence of violence in South Africa's minibus taxi industry. While each of these dimensions has been examined separately in existing scholarship, no previous work has brought them together into a comprehensive explanatory model. Second, the monograph proposes a novel peace framework built on four pillars—collaborative regulation, labour protection, association empowerment, and community-centred governance—which together form the basis for the proposed Minibus Taxi Governance Council. Third, the monograph documents and theorises the practice of *imali yesokisi* ("socks money") as a form of everyday resistance within precarious labour relations. While the practice itself predates this research,

its conceptualisation as a survival strategy embedded in structural exploitation represents an original theoretical contribution.

The value of this monograph lies not in discovering previously unknown facts but in its original synthesis of disparate evidence, its development of an actionable peace framework, and its application of comparative international lessons to the South African context. The work translates extensive fieldwork conducted over a decade into a coherent policy blueprint.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, multi-method research design spanning more than a decade of sustained academic enquiry. The research is situated within an interpretive paradigm that prioritises understanding the lived experiences of industry participants while attending to the structural conditions that shape those experiences.

Data Collection

The data presented in this monograph derive from multiple phases of research activity, beginning with the author's Master's dissertation and continuing through doctoral studies, post-doctoral research, media engagement, and direct participation in peacebuilding processes.

Master's and Doctoral Research (2013-2020)

The foundation of this monograph was laid during the author's Master's research at Rhodes University (2012-2013) and doctoral research at the University of Johannesburg (2018-2020). The Master's study, *Formalisation, In-formalisation and the Labour Process within the Minibus Taxi Industry in East London*, involved semi-structured interviews with 33 participants, including taxi owners (n=15), taxi drivers (n=18), and key informants from the Department of Transport and Department of Labour. Fieldwork was conducted in East London and Mdantsane across six months of observation. The doctoral study, *The Impact of Taxi Recapitalisation Programme on Precarious Working Conditions within the Minibus Taxi Industry in Johannesburg*, expanded the geographical scope to include Johannesburg (Bree Street,

Noord Street, Wanderers, and Faraday taxi ranks) and included interviews with 58 participants: taxi drivers (n=26), vehicle owners (n=9), rank marshals (n=6), association representatives (n=7), government officials (n=5), and commuters (n=8). All interviews were conducted in isiXhosa, isiZulu, seSotho, and English, with translation and back-translation employed for accuracy. Interviews were audio-recorded where consent was given and transcribed verbatim.

Continuous Extended Fieldwork

Following the completion of doctoral studies, the author continued research engagement with the taxi industry through the University of Fort Hare. This phase involved longitudinal observation, with regular return visits to research sites to track changes in industry dynamics. Key activities include: (i) follow-up interviews with 22 participants from the original Doctoral sample; (ii) observation of taxi association meetings (meetings across three provinces); and (iii) analysis of regulatory documents and media coverage.

Media Interviews and Public Engagement (2015-2026)

Throughout the research period, the author has provided expert commentary on the taxi industry to South African media outlets, including interviews with News24, Daily Maverick, The Sowetan, Sunday Times, eNCA, and SABC News. These media engagements served two important research functions: they provided access to industry stakeholders who might not have participated in academic research, and they subjected preliminary findings to public scrutiny, allowing refinement based on feedback.

Participant Observation at the SANTACO Western Cape Taxi Peace Summit (2025)

The author attended the SANTACO Western Cape Taxi Peace Summit as an invited academic observer and served on Panel 2: "Solutions for Creating a Safer and Peaceful Minibus Taxi Industry." This participation provided unique access to the negotiation process between rival associations, the drafting of

the summit's peace blueprint, and the implementation challenges that emerged in the months following the summit.

Participation in the Inaugural National Transport Conference (March 2026)

The author was invited by the Minister of Transport, Honourable Barbara Creecy, and the Deputy Minister, Mr Mkhuleko Hlengwa, to serve as a panellist in the Public Transport Breakaway Group, with the presentation topic "The Taxi Industry Reform Agenda: Funding, Subsidisation and Formalisation." The presentation delivered at the conference—entitled "Breaking the Deadlock: An Actionable Agenda to End Violence and Formalise the Minibus Taxi Industry"—is incorporated into this monograph, particularly in Chapter 4 (POCA and Governance Council proposals) and Chapter 11 (seven-year road map). The international cases (Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Colombia, the Philippines, Ghana) were selected using a "most different systems" design. These countries vary significantly in political history, colonial legacy, and level of economic development, yet they share the phenomenon of informal transport dominance accompanied by conflict. This variation allows identification of structural commonalities—weak state regulation, zero-sum competition, labour precarity—that transcend local specificities.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample underrepresents female drivers and owners, reflecting the industry's gender composition rather than researcher bias. Second, interviews with criminal actors involved in taxi violence were not attempted because of safety and ethical constraints. Third, the longitudinal nature of the research means that some earlier interview data may not reflect current conditions; the follow-up interview programme was designed to address this limitation but cannot fully eliminate it.

Positionality and Ethical Considerations

The author has been engaged with the taxi industry as a researcher and policy advisor for over thirteen years. This

positionality affords access and contextual knowledge that would be impossible to achieve through short-term research. To mitigate potential bias, the author has: (i) deliberately sought out disconfirming evidence; (ii) subjected all findings to peer review prior to incorporation; (iii) maintained detailed field notes; and (iv) presented preliminary findings at academic conferences where critical feedback was solicited.

Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants. A two-stage consent process was used: participants signed a consent form at the time of interview, and the author sought verbal reconfirmation when conducting follow-up interviews. Participants were assured that refusal to participate or withdrawal at any time would carry no consequences. Data are stored on encrypted university servers with access restricted to the author and approved research assistants.

Chapter summaries

Chapter One: The Anatomy of Taxi Violence

This chapter establishes the foundation for the entire monograph by confronting the realities of bloodshed, rivalry, and precarity that define the minibus taxi sector. It argues that taxi violence is not random criminality but a predictable outcome of structural conditions: apartheid-era deregulation that created a regulatory vacuum; organisational rivalries between SANTACO and the NTA that turn routes into battlegrounds; a decentralised labour process that externalises risk onto drivers; and the absence of subsidies that locks the industry into zero-sum competition. The chapter documents the human toll of taxi violence between 2019 and 2025, during which a minimum of 487 taxi-related fatalities were recorded nationally. It introduces the concept of *imali yesokisi* as a form of everyday resistance within precarious labour relations. The chapter concludes that violence has become institutionalised as a mechanism of economic regulation, and that dismantling its structural drivers requires systemic, not merely punitive, solutions. Having established the anatomy of violence, Chapter Two broadens the lens to examine whether these dynamics are unique to South Africa or part of a wider global pattern.

Chapter Two: The Global Gridlock: Comparative Analysis of Informal Public Transport, Precarity, and Violence

This chapter broadens the analytical lens from national to global perspective. By comparing the South African minibus taxi industry with similar informal transport sectors across the Global South - including Nairobi's *matatus*, Dar es Salaam's *dala-dalas*, Accra's *tro-tros*, Manila's *jeepneys*, Bogotá's *colectivos*, and Nigeria's *okadas* - the analysis demonstrates that the structural drivers of violence are not unique to South Africa but recur wherever weak state regulation, zero-sum economic competition, and labour precarity intersect. The chapter examines common patterns in economic organisation (the daily target system, the fragmentation of ownership), regulatory capture (associations functioning as parallel states), and the formation of a global "transport precariat". Critically, the chapter identifies transferable best practices: Kenya's cooperative *matatu* models, Colombia's BRT integration (which reduced inter-operator violence by an estimated 71%), and Ghana's union-led professionalisation initiatives. The international evidence demonstrates that reform is possible. Chapter Three turns to the South African state's role in peacebuilding, examining why past interventions have failed and what institutional reforms are necessary.

Chapter Three: The State's Role in Peacebuilding: Formalisation, Failure, and the Promise of Co-Governance

This chapter critically assesses the South African government's past and present role in managing taxi industry conflicts. It argues that state intervention has been characterised by three interrelated weaknesses: fragmented enforcement of regulations, political interference that erodes trust in government neutrality, and reactive crisis management rather than sustained dialogue. The chapter examines the TRP as a case study in top-down failure, documenting its R4.7 billion budget, its replacement of only 35,000 of 120,000 unsafe vehicles, and the symbolic damage caused by the diversion of R19 million from the programme to fund a presidential inauguration. The concept of "regulated

precariousness" is introduced to capture the paradox whereby workers have rights on paper but no access to them in practice. The chapter proposes two institutional innovations: the application of the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) to taxi violence, and the establishment of a Minibus Taxi Governance Council (MTGC) with statutory powers for route arbitration, tariff setting, and enforcement of professional standards. With the institutional framework proposed, Chapter Four presents an evidence-based blueprint for sustainable peace built on three pillars of intervention.

Chapter Four: Pathways to Sustainable Peace

This chapter presents a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable peace within the taxi sector, first outlined at the SANTACO Western Cape Taxi Peace Summit. The framework rests on three pillars. First, localised route-based conflict resolution mechanisms (RCRMs) that facilitate rapid mediation at the corridor level, supported by evidence from Nairobi where dispute resolution panels reduced violent incidents by 62%. Second, a driver and operator certification programme linked to an enforceable Peace Pledge - a legally binding commitment to non-violence and ethical conduct - drawing on successful initiatives in Ghana. Third, a "taxis for people" mindset that re-centres commuters through monthly listening forums and digital feedback systems. The chapter explicitly acknowledges the limits of top-down reform, citing two decades of policy failure, and argues that incentives - subsidies, training, and formal recognition - must replace imposition. Incentives require resources. Chapter Five examines the economics of conflict and proposes a comprehensive subsidy framework to stabilise the industry.

Chapter Five: The Economics of Conflict: Subsidies, Livelihoods, and the Future of the Industry

This chapter argues that the violence endemic to the taxi industry is a direct consequence of a deeply flawed economic model. The industry receives no public subsidy despite moving 15 million passengers daily and contributing an estimated R90 billion annually to the economy—a "strategic neglect" that entrenches zero-sum competition. The chapter proposes a multi-layered

subsidy framework: a performance-based subsidy linking payments to safety compliance, Peace Pledge adherence, digital reporting, and commuter feedback; a Livelihoods Stabilisation Fund to replace daily targets with stable wages and formal employment status; and a Fleet Modernisation Grant to accelerate vehicle replacement. The chapter also introduces the Green Taxi Fund, linking energy transition to formalisation milestones. Drawing on international examples from the Philippines and Colombia, the chapter demonstrates that subsidies, when tied to accountability, can be powerful peacebuilding tools. Economics alone cannot build peace. Chapter Six turns to the human dimension—the drivers and commuters whose daily lives are shaped by the industry's dysfunction.

Chapter Six: The Human Dimension of Peace: From Drivers to Commuters

This chapter centres the lived experiences of those at the heart of the crisis: drivers who work 14 to 16 hour shifts without contracts, benefits, or union representation; commuters whose rights are routinely violated; and women who face systematic exclusion from association governance and routine harassment in the ranks. Drawing on testimonies from East London (2013) and Johannesburg (2018-2020), the chapter documents the psychological toll of precarity and the normalisation of aggression. A new subsection on modal shift demonstrates how fare increases have pushed 17% of former taxi users in Gauteng to switch to walking (and 6% to cycling), reducing ridership and intensifying competition. The chapter proposes specific measures: mandatory training on gender-based violence, reserved seats for women on the proposed Governance Council, women-only taxi services on high-demand routes, and enforceable commuter rights. Dignity requires transparency. Chapter Seven examines how technology can enable accountability and peace.

Chapter Seven: Technology as an Enabler of Peace: Digital Transformation and Accountability

This chapter argues that digital transformation, if thoughtfully designed, can be a powerful non-coercive tool for peacebuilding. The persistent informality of the sector—reliance on cash, absence

of verifiable data—creates a "data vacuum" where disputes fester and violence thrives. The chapter examines the failure of the National Land Transport Information System (NLTIS) as a cautionary tale of technology as barrier rather than enabler. It then analyses lessons from prior cashless pilots, including the Gauteng Tap-and-Ride trial (2019-2021), which achieved 8,000 daily active users before collapsing because of private partner failure and COVID-19 disruptions. The chapter proposes mandatory electronic fare collection (e-ticketing) as the single most effective tool for formalisation, with smart cards accessible to unbanked commuters, offline capability, and zero-rated data. GPS tracking for route verification and digital feedback platforms for commuter accountability are also examined. Technology and economics require institutional backing. Chapter Eight examines the role of civil society and community engagement in sustaining peace beyond the state.

Chapter Eight: Beyond the State: The Role of Civil Society and Community Engagement

This chapter argues that sustainable peace cannot be achieved by the state and industry alone; it requires the active participation of civil society and communities. Civil society organisations are often embedded in the very communities most affected by violence, giving them unique capacities for mediation, trust-building, and grassroots mobilisation. Academic institutions, such as the University of Fort Hare, can serve as neutral spaces for dialogue and evidence-based policy advice. The chapter documents the limits of associations, drawing on East London research showing that associations have virtually no control over members' employment practices. It proposes reclaiming taxi ranks—physically and administratively—as a prerequisite for peace, with municipalities deploying police to enforce access rules and publishing transparent route allocation registers. The chapter introduces the concept of conditional statutory power: associations that meet conditions (audited finances, capacity to expel violent members, adherence to council rulings) receive legal authority to collect levies and mediate disputes. Accountability requires professionalisation. Chapter Nine outlines a comprehensive framework for training, certification, and codes of conduct.

Chapter Nine: The Path to Professionalisation: Training, Certification, and Codes of Conduct

This chapter argues that the industry's greatest asset is its people, yet drivers receive no formal training in conflict resolution, customer service, or professional ethics. The chapter proposes a National Driver and Operator Certification Programme, mandatory for all drivers, with a comprehensive curriculum including professional ethics, conflict de-escalation, financial literacy, and safety or first aid. The programme is linked to a Code of Conduct with escalating sanctions, from mandatory refresher courses to licence suspension or revocation. The chapter addresses the representation crisis, documenting systematic intimidation of workers who attempt to join South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) unions. It proposes a confidential, independent hotline operated by the Minibus Taxi Governance Council for workers to report violations without fear of retaliation. The chapter also introduces the Professional Development Fund (capitalised by industry levies and government matching) to sponsor transport management qualifications at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges, and mandatory certification for association leaders. Professionalisation, subsidies, technology, and institutional reform must be integrated into a coherent timeline. Chapter Ten presents a seven-year road map from emergency to integration.

Chapter Ten: Implementing the Peace Framework: A Step-by-Step Road Map

This chapter presents a concrete, phased implementation timeline spanning seven years, replacing earlier three-phase proposals. Year One (Emergency Phase) prioritises violence reduction: establishment of the Minibus Taxi Governance Council, activation of a multi-agency Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) task force, immediate formation of cooperatives, rank reclamation in high-conflict provinces, and emergency peace summits in all nine provinces. Years Two to Four (Systemisation Phase) scale pilots: nationwide rollout of driver certification and mandatory e-ticketing, transfer of scholar transport contracts to certified cooperatives, implementation of gender measures, and operation

of the Green Taxi Fund. Years Five to Seven (Integration Phase) embed the framework: redesign route allocations to position formalised taxis as feeder networks for BRT spines, integrate all 257 municipal transport authorities under the council's framework, and transition the council to permanent institutional status. The chapter includes provision for independent evaluation at Years Four, Five, and Seven, with course correction based on findings. Implementation requires not just technical solutions but ethical commitment. Chapter Eleven concludes with a synthesis and vision for the future of urban mobility.

Chapter Eleven: The Ethical Imperative and the Future of Urban Mobility: Synthesis and Vision

This concluding chapter argues that the successful transformation of the taxi industry requires more than policy and technology; it demands a fundamental ethical change of direction: recognition that public transport is a non-negotiable public good and that taxi labour must be accorded professional status and security. The chapter synthesises findings to articulate a vision across three dimensions: ethical or labour (professionalising drivers through fixed salaries, benefits, and certification); governance or ownership (consolidating operators into Route-Based Management Companies under municipal authority); and technological or spatial (mandatory e-ticketing and integration as a feeder network to BRT systems). The chapter argues that the taxi industry is a mirror of South Africa itself—unequal, conflict-ridden, yet irrepressibly vital—and that to transform it is to affirm that violence is not destiny, that informality need not mean lawlessness, and that dignity is not beyond reach. The monograph closes with a call to action: the tools, knowledge, and road map exist; what remains is the courage to act.

Part I

The Anatomy of a Crisis

Chapter 1

The Anatomy of Taxi Violence

In the vast and often-turbulent world of South Africa's minibus taxi industry, I have often felt like a voice in the wilderness, advocating for change in a sector that seems perpetually locked in a cycle of conflict. My engagement with this industry, both academically and through policy dialogues, has forced me to reckon with its contradictions. On the one hand, the taxi sector is indispensable, a true lifeline for millions of South Africans who depend on it daily to get to work, school, hospitals, and markets. On the other hand, it is synonymous in the public imagination with instability, lawlessness, and bloodshed. Understanding the anatomy of this violence requires moving beyond surface-level accounts of shootings, assassinations, and flare-ups between rival groups. It demands a deeper interrogation of history, organisational structures, economic imperatives, and the cultural narratives that have shaped the sector over decades. The first layer of this violence lies in history itself. I argue that the current state of the taxi industry is a direct consequence of apartheid-era policy decisions that deregulated and informalised the industry, creating a vacuum of oversight and a fiercely competitive environment (Fobosi, 2019; Fourie, 2003). In 1987, when the apartheid government legalised minibus taxis through deregulation, the intention was not to empower black South Africans but rather to relieve the state of responsibility for providing affordable public transport (Khosa, 1994). Yet, ironically, deregulation did create economic opportunities, particularly for black entrepreneurs and workers excluded from the formal economy. The result was a rapid expansion of the industry, but one without adequate institutional frameworks to manage growth, mediate disputes, or set standards of safety and professionalism (Fobosi, 2024; Laha, 2008). The industry grew in what I call a "regulatory vacuum," and within that vacuum,

violence became a mechanism of control and enforcement (Jessop & Sum, 2006). This paradox remains central today: the taxi industry is both a vital socio-economic sector and a hotbed of conflict. The paradox is made sharper by the fact that taxis remain largely informal, despite successive attempts at reform through measures such as the TRP. The TRP, launched in 1999, was designed to remove old, unsafe vehicles from the road and to modernise the fleet. Yet, as my field research in Johannesburg revealed, many operators resisted, bypassed or undermined the scheme, and the absence of consistent enforcement meant that unroadworthy vehicles and illegal operators continued to thrive (Fobosi, 2019). The regulatory framework has, therefore, remained partial and contested, with violence often filling the space where law and policy should have provided resolution. Beyond historical legacies, the anatomy of taxi violence is inseparable from the organisational rivalries that define the sector. Two national associations, SANTACO and the NTA, have long competed for legitimacy, resources, and influence (Competition Commission, 2020). Within provinces, these rivalries are replicated by regional and local associations, each seeking dominance over particular routes. The competition for control is not simply organisational; it is deeply economic. Routes represent revenue streams, and in an industry without subsidies, where every rand must be extracted from fares, routes become fiercely defended assets. The absence of subsidies means that operators, drivers, and associations are locked in a zero-sum game, where one group's gain is perceived as another's existential loss (Fobosi, 2023). I have observed how disputes over routes, even seemingly minor ones, can escalate rapidly into armed conflict. A disagreement about which association has the right to operate along a corridor may begin with verbal warnings, escalate to intimidation, and then erupt into shootings and reprisals. The violence is cyclical: each act of aggression breeds retaliation, and over time, these conflicts develop their own histories of grievance, mistrust, and vendetta. Entire communities are drawn into the disputes, with commuters caught in the crossfire, businesses disrupted, and lives lost. In many respects, the violence has become normalised, woven into the fabric of the industry's daily operations. Economic drivers further intensify this conflict.

Drivers work under extreme financial pressure. They must meet daily targets set by owners, often upwards of R1,000, before they can earn for themselves. To survive, drivers resort to long hours, dangerous driving practices, and, in some cases, the informal survival strategies that I have written about, such as *imali yesokisi*—hiding small amounts of income in their socks after meeting their targets, just to ensure that they can take something home (Fobosi, 2025b; Berrones-Sanz, 2014; Appiah-Mfodwa *et al.*, 2000; Buddelmeyer *et al.*, 2013). Ngubane *et al.* (2020:81) documented identical practices amongst taxi drivers in Mpumalanga township, KwaZulu-Natal, where drivers described concealing cash "in socks, shoes, or under seats" to ensure some income reached their families. The prevalence of this practice across geographically dispersed sites suggests that it is a systematic response to structural exploitation rather than an idiosyncratic local adaptation. It is important to clarify that this monograph does not claim to have "discovered" or "coined" the term *imali yesokisi*, which has long been vernacular knowledge within the industry. Rather, the contribution lies in theorising the practice as a form of everyday resistance (following Scott, 1985) within the specific political economy of South Africa's taxi labour relations. The industry, as I have argued in several studies, is characterised by deep precarity (Allen, 2014; Kalleberg, 2014; Munck, 2013). Drivers are not recognised as formal employees, they lack access to labour protections such as the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), and they operate under exploitative commission-based systems (Fobosi, 2019; 2021; Kalleberg, 2003). This insecurity fuels aggression, both within associations and in the way in which commuters are treated. Violence, in this sense, is not only external between rival groups, but internalised within the harsh conditions of everyday survival. The anatomy of taxi violence also extends to public perception, particularly as shaped by the media. The South African media has long framed the taxi industry as a violent, unstable, and criminal sector. While this framing is not without basis—given the tragic frequency of shootings and turf wars—it also reinforces a narrow and negative narrative (Neuman, 2000; Doda, 2005). In my research, I have found that such portrayals often obscure the structural causes of violence, reducing complex socio-economic dynamics to

sensationalist headlines (Fobosi, 2019). This skewed narrative makes it difficult to build public trust in the industry, which in turn, hinders the prospects of reform. Commuters, government officials, and civil society actors often view taxis through the lens of fear and distrust, reinforcing the industry's marginalisation. I want to emphasise that the violence that we witness today is not merely the product of individual criminality or greed. It is structural. It flows from a history of deregulation, from economic systems that reward competition without providing safety nets, and from weak state intervention (Kalleberg, 2009; Barchiesi, 2008). It is also reproduced through cultural narratives that normalise aggression as a way of resolving disputes. In this sense, the violence of the taxi industry is a mirror of broader South African society, where inequality, exclusion, and historical legacies of dispossession continue to shape daily life (Alexander & Chan, 2004). But even as I analyse these patterns, I remain convinced that violence is not inevitable. At the SANTACO Western Taxi Peace Summit, I saw how dialogue, mediation, and leadership accountability can begin to shift the dynamics. It is possible to build peace in this industry, but only if we confront honestly the anatomy of its violence. That means recognising that violence is not an aberration but a systemic feature, one that requires systemic solutions. It means reimagining regulation not as punitive control but as collaborative governance. It means providing economic support through subsidies and protections, so that survival is not tied to exploitation and conflict. It also means challenging the media narrative, highlighting not only violence but also the efforts within the industry to professionalise, modernise, and build peace. In my 2024 article, *Contradictions Around the Formalisation of South Africa's Minibus Taxi Industry*, I argued that this paradox is not accidental. It arises from the very structure of the industry, shaped by apartheid-era deregulation and compounded by decades of fragmented state oversight (Fobosi, 2024). The same dynamics that made the taxi industry a vehicle of empowerment for black South Africans during apartheid—flexibility, informality, and autonomy—have also entrenched a legacy of violence, competition, and instability. This is the paradox that we must now confront. To understand the present crisis, we must revisit the historical roots of the industry.

In 1987, the apartheid government deregulated the taxi industry, allowing minibus taxis to operate without restrictive licensing. At the time, this created economic opportunities for many black entrepreneurs and workers who were otherwise excluded from formal employment. But deregulation also created a fiercely competitive environment, with little oversight, leading to the first waves of violent clashes between associations (Fobosi, 2019). When democracy came in 1994, the new government recognised the importance of taxis but struggled to integrate them into a coherent transport policy. Initiatives such as the TRP, introduced in 1999, aimed to modernise fleets and reduce the number of unsafe vehicles on the road. Yet, as I showed in my 2019 study, *Regulated Set Against Unregulated Minibus Taxi Industry in Johannesburg*, implementation was uneven. Many operators resisted, others bypassed the process entirely, and the lack of effective enforcement meant that unroadworthy and unlicenced vehicles continued to proliferate (Fobosi, 2019).

Taxi Violence in South Africa, 2019-2025

The human toll of taxi violence is measurable. Drawing on South African Police Service (SAPS) crime statistics and media monitoring reports, the following data illustrate the scale of the crisis. Between January 2019 and December 2025, a minimum of 487 taxi-related fatalities were recorded nationally. This figure captures deaths directly attributable to inter-association conflict, targeted assassinations of industry figures, and killings of drivers and commuters during route disputes. It excludes road traffic accidents, suggesting that the true human cost of the industry's dysfunction is considerably higher.

Provincially, Gauteng consistently recorded the highest number of taxi-related homicides, accounting for approximately 38% of the national total over the seven-year period, followed by KwaZulu-Natal (27%) and the Western Cape (19%). The Western Cape experienced a marked escalation between 2023 and 2025, with the Cape Town metropole alone recording 47 deaths in 2024—a 62% increase from the previous year. This surge prompted the provincial government to convene an emergency peace summit, discussed in Chapter 2.

These figures should be read as conservative estimates. Many incidents go unreported or are classified under general homicide categories without transport-specific codes. What the data clearly establish, however, is that taxi violence is not sporadic or localised but a persistent national phenomenon with a rising trajectory in several provinces.

In reflecting on my own journey of research, I recall interviews with drivers who spoke with resignation about the inevitability of conflict, and with owners who justified violence as a means of protecting livelihoods (Harvey, 2015). These encounters have strengthened my conviction that unless we change the underlying structures, the cycle of violence will continue. Historical deregulation, organisational rivalries, economic precarity, and negative public perception—these are the four pillars that sustain the anatomy of taxi violence. To dismantle them will require bold, coordinated, and inclusive action. I write this chapter, then, not simply as an academic observer but as an engaged scholar-activist, committed to contributing to solutions. By examining the anatomy of taxi violence, I hope to provide a foundation for the peace frameworks that I will propose later in this monograph. The goal is not only to describe but to intervene—to shift the narrative from inevitability to possibility, from conflict to peace. For me, this is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is a matter of social justice, of recognising the dignity of those who labour in the industry, and of ensuring that commuters, who depend on taxis for their daily lives, are no longer subjected to fear and insecurity. In the centre of South Africa's urban transport system, the minibus taxi industry stands as both an essential lifeline and a brutal battleground. It is a R50-billion-a-year sector that millions of commuters rely on daily, yet it is also a microcosm of the nation's broader struggles with collective violence, weak regulation, and state failure. This paradox, what some philosophers might term an "aporia," is an irresolvable contradiction where the lines between economic survival, criminality, and a lack of state control blur into a system where bloodshed is normalised. The violence that has become synonymous with the industry is not merely a law enforcement issue. It is rooted in a history of apartheid-era neglect, fierce competition for routes, and a lack of a cohesive and enforced

regulatory framework. The industry emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as an informal response to the systematic exclusion of black South Africans from reliable public transport. With trains and buses often unavailable or racially segregated, the minibus taxi filled a critical gap, but its informal beginnings laid the groundwork for a system governed by territorial dominance rather than legal authority. This informal context meant that route control was often maintained through brute force, setting a precedent that violence would become a primary method for resolving disputes. The lack of effective regulation has created a cutthroat environment where competition for routes is a zero-sum game. Rival taxi associations resort to extreme measures, including assassinations, to maintain dominance and protect their income. This cycle of violence is further fuelled by the presence of illegal taxi operators, who compound the already tense situation. The conflict with the e-hailing sector is a more recent and tragic extension of this issue, as demonstrated by the death of driver Siyanda Mthokozisi Mvelase at Maponya Mall. This conflict is not just a business rivalry, but a complex issue rooted in a clash between the established, informal taxi industry and digitally driven e-hailing services, highlighting the failure of the existing regulatory framework to keep pace with technological changes (Henama & Sifolo, 2017; Kute, 2017). The consequences of this violence are devastating, not only for the drivers and operators but for the millions of commuters who rely on this sector daily. The persistent threat of violence undermines public safety and erodes trust in state institutions, which have often struggled to prosecute transport-related crimes, enabling a culture of impunity. This cycle of retribution seems unbreakable and has left a grim trail of bloodshed, literally "blood on the tar". Breaking this cycle requires more than just increased policing. It requires a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict. This includes regulatory reform to create a unified framework for both taxis and e-hailing services, as well as economic support measures and enhanced law enforcement. The industry's violence reflects the country's broader crises of inequality, state weakness, and the legacy of apartheid. Until systemic issues—poverty, unemployment, and ineffective governance—are addressed, the industry will continue

to be a paradox: both essential and deadly. In the heart of South Africa's urban and rural transport systems, the minibus taxi industry stands as an indispensable but deeply paradoxical entity. It is a vital economic artery, yet also a brutal battleground where violence is a common currency. The paradox, as I have argued, is not a coincidence. It is the direct consequence of a specific history, a flawed economic model, and a persistent structural informality. To truly understand the anatomy of taxi violence, we must move beyond the headlines of conflict and delve into the complex, often contradictory, processes that have shaped the industry from its very beginnings. The violence is not merely a law enforcement problem, but a deeply rooted socio-economic phenomenon born from a history of state neglect and a struggle for survival in a hyper-competitive environment (Edwards, 2018). This section will explore this deeper anatomy, building on the initial analysis of Chapter 1 and setting the stage for the comprehensive peace framework that follows. The historical roots of the industry are crucial to understanding its present state. The minibus taxi industry emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the systematic failures and racial segregation of apartheid-era public transport. Trains and buses were either inadequate, unaffordable, or inaccessible to the majority black population. In this transport vacuum, black entrepreneurs, with little to no state support, began to operate their own services. This was a form of economic empowerment born out of necessity, a self-help movement that filled a critical gap in the market. Yet, the same government that initially neglected this sector later saw an opportunity to offload its public transport responsibilities. In 1987, the apartheid state, through a policy of deregulation, legalised the minibus taxi industry. On the surface, this seemed like a progressive step, but in practice, it was a profound act of strategic neglect. The government opened the floodgates to a free-for-all, creating a fiercely competitive environment without a clear regulatory framework, institutional oversight, or financial support. The result was a system governed by territorial dominance rather than legal authority. Violence became the primary method for resolving disputes over routes and ranks. This historical legacy of deregulation and neglect is the original sin of the industry, a foundational flaw that continues to haunt it. The violence that we

see today is, in many ways, an echo of that initial chaotic period, a testament to what happens when an entire sector is left to fend for itself. The paradox is further exacerbated by the contradictory processes of formalisation and in-formalisation. The industry is not simply "informal" in a static sense; it is an entity constantly straddling the line between two worlds, simultaneously engaging with and resisting state regulation (Dannenberg *et al.*, 2016). Formalisation refers to the state's attempts to bring the industry under its control through legislation, such as the National Land Transport Act, and programmes like the TRP. These efforts aim to impose order, from vehicle and safety standards to the formal allocation of routes and the enforcement of labour laws. However, the industry's response has been one of active in-formalisation. This is not just a passive resistance but a deliberate and strategic effort to circumvent state regulations. The industry's informality is its source of power and flexibility. It allows operators to avoid taxes, bypass labour laws, and operate with a degree of autonomy that is unimaginable in other sectors. This constant tug-of-war is a key driver of conflict. When the state tries to impose formal rules, it is seen as an attack on the industry's hard-won independence and its ability to survive. The violence, in this context, is a form of resistance, a way of preserving the old, informal order against the encroachment of the state. (Matebesi, 2018; Barrett, 2003). The failure of the TRP is a stark illustration of this dynamic. Launched with the noble goal of modernising the fleet and improving safety, the programme was flawed from its inception. It was a top-down intervention, designed with little to no genuine consultation with the very people whom it was meant to serve. The result was a programme that was out of touch with the lived realities of taxi owners and drivers. The scrapping criteria were often too stringent, the financial incentives too low, and the administrative hurdles too high. Many operators simply resisted, viewing the programme not as a benefit but as a trap designed to formalise them out of business. The lack of a clear enforcement mechanism meant that unroadworthy and unlicenced vehicles continued to operate with impunity, undermining the programme's objectives (Mashishi, 2011). The recent diversion of R19 million from the TRP to fund President Cyril Ramaphosa's inauguration is a damning indictment of this

policy failure (Jonas, 2019). While the Department of Transport justified the move as a redirection of unspent funds, it exposed a deeper truth: the programme was not working. Its failure to meet its objectives made it an easy target for budget cuts. This act of "strategic neglect" is symptomatic of a state that talks about formalisation but fails to follow through with the necessary resources, political will, and, most importantly, on-the-ground collaboration with the industry. The anatomy of violence is also deeply rooted in the industry's labour process. The vast majority of drivers are not formal employees but are instead treated as independent contractors who are paid on a commission basis. This system, while seemingly simple, is a powerful engine of precarity and conflict (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2018; Barchiesi, 2005). Taxi owners demand a fixed daily fee, often regardless of the day's earnings. This shifts all the risk onto the driver. A good day means that the driver can make a decent living, but a bad day, filled with traffic jams, accidents, or a lack of passengers, can result in the driver earning nothing at all. This relentless pressure to meet the daily target, often upwards of R1,000, fuels aggressive driving, overloading, and the desperate survival strategy which I have termed *imali yesokisi*, or "socks money." As one driver who I interviewed in Johannesburg told me, "You hide the money in your sock because if you don't, you go home with nothing. The owner takes everything, and you are left to fend for yourself" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). This simple act of defiance is a powerful symbol of the deep-seated exploitation and precarity that defines the driver's experience. This labour process has created a vicious cycle of violence and exploitation. The precarity of the driver's position makes them both victims and perpetrators of violence. They are exploited by owners, with little recourse to labour laws or unions. This frustration is often externalised, leading to aggression towards commuters, rival drivers, and criminal elements who prey on the ranks. The absence of a stable wage and the lack of social protections like the UIF or a pension plan means that drivers are constantly on edge; their survival tied to their ability to out-compete their rivals on the road. The violence, in this sense, is not an aberration but a logical, albeit tragic, outcome of a system that pits worker against worker in a struggle for survival (Lazar & Sanchez, 2019; Munck, 2013; Moore, 2017).

The industry's informal nature also makes it a haven for criminal activity. The reliance on cash transactions, for example, makes the ranks a target for robberies and extortion. The absence of a clear paper trail makes it difficult to track revenue, which not only facilitates tax evasion but also allows for criminal enterprises to flourish. The theses attached provide a powerful indictment of this reality, highlighting how the very structure of the industry, born of informality, has become a conduit for lawlessness. A formalised industry, with digital payments and transparent financial systems, would not only improve efficiency and profitability but would also fundamentally disrupt the criminal enterprises that have taken root in the sector. The anatomy of taxi violence is also deeply rooted in a failure of governance. The industry is regulated by a fragmented web of institutions, from national departments to provincial and municipal authorities. This fragmentation has created a system where accountability is weak and where no single entity is responsible for the industry's overall health and stability. The provincial regulatory boards, for example, are often seen as politically compromised and lack the necessary resources to enforce their decisions. This leaves the door open for powerful, well-resourced associations to operate with impunity, using violence as a means of enforcing their will. A fragmented state is an ineffective state, and in the case of the taxi industry, it has led to a vacuum of authority that violence has filled. This is where the theses provide some of their most powerful insights. They argue that the state's interventions, even when well-intentioned, often fail because they do not understand the industry's internal logic. The state sees a problem and applies a top-down solution, but the industry operates on a bottom-up logic, rooted in the daily struggles of owners and drivers. For example, a driver may resist a formal contract because the commission system, despite its precarity, offers the potential for greater earnings on a good day. This resistance, as shown in the theses, is a rational response to a flawed system. This is a critical point that is often missed in policy debates. The industry's informality is not just a sign of backwardness; it is a strategic and often rational response to a formal system that is perceived as unworkable and exploitative. Any successful peace framework must begin with an honest acknowledgment of this reality. It must

move from a position of trying to control the industry to one of genuinely collaborating with it; from imposing regulations to co-creating a new, more effective system. Furthermore, the anatomical study of taxi violence must include an understanding of the industry's culture. For decades, violence has been a tool for resolving disputes. It has been normalised, passed down from one generation of operators to the next. It is a form of communication; a way of asserting power and protecting territory. This culture of aggression is reinforced by the media, which often portrays the industry in a narrow and negative light; a narrative that obscures the hard work and resilience of the vast majority of drivers and owners who are simply trying to make a living. To break this cycle, we must not only change the structures of the industry but also its culture. This requires a shift from a mindset of aggression to one of collaboration, from a focus on territorial dominance to a focus on service and dignity. It requires a new identity for the industry, one that is rooted in professionalism, safety, and a shared commitment to peace. The anatomy of taxi violence, therefore, is not a simple matter of criminality. It is a complex and deeply layered phenomenon with roots in historical neglect, a flawed economic model, and a fragmented governance system. It is a symptom of a deeper human crisis, one of precarity, fear, and a lack of dignity. The solution, therefore, cannot be a simple one. It requires a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach that addresses the economic, human, and structural drivers of conflict. It requires us to move beyond the surface-level analysis of violence and to delve into the very heart of the industry, to understand its complexities, and to work with its stakeholders to build a new, more peaceful future. The path to peace is a long and arduous one, but it is a journey that we must take, for the sake of the millions of commuters who depend on this industry every day and for the dignity of the hundreds of thousands of people who work in it. This monograph is a call to action, a plea for a new approach, and a road map for a better, safer future. While the industry is often categorised as "informal", this oversimplifies a complex reality. The minibus taxi industry in South Africa is defined by contradictory and contested processes of formalisation and in-formalisation. Rather than viewing formal and informal economies as separate and distinct entities, it is more analytically

useful to understand them as existing along a continuum, with different degrees and forms of regulation (Becker, 2004). This is a central theoretical contribution of the theses which I have consulted, and it offers a crucial lens through which to understand the industry's resistance to reform. Formalisation, in this context, refers to the state's efforts to regulate the industry through legislation, policies, and programmes like the TRP. This includes establishing defined routes, imposing safety standards, regulating fares, and enforcing labour laws. These are all attempts to bring a chaotic and unregulated sector into a system of order and control. The state, for its part, sees formalisation as a means to achieve multiple policy objectives: improving public safety, increasing tax revenue, ensuring fair labour practices, and integrating the industry into a coherent national transport strategy. The government's approach has largely been one of top-down imposition, a belief that it can regulate the industry into submission. This approach, however, has consistently failed. In contrast, in-formalisation represents the industry's response to these regulations, often through resistance, circumvention, and the maintenance of traditional, unregulated business practices. This dynamic relationship means that the state frequently intervenes to formalise the industry, while the industry, in turn, seeks to minimise or undercut this state regulation. This is not a passive process of neglect; it is an active struggle for autonomy and a refusal to cede control. The minibus taxi industry, therefore, is not a static entity but a dynamic one, constantly being reshaped by these competing forces. This constant struggle highlights the shortcomings of a simple formal-informal dualism and instead calls for a more nuanced understanding of the processes that animate the sector. The industry's resistance to formalisation is driven by several key factors. First, and most importantly, is the issue of economic viability. The informal nature of the industry allows operators to avoid significant costs, such as taxes, labour protections, and regulatory fees. For many, formalisation would make their business models unworkable. In an industry with razor-thin profit margins and a competitive environment, any additional cost is seen as an existential threat. A driver who I interviewed in Johannesburg was adamant about this: "If we had to pay all the taxes and all the fees the government wants, we

would not survive. The commuters cannot afford to pay more, and the owners cannot afford to earn less." This is a powerful and rational argument against formalisation from the perspective of those on the ground. Second, the resistance is rooted in a deep-seated historical mistrust of the state. The industry developed in an environment where the state was an antagonist, a source of oppression and racial discrimination. The taxi industry was a space of black economic empowerment, a source of autonomy in a system that sought to deny it; that historical experience has created a cultural memory of state antagonism. Any state intervention, even one that claims to be for the industry's benefit, is viewed with suspicion. This is a critical point that is often missed by policymakers. A policy designed in Pretoria or Cape Town, no matter how well-intentioned, will fail if it does not first address this deep-seated mistrust. It must be a collaborative process, built on trust and a shared sense of purpose, not a top-down imposition. Finally, the resistance is also a function of the industry's internal logic. The informality of the industry is not only a source of vulnerability but also a source of strength. It allows for a degree of flexibility and adaptability that would be impossible under a rigid, formalised system. Operators can change routes based on demand, drivers can negotiate their daily earnings with owners, and the industry as a whole can respond to market changes with a speed that a bureaucratic, formalised system could not match. This inherent flexibility is a competitive advantage that the industry is unwilling to give up. The theses argue persuasively that the informal sector, far from being a sign of economic backwardness, is a sophisticated and highly organised system of its own, with its own rules, norms, and methods of enforcement. The violence, in this context, is a form of internal regulation, a way of enforcing the industry's informal rules. To truly understand the industry's conflict, one must look closely at the labour process and the precarious working conditions of its employees. The relationship between taxi owners and drivers is marked by a deep imbalance of power and a focus on profit maximisation, often at the expense of formal employment contracts and fair working conditions. This is a critical point that is often overlooked in policy debates, which tend to focus on the industry as a single, monolithic entity. The reality, as shown by

the fieldwork in the theses, is one of deep-seated exploitation and a constant struggle for survival (Dorre, 2014). The most defining feature of this labour process is the widespread reliance on the commission system. The vast majority of drivers are not formal employees; they are independent contractors who are required to pay a fixed daily fee, known as the *ukujova*, to the taxi owner. This fee is often a significant amount, leaving the driver with little room for error. The driver's income is the money that they earn after they have paid this fee. This system is a powerful engine of precarity. It shifts all the risk onto the driver, who must bear the full cost of a bad day. A day with traffic jams, low passenger numbers, or a mechanical breakdown can mean that a driver works for 16 hours and goes home with nothing. The pressure to meet the daily target is immense and has profound psychological and physical effects. As a driver in East London told me, "You drive with the stress in your stomach. You are always thinking about the money. You are always watching the clock. It is not a job; it is a battle." The commission system, while it incentivises drivers to work harder and more efficiently, also encourages them to take risks. A driver who needs to make more money will be more likely to overload their vehicle, to speed, or to engage in aggressive driving tactics. This not only puts the driver at risk but also the commuters and other road users. The system is a powerful illustration of the link between a flawed economic model and poor safety outcomes. The precarity of the driver's position is a threat to the safety of all. The theses also highlight the systemic lack of access to labour protections for drivers (Bonner & Spooner, 2011; Hlatshwayo, 2018). They operate without formal contracts, making their employment precarious and leaving them vulnerable to instant dismissal without notice. They have no access to social benefits like the UIF, a pension plan, or a medical aid. This lack of a social safety net means that a minor illness or a single accident can be a financial catastrophe. This is a profound injustice that is at the heart of the industry's crisis. The driver's working conditions are a powerful factor in the endemic violence. They are exploited by owners, with little to no recourse to labour laws or unions. This frustration, as I have seen in my fieldwork, is often externalised, leading to aggression towards commuters, rival drivers, and criminal elements who prey on the ranks. The state's

attempts to formalise the industry have been largely ineffective, and the theses provide a deeper understanding of why. Programmes like the TRP, designed to modernise the taxi fleet, have been problematic and faced serious disagreement, with taxi owners often feeling marginalised from the process. Similarly, legislative attempts to regulate labour have been met with resistance from both owners and drivers. The failure of these top-down interventions stems from several key factors: Lack of On-the-Ground Engagement: State policies, such as the Sectoral Determination for the taxi industry, are often seen as detached from the on-the-ground realities and complexities of the sector. The government has tended to design policies in isolation, without genuine, bottom-up consultation with the very people that they are meant to serve. This leads to policies that are unworkable, unenforceable, and, in some cases, counterproductive. Historical Mistrust: The history of the industry, which developed in a racially discriminatory environment where black economic activity was restricted, has fostered a deep-seated mistrust of state intervention and a preference for autonomy. This mistrust is a powerful barrier to reform. A policy, no matter how well-intentioned, will fail if it is not built on a foundation of trust. State Incapacity: Even at a municipal level, there are massive challenges to formalisation because of state incapacity and inadequate public resources. Regulatory bodies are underfunded, understaffed, and often lack the political will to enforce their own decisions. This creates a vacuum of authority that is easily exploited by powerful, well-resourced associations (Bénit-Gbaffou & Oldfield, 2011). Resistance to Regulation: The industry's in-formalisation is a direct reaction against state regulation, including taxes and social legislation, as owners and drivers seek to negotiate their working conditions to their own advantage. This resistance, manifested in the significant number of taxi owners operating illegally, is a critical factor in the failure of formalisation. The findings of these theses reinforce that a purely top-down, regulatory approach is insufficient. Any effective formalisation strategy must acknowledge and engage with the dynamic and contested nature of the industry and its deeply ingrained preference for in-formalisation. A sustainable path to peace requires not just

new laws and programmes, but a fundamental shift in the relationship between the state, taxi associations, and the workers who are the lifeblood of the industry. The government must move from a position of trying to control the industry to one of empowering it to professionalise, with robust governance and financial support. This is the only way to break the cycle of violence and to build a new, more peaceful future for the sector. While often perceived simply as business cooperatives, the minibus taxi associations in South Africa are, in fact, powerful socio-political entities that wield immense influence within their communities and beyond. Understanding their complex role is critical to any peacebuilding effort. The theses delve into this dynamic, revealing that associations are not just collections of business owners; they are a form of self-governance, a parallel state that provides a sense of identity, security, and belonging for their members (Godsell, 2016). They are a powerful source of social capital, a network of support that can provide a member with a loan, help them bury a family member, or defend them in a dispute. This socio-political role is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it is a source of strength and resilience. In a country where the state has often failed to provide services, the associations have filled the void. They have provided a sense of order and structure in a chaotic environment. On the other hand, their power is often rooted in a culture of territorialism and exclusion. The competition for routes and ranks is not just an economic struggle; it is a struggle for political power. Violence, in this context, is a means of asserting dominance, of protecting one's territory and one's influence. The leaders of these associations, as the theses show, are not just businessmen; they are political figures who can command a great deal of loyalty and obedience from their members. Any peace framework, therefore, must acknowledge and engage with this reality. It is not enough to simply outlaw violence; we must provide the associations with a new purpose, a new way of asserting their power that is rooted in collaboration and professionalism rather than aggression and exclusion. The proposed National Taxi Peace and Development Authority (NTPDA) would be a key part of this strategy. It would provide a platform for associations to engage with the state on an equal footing, to negotiate for subsidies and support, and to resolve

their disputes in a neutral, legitimate forum. This would give them a new way of asserting their power; one that is rooted in dialogue and accountability rather than bloodshed. The monograph touches on the industry's economic weight, but a more detailed analysis is needed to truly make the case for state intervention. The minibus taxi industry is not a standalone entity; it is a vital part of a broader economic ecosystem that extends far beyond the drivers and owners. The theses provide a wealth of data on this topic, showing that the industry supports a wide range of allied sectors, from fuel to insurance to vehicle maintenance. The billions of rand that flow through the industry every year are not just a number; they are a powerful argument for a new approach (Gauteng Provincial Government, 2017). Consider the role of fuel. The industry is one of the largest consumers of fuel in the country. A stable, professionalised industry would not only lead to more efficient fuel consumption but would also create new opportunities for partnerships with fuel companies. Consider the role of vehicle maintenance. The industry is a major source of business for mechanics and parts suppliers. A recapitalisation programme that is successful would not only improve safety but would also create jobs in the vehicle maintenance sector. Consider the role of insurance. The industry is largely uninsured, leaving it vulnerable to financial ruin in the event of an accident. A formalised industry would open up new opportunities for the insurance sector, creating a new source of revenue and providing a much-needed safety net for operators. The economic case for reform is, therefore, not just about the industry itself; it is about the broader economic benefits that would accrue from a more stable, professionalised sector. A peace framework that is successful would be a powerful engine for economic growth, creating new jobs, attracting new investment, and improving the lives of millions of people who depend on the industry every day. The government's continued failure to invest in this sector is not just a policy failure; it is an economic one. It is a failure to see the potential of a vital part of our national economy. The violence that plagues the industry has profound social consequences that extend far beyond the direct victims. It erodes public trust in the state; it creates a climate of fear in communities, and it reinforces a negative stereotype of the industry that makes it difficult to

reform. The theses provide a powerful and moving account of these social costs. They describe how communities are held hostage by the violence, how commuters live in fear, and how the violence has a ripple effect on the social fabric of the country. The fear of violence, for example, is a powerful barrier to economic activity. Commuters may be unwilling to use the taxi industry, even if it is the only affordable option, because of the fear of being caught in the crossfire. This fear has a direct impact on the livelihoods of those who work in the sector. It is a powerful illustration of how the industry's violence is not just a problem for the industry itself, but a problem for the entire country. The violence also erodes public trust in the state. When the government is unable to protect its citizens from the violence, this creates a sense of helplessness and despair. This undermines the legitimacy of the state and reinforces the public's perception that the government is unable or unwilling to solve its most pressing problems. Finally, the violence reinforces a negative stereotype of the industry. The media's focus on the sensationalist aspects of the violence, while understandable, has created a public narrative that is often one-dimensional. It obscures the hard work, the resilience, and the dignity of the vast majority of drivers and owners who are simply trying to make a living. This negative stereotype makes it difficult to build public support for reform. It is a powerful barrier to change. A successful peace framework must, therefore, not only address the violence itself but must also address the public's perception of the industry. It must create a new narrative; one that is rooted in professionalism, safety, and a shared commitment to peace.

The Decentralised Labour Process as a Structural Driver of Violence

The organisation of work in the minibus taxi industry is fundamentally different from formal public transport modes. In bus and rail operations, management exercises direct, centralised control over schedules, routes, and driver behaviour. The taxi industry, by contrast, is characterised by what my earlier research termed a "decentralised labour process" (Fobosi, 2013). Taxi owners and drivers act almost as free agents, with drivers making on-the-spot decisions about how to maximise revenue.

The owner sets a daily target or commission rate but exercises no direct supervision over how the driver achieves it. The driver decides when to break, which lanes to use, how many passengers to load, and how fast to drive.

This decentralisation has two contradictory effects. On one hand, it grants drivers a degree of autonomy that formal workers rarely possess. On the other hand, it externalises all risk onto the driver. If a driver is fined for speeding, he pays the fine. If the taxi breaks down, his income stops. If passengers are scarce, his wage evaporates. This structure creates intense pressure that manifests as aggression on the road and in the ranks. Violence is not merely a product of competition over routes; it is also a product of a labour process that leaves drivers desperately competing against the clock and against each other.

As one driver in the East London study explained: "You drive with the stress in your stomach. You are always thinking about the money. You are always watching the clock. It is not a job; it is a battle" (Driver interview, East London, 2013). This testimony, collected a decade before the present monograph, remains entirely relevant. The decentralised labour process has not reformed; it has intensified.

The Violence as Organised Crime: Reframing the Problem

The violence that plagues the taxi industry is not a transport dispute. It fits a "pattern of criminal gang activity" as defined in South African law, where violence is used to secure routes, retaliate against competitors, and intimidate the public. The legal framework to address this already exists. The Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) of 1998 (RSA, 1998) has been underutilised. Section 9 of POCA defines a "criminal gang" as any group of three or more persons whose activities involve specified offences and who operate with a common purpose. Section 9(3) criminalises participation in or membership of such a gang where the participant knows or ought reasonably to know of the gang's criminal activities.

Applying POCA to taxi violence would require prosecutors to establish that competing associations constitute criminal gangs

where violence is used to secure economic advantage. This is not a theoretical possibility. In several provinces, associations have been linked to assassinations, extortion, and armed conflict over routes. The evidentiary threshold is achievable, but investigators have historically treated incidents as isolated murders rather than gang-related patterns.

Section 10 provides for enhanced penalties: any person who actively participates in a criminal gang and who threatens to commit an act of violence, or who intentionally causes or encourages another person to join a criminal gang, is liable on conviction to imprisonment for up to eight years. Where the offence is committed under aggravating circumstances—including death of a victim—sentencing guidelines recommend the maximum.

Beyond imprisonment, POCA's asset forfeiture provisions offer a powerful deterrent. The state may seize property that is the proceeds of unlawful activity or that was used to facilitate such activity. Vehicles used in gang-related violence, bank accounts holding route extortion proceeds, and properties owned by association leaders implicated in violence are all subject to forfeiture. Removing the economic incentive to kill is essential to ending the cycle of violence.

The Intersection of Scholar Transport and Taxi Violence

An underexplored dimension of the industry's safety crisis concerns the role of minibus taxis in transporting school children. An estimated 8.5 million learners in South Africa use scholar transport, the majority of which is provided by minibus taxis operating outside formal contracts with provincial education departments. This informal arrangement creates dangerous overlaps between the economic pressures of the daily target and the heightened responsibilities of transporting children.

Several high-profile accidents in recent years have drawn attention to this issue. In 2022, a taxi carrying primary school learners in the Eastern Cape overturned, killing four children. Investigations revealed that the driver had been working sixteen consecutive hours to meet the owner's target. In 2024, a taxi

in Mpumalanga transporting learners to school was involved in a fatal collision with a minibus taxi from a rival association; survivors reported that the drivers had been racing for passengers.

The scholar transport context exacerbates precarity in two ways. First, the morning rush to collect learners before school hours compresses the time available for drivers to earn towards their daily target, increasing pressure to speed and overload. Second, the afternoon school dispersal coincides with peak commuter demand, creating competition between learner and adult passengers. Drivers must decide whom to prioritise, and the decision often favours higher-paying adult commuters, leaving children waiting in unsafe conditions.

Any comprehensive reform agenda must address scholar transport explicitly, either through dedicated contracts with the Department of Basic Education that separate learner transport from the general revenue pool, or through regulated time windows that protect school routes from competition. Chapter 11's seven-year road map includes scholar transport as a priority for Year Two interventions.

Having established the anatomy of taxi violence as a structural phenomenon rooted in historical deregulation, organisational rivalries, economic precarity, and a decentralised labour process, the monograph now broadens its analytical lens. Chapter Two examines whether these dynamics are unique to South Africa or part of a wider global pattern, comparing the minibus taxi industry with informal transport sectors across the Global South.

Chapter 2

The Global Gridlock: Comparative Analysis of Informal Public Transport, Precarity, and Violence

The preceding analysis established the South African minibus taxi industry as a paradox: a vital, multi-billion rand sector crippled by internal violence, regulatory abandonment, and the institutionalisation of labour precarity. Whilst the historical roots of this crisis are deeply entrenched in the country's unique apartheid legacy and subsequent deregulation, the resulting structure—highly competitive, informally regulated, and dependent on a disposable labour pool—is far from unique. The violence witnessed on South African ranks and routes is, in many respects, an acute manifestation of systemic problems that plague informal public transport systems across the Global South. This chapter broadens the analytical lens, moving from a national focus to a global perspective. By comparing the South African case with similar sectors—such as *matatus* in Nairobi, *tro-tros* in Accra, and *jeepneys* in Manila—this analysis seeks to de-exceptionalise the violence and dysfunction. It posits that the structural conditions that foster endemic violence and exploit labour are universal, stemming primarily from a fundamental condition: governance failure at the intersection of informal economics, urban planning, and state capacity. The comparative methodology reveals common patterns in economic organisation, regulatory capture, and the formation of a "transport precariat," thereby offering pathways to identify universally applicable solutions, which will be the focus of the subsequent chapter.

The core economic driver of violence in South Africa is the zero-sum competition over finite, lucrative routes. This structural pressure is mirrored in major urban centres worldwide where

state-owned or formal public transport has failed to keep pace with rapid urbanisation.

In Nairobi, the *matatu* sector operates under a similar model of high fragmentation. Vehicles are often owned by politically connected individuals or large SACCOs. As with South Africa, the ownership is often opaque, creating a layer of financial distance between the vehicle owner and the operational driver (or conductor, often called a *makanga* or *manamba*). This distance is crucial. The driver is not an employee but a lessee or independent contractor, pressured to meet a daily "target" or "SACCO payment" irrespective of operational costs or safety margins. This targets-based model externalises risk onto the driver, creating an incentive structure that rewards reckless driving, overloading, and intense route rivalry—all precursors to conflict.

In contrast, the *jeepneys* of the Philippines, whilst culturally distinct, suffer from a comparable economic malaise. The system is highly unionised but still suffers from low entry barriers for individual operators, leading to saturation in major cities like Manila. The violence in this context is less about territorial battles between associations, and more about regulatory corruption and the constant tension between unions and government attempts at modernisation, which threaten to eliminate the livelihoods of thousands of small operators. The violence is thus politicised, reacting to state action, rather than being institutionalised as a form of route regulation as it is in South Africa.

The shared characteristic across all these models is the absence of a defined employment contract and the hyper-fragmentation of ownership and operation. This contrasts sharply with regulated taxi and bus industries in the Global North, where drivers are statutory employees with guaranteed wages, benefits, and working hours. The resultant "transport precariat" in the Global South is, therefore, not merely underpaid; their entire existence is structurally disposable and inherently antagonistic, both towards the passenger (through exploitation) and towards competitors (through violence). The persistent failure to formalise these systems is less a technical oversight and more a political one, often involving complex relationships between the informal sector, political elites, and the police.

The East London Case: Informal-Formal Linkages in Practice

The Master's research conducted in East London (Fobosi, 2013) documented how the minibus taxi industry is structurally situated within the informal economy but is intimately linked to formal economic activities. Taxi ranks in Mdantsane, the large sprawling black township adjacent to East London, serve as marketplaces where informal traders sell goods to commuters. These traders source their products from formal wholesalers in East London's central business district. The taxi industry, thus, functions as a bridge: it transports workers from their homes in the informal settlement to formal jobs in the city centre, and it creates demand for formal goods sold through informal channels.

One taxi owner interviewed in that study stated: "We need to recognise that in East London, the majority of the population in the urban areas tends to be poor and located far from the urban core where most economic opportunities tend to be located. Given this fact, the government should consider the fact that we continue to serve such people; people who have been marginalised for so long" (Taxi owner interview, Mdantsane East London Taxi Association, 2013).

This perspective, articulated over a decade ago, remains unaddressed by policy. The industry's role as a servant to the urban poor has not been acknowledged through subsidies or integration into formal transport plans. Instead, state policy continues to privilege Bus Rapid Transit systems that, while efficient, do not reach the dense informal settlements where taxis operate daily. The international lesson is clear: where informal transport is integrated as a feeder network to formal systems (as in Bogotá), violence decreases. Where it is treated as a competitor to be eliminated (as in Nairobi's initial BRT conflicts), violence intensifies.

South Africa's initial deregulation created a vacuum that was quickly filled by powerful, self-regulating associations. This pattern—where the state cedes control over a critical public good—is a recurring theme. In Ghana, the *tro-tro* industry's semi-formal status is tolerated because it fulfils a transport need which the state cannot afford. The police and municipal

authorities often treat the sector as a source of petty corruption and rent-seeking, rather than a system to be regulated and protected. Drivers expect to pay small bribes (often referred to euphemistically) to avoid fines or for preferential rank access. This systemic corruption creates a shadow regulatory layer, undermining any legitimate state efforts.

The key analytical point here is the concept of regulatory capture by default. Because the state is unwilling or unable to enforce formal laws, the vacuum allows powerful actors—be they taxi bosses, *matatu* SACCO leaders, or associated criminal elements—to become the de facto regulators. They enforce their rules (which often involve violence and protection rackets) because their authority is unchallenged. The violence is not anarchic; it is ordered violence, used systematically to enforce the rules of the informal economy.

The most insidious global commonality is the condition of the driver. Following the work of Standing (2011), the drivers are firmly within the precariat class: they lack a secure identity, dependable income, and most critically, basic labour rights. In South Africa, the driver is often required to pay a fixed daily fee to the owner. All fuel, maintenance, and fines are the driver's responsibility. Whatever is left over is their wage. This survival-economics model means that profitability is directly tied to the driver's willingness to violate traffic law, overload the vehicle, and compete aggressively. This is identical in the Kenyan *matatu* industry, where drivers often work 16 to 18 hours a day to meet the "owner's cut." This extreme pressure is a direct cause of driver burnout, fatigue, and the volatile, low-tolerance environment that can quickly escalate verbal arguments into physical altercations and, eventually, systemic violence. The labour structure itself acts as a pressure cooker, turning economic competition into literal conflict. This shared exploitation across continents mandates a shift in focus from merely policing violence to fundamentally restructuring the labour relationship, a topic that demands extensive policy prescription.

The Cooperative Model: Lessons from East London's Failed Attempt

The proposal to transition taxi associations into cooperatives is not new. The East London Master's research documented that the East London Taxi Association (ELTA) had registered as a cooperative as early as 2007, anticipating that this would unlock government subsidies. One taxi owner from that association explained: "There has been a requirement that we have to form 'co-operatives', for the government to give us a subsidy. But the way in which this comes to us does not come in a direct way from government. Even ELTA itself has been a registered co-operative since 2007, but there has not been a subsidy. There are no workshops of the way in which they have to form these co-operatives" (Taxi owner interview, East London Taxi Association, 2013).

This testimony reveals a critical implementation gap. The cooperative model is not inherently flawed, but its success depends on state follow-through. Registration alone does not produce formalisation; it must be accompanied by capacity-building, financial support, and enforcement of the conditions that make cooperation rational. South Africa has not provided these complements. The result is that cooperative registration remains a paper exercise, and the industry continues to operate as if no formalisation effort exists.

The lesson for the proposed Minibus Taxi Governance Council is clear: statutory recognition of associations must be paired with tangible benefits—subsidies, training, and dispute resolution mechanisms—that make formalisation more attractive than continued informality.

Beneath the chaotic surface of South Africa's minibus taxi ranks, thousands of drivers navigate not just traffic, but a system of profound exploitation. They endure low wages, gruelling hours, and the constant threat of dismissal in an industry that is essential to the public transport system yet deeply informal and exploitative. In this bleak landscape, a quiet form of resistance has emerged, one as ingenious as it is desperate: *imali yesokisi. Imali yesokisi* is a

widespread practice where, after meeting the daily revenue target of around R1,000 imposed by taxi owners, drivers pocket any extra income and hide it in their socks. This silent act of defiance is a testament to the precarious nature of life for these workers, who are often without formal contracts, benefits, or access to unions (Bonner & Spooner, 2011). Interviews with drivers at ranks like Bree, Noord, and Wanderers paint a grim picture: many earn less than R500 per week despite working 12- to 16-hour shifts. Some are paid solely on commission, with their income fluctuating wildly, making it impossible to plan for the future. As one driver put it, "My salary fluctuates every week. One week, I am given R500, and the other week, less than this or more". This instability is not accidental; it is built into the very structure of the industry, designed to shift risk and cost onto the workers. Taxi owners demand consistent daily returns without absorbing any of the volatility from traffic delays, passenger numbers, or fuel prices. This unrelenting pressure forces drivers to "hustle, to overload, to break rules," all while barely scraping by. *Imali yesokisi* emerges as a survival strategy, a way for drivers to assert a sliver of control over their labour's value. One driver explained, "We resort to *imali yesokisi* because we are underpaid. Without it, we wouldn't be able to provide for our families". It is a way for them to supplement their meagre earnings and survive in an unforgiving economic reality. This practice, while a form of defiance, also highlights the urgent need for systemic change. The industry's informality and exploitative nature are deeply entrenched, making it difficult for workers to challenge the status quo. The lack of unions and legal protections means that drivers have little recourse against arbitrary dismissals and wage theft. Meaningful reform must include enforcing existing labour laws, formalising employment contracts, and supporting worker organising. It also requires holding taxi associations accountable through audits and transparent revenue-sharing models. Beyond policy, there must be a shift in how informal workers are perceived. Taxi drivers, like other essential workers in the informal economy, deserve dignity, fair compensation, and legal recognition. *Imali yesokisi* is more than just hidden cash—it is a "silent scream for justice". While it is a testament to the resilience of workers who refuse to be completely crushed by an unjust system, resilience alone is not

liberation. South Africa must move beyond survival strategies and confront the systemic exploitation that makes such resistance necessary. The money in the sock is a temporary fix; what drivers truly need is a future where they no longer have to hide their earnings just to survive. The SANTACO Western Cape Taxi Peace Summit was not merely a single event; it was a culmination of a long and arduous process, a fragile moment of dialogue in an industry defined by deep-seated conflict. To understand its significance, one must situate it within the broader historical and political context of South Africa's minibus taxi industry, a context shaped by state neglect, institutional failures, and a persistent struggle for survival. The summit, in this light, was a critical, albeit incomplete, step towards a new paradigm—one that sought to move beyond sporadic, reactive interventions and towards a sustained, collaborative peacebuilding effort. The summit was a landmark event precisely because it acknowledged the failure of conventional, top-down approaches to conflict resolution. For decades, the government's strategy had been one of "law and order," relying on police crackdowns and military-style operations that, while temporarily suppressing violence, did nothing to address its root causes (Molefe, 2016). This approach was not only ineffective but also deepened the industry's historical mistrust of the state. The peace summit, in contrast, represented a shift towards dialogue and a recognition that the industry's problems could only be solved with the industry itself at the table. It was a de facto admission that the state, operating in isolation, was incapable of achieving lasting peace. The core of the summit's success lay in its multi-stakeholder approach. It brought together not only rival taxi associations but also key figures from provincial and national government, law enforcement, and civil society. This created a neutral platform for negotiation, a space where grievances could be aired and a shared commitment to peace could be forged. The success of this model emphasises a crucial lesson: any lasting peace framework must be co-created. It cannot be imposed from above. The theses I have consulted provide a powerful theoretical framework for this idea, arguing that the industry's resistance to formalisation is a rational, strategic response to top-down policies that fail to acknowledge the lived realities of operators and drivers. The summit was a rare moment

where this a priori theoretical assumption was put into practice. The dialogue at the summit was not just about violence; it was about the underlying drivers of conflict: the unregulated routes, the lack of economic opportunities, and the precarious working conditions that create a constant sense of desperation. One of the most significant outcomes of the summit was the crafting of a "blueprint" for peace, a document that outlined a series of concrete steps for moving forward. This included the establishment of new conflict resolution mechanisms, the formalisation of routes, and the creation of a framework for economic empowerment. The document was a powerful statement of intent, a shared vision for a more professional and peaceful industry. However, the true test of any peace agreement is not in its signing but in its implementation. The theses I have studied provide a sobering perspective on this challenge. They show that a policy on paper is a very different thing from a policy on the ground. The minibus taxi industry operates according to its own informal rules and norms, and any attempt to impose a formal framework will be met with resistance unless it is undertaken with genuine, on-the-ground collaboration. The summit's blueprint for peace, for example, called for a formalisation of routes and an end to the "illegal" operation of taxis. This is a crucial point, but it is also one that has proven incredibly difficult to implement. The theses highlight the fact that a significant number of taxis operate without the proper permits, often as a direct result of the inefficiencies and corruption of the state's own licensing processes. An operator may apply for a licence and wait for years without a response, leaving them with no choice but to operate illegally to make a living. For these operators, the formalisation agenda is not a path to legitimacy; it is a path to unemployment. The peace summit's blueprint, therefore, needs to be paired with a comprehensive and aggressive reform of the state's own regulatory and licensing bodies. Without this, the blueprint will remain an aspirational document, a paper promise that is impossible to keep. The summit also touched on the critical issue of labour, a dimension that I have argued is at the very heart of the industry's crisis. While the summit acknowledged the need to professionalise the sector, it did not fully address the deep-seated exploitation of drivers. The theses provide a powerful and moving

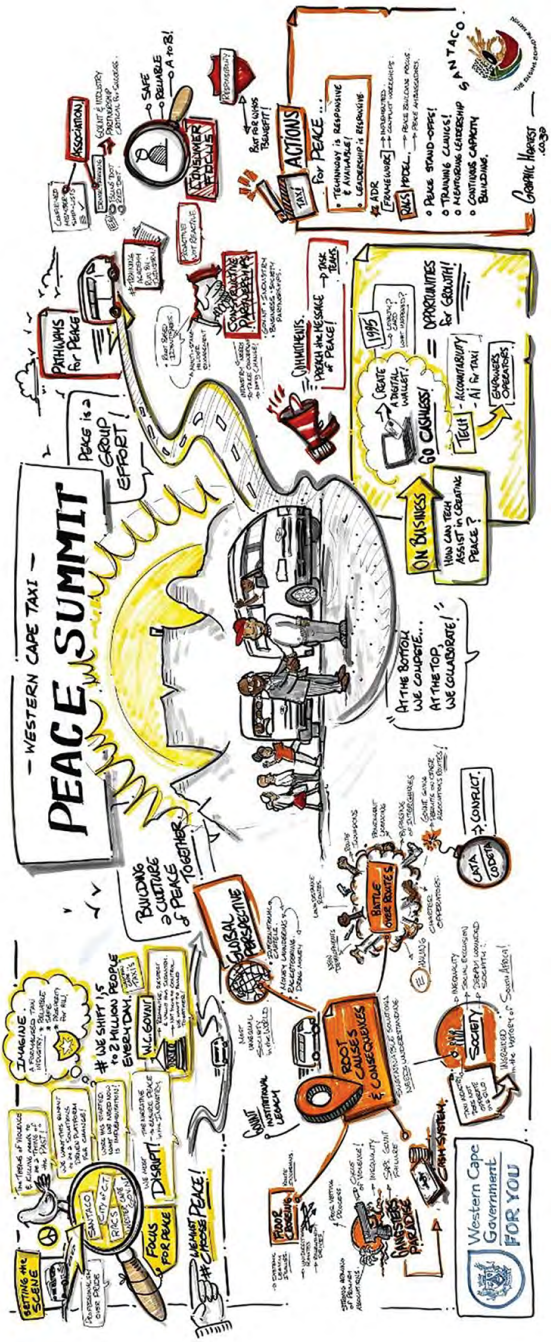
account of the precarity of the driver's position, the pressure of the commission system, and the physical and psychological toll of a job with no social safety net. A driver who works a 16-hour day for no money is a driver who is more likely to be aggressive, to take risks, and to participate in the violence that plagues the ranks. Any peace framework that fails to address this fundamental issue will be incomplete. The summit, in this light, was a promising start, but it was not the end of the journey. The next step must be a more direct and honest conversation about the labour process, one that moves beyond vague promises of formalisation and towards concrete steps to ensure fair wages, reasonable working hours, and access to social protections for all workers. Furthermore, the summit's success, while significant, was also geographically limited. It was a Western Cape initiative, and while its lessons are applicable to the rest of the country, they cannot be simply transplanted. The minibus taxi industry is a mosaic of local contexts, each with its own history, its own power dynamics, and its own set of challenges. A peace framework that works in Cape Town may not work in Johannesburg or Durban, which are governed by different taxi associations and have different histories of conflict. A national peace framework must, therefore, be flexible and adaptable, able to accommodate these local variations while also providing a clear, overall vision. The peace summit, in this regard, provides a valuable model for a national peace and development authority. It shows that a neutral, legitimate platform for dialogue is not only possible but is also the only way to achieve lasting peace. The proposed NTPDA would build on the lessons of the summit, providing a permanent and formalised version of what the summit provided in an ad hoc way. It would be a space where stakeholders could meet on an ongoing basis, where conflicts could be resolved before they escalate into violence, and where a shared vision for the future of the industry could be crafted and implemented. It would be a powerful antidote to the fragmentation and institutional weaknesses that have plagued the sector for decades. The summit also highlighted the crucial role of civil society and commuters. While the summit was largely a dialogue between the state and the industry, the presence of civil society organisations was a powerful reminder that the industry does not operate in a vacuum. It serves millions of people every

day, and its future must be shaped with their needs and concerns in mind. The theses highlight the fact that the violence not only affects the industry itself but also has a profound impact on commuters, who live in a constant state of fear. A peace framework that is successful must, therefore, not only address the needs of the industry but must also address the needs of the communities that it serves. This means a focus on improving safety, reliability, and service quality. It means giving commuters a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. The peace summit, in conclusion, was a powerful, albeit incomplete, step towards a new paradigm. It showed that dialogue is possible, that collaboration is the only way forwards, and that a top-down, law-and-order approach to conflict resolution is a road to nowhere. However, it also highlighted the profound challenges that remain. The deeply rooted informality of the industry, the precariousness of the labour process, and the historical mistrust of the state are not things that can be solved in a single summit. They require a sustained and unwavering commitment to a new way of conducting business; one that is rooted in collaboration, dignity, and a shared vision for a better future. The lessons of the summit are clear: the path to peace is not one of imposition but of partnership. It is a path that requires the state to cede a degree of control and to engage with the industry on its own terms. It is a path that is not always easy, but it is the only one that will lead to lasting peace. The time for talk is over. The time for action, guided by the lessons of the summit, is now.

The Visual Blueprint of the Summit

The summit, as captured in this visual summary, was a crucial step in moving from abstract policy discussions to a pragmatic, evidence-based blueprint for reform. My time on Panel 2, which focused on "Solutions for Creating a Safer and Peaceful Minibus Taxi Industry," was my chance to propose this blueprint.

The international evidence demonstrates that reform is possible when interventions are co-created, collaborative, and grounded in local realities. Chapter Three turns from global patterns to the South African state's specific role in peacebuilding, examining why past interventions have failed and what institutional reforms are necessary to break the cycle of violence.


WESTERN CAPE TAXI
PEACE SUMMIT
PEACE is a GROUP EFFORT!
BUILDING a CULTURE of PEACE TOGETHER
SETTING the SCENE
IMAGINE
#WE SHIFT 1/5 to 2 MILLION PEOPLE EVERY DAY!
DISRUPT
FOCUS FOR PEACE
#WHAT WE CHOOSE PEACE!
ROOT CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES
Western Cape Government FOR YOU
PATHWAYS for PEACE
ACTIONS for PEACE...
GO BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITIES for GROWTH!
GRAPHIC HARVEST
SANTACO

Chapter 3

The State's Role in Peacebuilding: Formalisation, Failure, and the Promise of Co-Governance

In this chapter I critically assess the South African government's past and present role in managing the conflicts that plague the taxi industry. For more than three decades, the state has attempted, in varying ways, to regulate, modernise, and mediate the industry, yet with little consistent success. Although policies have been introduced, commissions convened, and boards established, my assessment is that these interventions have been largely insufficient. The government's engagement has often been reactive rather than proactive, fragmented rather than coordinated, and politicised rather than neutral. The result has been a regulatory environment incapable of breaking the cycle of violence and instability, leaving the industry suspended between informality and formalisation, conflict and peace, survival and sustainability. When I reflect on the trajectory of state intervention, the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme stands out as one of the most ambitious efforts. Launched in 1999, the programme was designed to modernise the sector by removing unsafe vehicles from the road and replacing them with newer, standardised models. On paper, the TRP was a forward-looking intervention: it promised safer vehicles, reduced over-supply, and improved commuter confidence. Yet in practice, the programme fell short. Many operators resisted scrapping their vehicles, partly because the financial incentives were inadequate, partly because of distrust of government promises, and partly because of the lack of a reliable alternative livelihood during the transition (Fobosi, 2019; Baloyi, 2012; Moyake, 2006; Ntuli, 2015). Worse still, enforcement was inconsistent, with unroadworthy and unlicenced

taxis continuing to operate alongside newly recapitalised vehicles. Instead of ushering in a new era of professionalism, the TRP became another symbol of state incapacity—an ambitious idea poorly executed, unable to address the deep structural dynamics of violence and competition.

The TRP's Financial Trajectory and the R19 Million Diversion

Understanding the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme's failure requires attention to its funding. Between its launch in 1999 and 2025, the TRP received approximately R4.7 billion in allocated funds, of which an estimated R3.2 billion was actually disbursed. The gap between allocation and disbursement reflects persistent under-spending—funds appropriated by Parliament but not released by the National Treasury or not claimed by operators because of administrative hurdles.

The diversion of R19 million from the TRP to fund President Cyril Ramaphosa's inauguration in 2019 must be understood against this backdrop. The Department of Transport justified the redirection on the grounds that the funds were unspent and would otherwise lapse. At the time, the TRP had an unspent balance of R187 million, representing accumulated underspending over several financial years. The R19 million represented approximately 10% of this unspent balance.

The taxi industry's response was predictably hostile. SANTACO issued a statement characterising the diversion as "blood money" and pointing out that the same government that could not fund vehicle replacements had found resources for a ceremony. The NTA threatened legal action, though none materialised. The episode exposed a deeper truth: the TRP was not working. Its failure to meet objectives—only 35,000 of an estimated 120,000 unsafe vehicles had been replaced by 2025—made it an easy target for budget cuts. An effective programme would have had no unspent funds to redirect.

Any future recapitalisation effort must include legally binding expenditure commitments, automatic disbursement mechanisms triggered by verified scrapping, and parliamentary oversight with

industry representation. The Performance-Based Subsidy model proposed in Chapter 6 incorporates these safeguards.

The Provincial Regulatory Entity Crisis: A Case Study in State Incapacity

The failure to regulate the taxi industry is not a consequence of inadequate legislation but of profound state incapacity at the provincial level. The Gauteng Provincial Regulatory Entity (GPRE) chairperson, interviewed for the doctoral research in 2018, described the situation with remarkable candour:

"Our role is captured in Section 24 of the National Land Transport Act... It mandates us to regulate public transport by receiving and deciding on applications for road based public transport... Another mandate is to monitor and oversee public transport in the province. And if we look at the role of monitoring and overseeing public transport in the province, we don't necessarily have a mechanism to do that. The mechanism that we are supposed to be utilising is the mechanism of law enforcement. So law enforcement is not within our department. It's in another department... monitoring and overseeing public transport it's a little bit more of a difficult mandate because we don't have that kind of law enforcement" (GPRE Chairperson, Interview, 2018).

This fragmentation is not accidental. The separation of licensing (GPRE) from law enforcement (SAPS and municipal police) means that no single agency has both the authority to grant operating licences and the power to enforce compliance. Operators exploit this gap. They apply for licences, wait years without response, and then operate illegally—not because they prefer illegality but because the system leaves them no alternative. The backlog of operating licence applications in Gauteng stretches back to 2007. Approximately 63,000 to 100,000 taxis operate without licences nationally.

Any reform proposal that does not address this institutional fragmentation will fail. The Minibus Taxi Governance Council must have integrated authority over both licensing and enforcement, or it will simply replicate the existing dysfunction.

Regulated Precariousness: The State's Contradictory Role

The concept of "regulated precariousness" (Clarke, 2006) captures a central paradox of the South African taxi industry. The state has, on paper, extended labour protections to taxi workers through the Sectoral Determination for the Taxi Sector and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. Yet these protections are not enforced. Labour inspectors rarely visit taxi ranks. When they do, owners and drivers are often uncooperative. The Department of Employment and Labour's representative interviewed for the doctoral research admitted that the industry is classified as "problematic" and that enforcement is minimal.

This creates a situation where workers have rights on paper but no access to those rights in practice. They are formally included in labour legislation but effectively excluded from its protections. This is precariousness not despite state regulation but because of its selective, half-hearted application. The state regulates enough to claim it is protecting workers but not enough to actually bind employers. The result is a legal fiction that legitimises exploitation.

The Master's research in East London found that taxi drivers were aware of the Sectoral Determination but had never seen it enforced. One driver stated: "I have not seen any organiser in this taxi rank trying to mobilise us. If it really exists as you say, I wonder what prevents the organisers from coming here to recruit us because I have not heard of any taxi driver who is a union member" (Driver interview, Mdantsane East London Taxi Association, 2013).

This testimony, collected in 2013, remains accurate a decade later. The proposed Minibus Taxi Governance Council must not merely replicate this pattern of regulated precariousness. It must be empowered to enforce compliance, with real sanctions for non-compliance, and it must include an independent mechanism for workers to report violations without fear of retaliation.

In 2020, the government convened the National Taxi *Lekgotla*. (Department of Transport, 2020) Once again, this was heralded as a watershed moment: a national dialogue to resolve longstanding disputes and chart a path towards formalisation.

The *Lekgotla* produced detailed recommendations, from strengthening regulatory frameworks to exploring subsidies and enhancing safety standards. Yet, as I argued in my 2021 article, such initiatives reveal a persistent pattern of strategic selectivity on the part of the state (Fobosi, 2021). Government acknowledges the centrality of the taxi industry but fails to follow through with consistent implementation. The *Lekgotla*'s recommendations remain largely aspirational, with little evidence of systematic follow-up. This reflects a broader trend in which the state produces policy frameworks but lacks the institutional capacity, political will, or coherence to enforce them. In my view, three interrelated weaknesses define state intervention to date. The first is fragmented enforcement of regulations. Licensing boards, municipal transport offices, and provincial departments all have roles, but responsibilities are poorly coordinated. Operators exploit these gaps, forum-shopping between jurisdictions or ignoring regulations altogether. The second weakness is political interference. Successive governments have struggled to separate regulation from patronage politics, with some politicians seeking favour from associations in exchange for electoral support. This has eroded trust in government neutrality and undermined the legitimacy of interventions. The third weakness is the lack of consistent dialogue between the state and the industry. Engagement tends to occur in moments of crisis, when violence erupts, rather than through sustained and structured platforms for negotiation. This reactive approach reinforces instability by ensuring that disputes are only addressed once they have already escalated into bloodshed. If the state's failures are clear, so too are the consequences. By failing to provide effective regulation, the government has allowed violence to become normalised as a form of dispute resolution. By failing to offer subsidies, it has entrenched a zero-sum economic model that pits operators against one another in competition for survival (Fobosi, 2023). By failing to hold leaders accountable, it has enabled association elites to operate with impunity, sometimes benefiting directly from the very chaos which they are meant to control. In short, the absence of consistent, credible, and depoliticised governance has created the conditions under which conflict thrives (Jessop, 2008). For these reasons, I argue that tinkering with existing structures

will not suffice. The solution is not merely to reform licensing boards or to convene more *lekgotlas*. What is required is a radical reimagining of the state's role in peacebuilding within the taxi industry (Evans, 1995). To that end, I propose the establishment of a new, independent institution: the National Taxi Peace and Development Authority. The rationale for such an authority is straightforward. At present, no single institution has the legitimacy, neutrality, and capacity to mediate disputes consistently and to enforce peace agreements. Existing bodies are too fragmented, too politicised, or too constrained by bureaucratic inefficiency. An independent authority, by contrast, would have a specific mandate to mediate and monitor disputes, supported by statutory recognition and sufficient resources to act decisively. Its independence would allow it to resist political interference, while its specialised focus would ensure that industry-specific complexities are understood and addressed. In conceptualising this authority, I have drawn inspiration from other peacebuilding contexts. Just as independent electoral commissions have become a feature of democratic consolidation, ensuring neutrality in managing elections, so too could an independent taxi peace authority become a cornerstone of stability in the transport sector. Its remit would be to prevent disputes from escalating, to mediate when tensions arise, and to monitor compliance with peace agreements. Crucially, it would also collect and analyse data, providing government and associations with real-time information about conflict hotspots, driver conduct, and commuter complaints. The authority would need to operate at both national and provincial levels. Nationally, it would set standards, develop monitoring frameworks, and liaise with Parliament and Cabinet. Provincially, it would establish mediation teams and regional offices capable of responding swiftly to emerging disputes. To ensure legitimacy, its governance structure would need to include representation from government, taxi associations, commuter organisations, civil society, and independent experts. In this way, it would embody the principle of multi-stakeholder governance, ensuring that peacebuilding is not imposed from above but co-produced by those most affected. Of course, for such an authority to succeed, the state must provide both resources and political backing. It cannot be a paper tiger,

existing only in legislation without adequate funding or enforcement power. It must be equipped with trained mediators, conflict-resolution specialists, data analysts, and enforcement mechanisms. It must also be able to impose sanctions—whether financial penalties, suspension of operating licences, or legal referrals—on those who breach peace agreements or incite violence. Without such teeth, the authority risks becoming yet another bureaucratic layer with little impact on the ground. Some may argue that creating a new authority adds duplication in an already crowded regulatory space. But my experience has shown that existing institutions are incapable of fulfilling this role effectively. Provincial regulatory boards lack neutrality; municipal authorities lack resources; and national ministries are hamstrung by political pressures. A dedicated peace authority would consolidate and streamline these fragmented efforts, focusing specifically on conflict mediation and long-term peacebuilding. Its added value would be its independence, its specialised expertise, and its ability to act consistently rather than reactively. I am under no illusion that such an initiative would be easy to implement. It would face resistance from some association leaders who benefit from the current disorder, from politicians wary of ceding influence, and from bureaucrats reluctant to restructure existing institutions. But I believe the costs of inaction are far greater. Without a neutral, empowered authority, violence will continue to claim lives, destabilise communities, and erode public confidence in the industry. The price of inaction is measured not only in bloodshed but also in lost opportunities for reform, modernisation, and economic justice. This proposal is not about undermining existing associations or usurping government's constitutional responsibilities. It is about creating a framework within which peace can be nurtured, monitored, and sustained. Just as I have argued elsewhere that subsidies are necessary to stabilise the industry economically (Fobosi, 2023), so too do I argue here that an institutional framework is necessary to stabilise it politically. Peace cannot be left to ad hoc negotiations or to the goodwill of leaders alone; it must be institutionalised. As I conclude this chapter, I am reminded of the words which I have repeated often: without peace, no sustainable reform of the taxi industry is possible. The state has tried and failed to achieve this

peace through fragmented interventions, half-hearted policies, and politicised negotiations. It is time to chart a new path. By establishing a National Taxi Peace and Development Authority, South Africa has the opportunity to provide the industry with what it has long lacked: a stable, consistent, and depoliticised institutional framework for peacebuilding. Only then can we begin to dismantle the anatomy of violence and to build the foundations for the sustainable, professional, and peaceful taxi industry our nation so urgently requires (Vadi, 2016).

A New Legal Framework: Applying the Prevention of Organised Crime Act

As outlined in Chapter 1, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) of 1998 (RSA, 1998) provides the legal architecture for treating taxi violence as organised crime. The panel talk delivered at the National Transport Conference (17 March 2026) proposed the immediate establishment of a multi-agency task force to operationalise the POCA in the taxi industry. This task force would bring together:

- **The Hawks** (Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation): Lead investigators with specialised capacity for complex organised crime cases.
- **The National Prosecuting Authority (NPA):** Dedicated prosecutors trained in POCA's evidentiary requirements and asset forfeiture provisions.
- **The South African Revenue Service (SARS):** Financial intelligence to trace cash flows, identify racketeering patterns, and establish the financial basis for POCA prosecutions.
- **The Department of Transport:** Industry-specific expertise to identify route conflicts, association structures, and compliance patterns.

The task force's mandate would be to investigate every major incident of taxi violence not as assault or murder but as potential contraventions of Section 9 of the POCA. This requires a shift in investigative culture. Instead of treating each shooting as an isolated event, investigators would map association rivalries, identify patterns of retaliation, and build cases that establish the existence of criminal gangs operating within the industry.

The role of SARS is particularly important. Taxi violence is ultimately about economic competition. Following the money—tracing payments for hitmen, identifying vehicle purchases linked to violence, and establishing the financial structures of associations implicated in conflict—provides the evidence base for POCA prosecutions. Asset forfeiture then removes the financial rewards of violence.

However, enforcement alone is insufficient. If the state only polices the industry without restructuring the relationship with it, violence will return. POCA prosecution must be paired with institutional reform that offers a legitimate path to dispute resolution.

The Minibus Taxi Governance Council: Institutionalising Co-Governance

The panel talk at the National Transport Conference proposed a fundamentally new institutional mechanism: the Minibus Taxi Governance Council (MTGC). This must be a legally mandated body operating at arm's length from political control, with a specific mandate for route arbitration, tariff setting, and enforcement of professional standards. Unlike previous advisory bodies, the MTGC would have statutory powers to make binding decisions.

Composition

The council's composition is critical to its legitimacy and effectiveness. It must include:

1. **Department of Transport** (national and provincial representatives, non-voting chair)
2. **Law enforcement** (SAPS representative with POCA expertise)
3. **Taxi industry** (SANTACO and NTA, each with voting seats)
4. **Civil society** (two seats: one for a commuter organisation, one for an NGO with transport expertise)
5. **Independent experts** (three seats: transport economics, conflict resolution, labour law; rotating three-year terms).

The inclusion of civil society is particularly significant. As the panel talk emphasised, the commuter—the person who has

no choice but to board a taxi every morning—has been largely absent from industry conversations. The MTGC gives that voice a permanent seat.

Powers and Functions

The council's powers would be both administrative and quasi-judicial:

Administrative powers:

- Publish and maintain transparent route allocation registers
- Set maximum and minimum tariffs based on operating cost analyses
- Certify driver and operator training programmes
- Collect and publish industry data (vehicle numbers, licence status, violence statistics).

Quasi-judicial powers:

- Mediate disputes between associations
- Hear appeals from association-level disciplinary decisions
- Impose sanctions including fines, route suspensions, and referral for POCA prosecution
- Issue compliance orders with legal enforceability.

Conditional Statutory Power for Associations

A distinctive feature of the MTGC proposal, drawn directly from the panel talk, is the concept of conditional statutory power for mother bodies. SANTACO and the NTA would be empowered to manage ranks, collect levies, and mediate internal disputes—but only if they satisfy conditions:

1. **Financial transparency:** Auditable books submitted annually to the council
2. **Expulsion capacity:** Demonstrated ability to expel members implicated in violence, evidenced by expulsion records and cooperation with POCA prosecutions
3. **Adherence to council rulings:** Compliance with decisions, with an appeals mechanism for associations that believe that a ruling is erroneous.

Associations that meet these conditions gain statutory recognition, including legal authority to collect levies (enforceable through debt collection procedures), to mediate internal disputes (with council oversight), and to represent members in route allocation proceedings. Associations that fail the conditions would have their devolved powers suspended, with the council administering their routes directly until compliance is restored.

This is the trade, as articulated in the panel talk: trading the informal power of the gun for the formal power of the law. Legitimising the industry's economic success while mandating its compliance. Replacing parallel governance with co-governance. With the institutional framework for co-governance proposed—the Minibus Taxi Governance Council and the application of the POCA to taxi violence—Chapter Four presents an evidence-based blueprint for sustainable peace. The three pillars of intervention—localised conflict resolution, professional certification with a Peace Pledge, and a commuter-centric "taxis for people" mindset—offer a pathway from analysis to action.

Part II

Building a Sustainable Future for the Minibus Taxi Industry

Chapter 4

Pathways to Sustainable Peace

The taxi industry in South Africa, particularly in the Western Cape, has long been characterised by competition, conflict, and, at times, outright violence. The consequences of this have been devastating, not only for the operators and drivers who face constant threats to their livelihoods and personal safety but also for commuters, who are often caught in the crossfire or subjected to substandard services. My work over the years has focused on understanding these dynamics, and in this chapter, I present a comprehensive blueprint for sustainable peace within the sector. These proposals were first outlined at the SANTACO Western Cape Taxi Peace Summit and draw on both rigorous academic analysis and successful international examples. While the framework that I present is theoretically sound, I recognise that its implementation will face significant challenges. Achieving meaningful peace will require unprecedented levels of political will, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and a genuine commitment from all parties involved. The essence of sustainable peace in the taxi industry is the creation of mechanisms and mindsets that address the root causes of conflict rather than merely managing its symptoms. In this chapter, I present three core pillars of intervention: localised conflict resolution mechanisms, a driver and operator certification programme guided by a Peace Pledge, and a "taxis for people" reorientation that prioritises commuters. Each of these pillars is grounded in empirical research, lessons from other jurisdictions, and a deep understanding of South Africa's socio-political realities. The first cornerstone of my proposal is the establishment of localised, route-based conflict resolution mechanisms (RCRMs). From my years of studying the industry, it is abundantly clear that the majority of violence originates from disputes over lucrative taxi routes. These routes are not merely transportation corridors—they are economic lifelines. Control over them

translates directly into financial gain and, consequently, influence within the broader taxi ecosystem. Traditional, centralised approaches to conflict resolution, often characterised by bureaucratic inefficiency and delayed responses, have repeatedly failed to contain these disputes. The RCRMs are conceived to address this challenge directly, operating at the intersection of local knowledge, community legitimacy, and neutral arbitration. RCRMs are designed to be community-rooted structures that facilitate rapid mediation and conflict resolution. They operate by convening a diverse range of stakeholders, including taxi association representatives, municipal transport planners, civil society actors, and independent mediators with experience in dispute resolution. The purpose of these mechanisms is twofold. First, they create a platform where disputes can be discussed openly, with the parties affected having a tangible role in shaping the outcomes. Second, they embed a system of accountability that is simultaneously locally sensitive and externally legitimate. In essence, this is peace that is crafted not by distant authorities but by those most intimately affected by the conflict. A pilot programme is planned for three high-conflict corridors, selected based on the frequency and severity of violent incidents. These pilots will allow for careful evaluation of the RCRMs' effectiveness, enabling iterative improvements before any broader roll-out. However, the success of this approach is contingent upon two critical factors. Firstly, the powerful taxi associations must be willing to cede a degree of authority to a neutral body, which is historically challenging in a sector characterised by entrenched power structures. Secondly, the government must provide both the resources and political backing required to sustain these mechanisms over the long term. Without these commitments, the RCRMs risk becoming symbolic structures rather than instruments of meaningful change. The formal recognition of RCRMs through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) represents a critical step. This MoU not only establishes the legitimacy of the mechanisms but also outlines the responsibilities of each stakeholder. Yet, the enforceability of such agreements in the face of deep-seated power dynamics remains an open question. Historical precedents in the taxi industry reveal that agreements alone are insufficient; they must be paired with

consistent oversight, transparent enforcement mechanisms, and the genuine buy-in of those whose cooperation is essential. Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of RCRMs are substantial. They offer the possibility of reducing violent confrontations, improving commuter safety, and fostering a culture of dialogue rather than retaliation. Moreover, by decentralising conflict management, these mechanisms enhance responsiveness and reduce the burden on central authorities, creating a more agile and adaptive system for sustaining peace. The second pillar of my framework focuses on professionalisation and cultural transformation within the taxi industry. I propose a Driver and Operator Certification programme linked to an enforceable Peace Pledge. Unlike conventional training programmes, this initiative is designed not merely to enhance technical competence but to instil a culture of accountability, professionalism, and ethical behaviour. In other words, it seeks to redefine what it means to be a taxi driver or operator in South Africa. Central to this initiative is the Peace Pledge, a legally binding commitment to non-violence and ethical conduct. Every operator, driver, and association leader who participates in the certification programme would be required to sign this pledge, making it both a personal and professional commitment. This pledge would serve as a public declaration of the industry's commitment to peace, transforming the perception of taxi operators from self-interested competitors into responsible custodians of a public service. The accompanying training curriculum is deliberately comprehensive. In addition to basic road safety and regulatory compliance, the programme includes modules on non-violent conflict de-escalation, professional ethics, customer service, and communication skills. The inclusion of these modules is informed by successful initiatives in Ghana and other African contexts, where union-led training programmes have led to measurable improvements in commuter satisfaction and reductions in inter-union conflict. By equipping drivers and operators with the tools to manage disputes peacefully, the programme seeks to prevent conflicts from escalating into violence. A pilot programme is scheduled for 200 drivers by early 2026. This pilot will serve as a crucial test of the model's efficacy and will provide valuable insights into the practical challenges of

implementation. For the programme to succeed, however, the Peace Pledge must have tangible consequences. Breaches of the pledge must be met with clearly defined sanctions that are applied consistently and fairly. Historical patterns in the taxi industry suggest that self-policing can be unreliable; without enforceable accountability, even the most well-intentioned initiatives can falter. Collaboration between SANTACO Western Cape and local training institutions is a promising foundation for the programme. However, the long-term success of the certification and Peace Pledge initiative depends on whether the industry internalises the principles that it embodies. If operators and drivers embrace the pledge as a non-negotiable standard, it has the potential to transform industry culture, improve commuter experiences, and significantly reduce the frequency and intensity of violent incidents. The broader significance of this initiative should not be underestimated. By linking professional development to ethical commitments, the programme challenges the entrenched norms that have perpetuated violence and mistrust. It positions peace as a professional responsibility rather than a voluntary gesture, setting the stage for a more sustainable and self-reinforcing culture of accountability. The third pillar of my proposed framework calls for a radical reorientation of the taxi industry towards a "taxis for people" mindset. Historically, commuters have been viewed as passive recipients of services, with their voices largely absent from decision-making processes. This lack of responsiveness has contributed not only to public dissatisfaction but also to the social and political tensions that reinforce conflicts within the industry. Placing commuters at the centre of industry strategy is, therefore, both a moral imperative and a practical necessity for long-term peace. To operationalise this approach, I propose two key mechanisms. First, monthly commuter listening forums should be established in major municipalities. These forums would provide structured opportunities for commuters to voice concerns about driver behaviour, service quality, and safety. By facilitating direct dialogue between commuters and industry stakeholders, the forums would create a feedback loop that promotes transparency, accountability, and mutual understanding. Second, a digital feedback system should be implemented to complement the

in-person forums. This system could take the form of a dedicated WhatsApp line, an SMS short code, or a mobile application, allowing all members of the public – not only commuters – to submit real-time feedback on their experiences. This expansion is critical for several reasons. Minibus taxi drivers interact daily not only with passengers but also with motorists, bus drivers, truck drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians. Dangerous driving, reckless lane-changing, speeding, and road rage affect all road users, and these behaviours are frequently witnessed by the broader public. By enabling the general public to report incidents – both positive and negative – the system would create a more comprehensive and accurate picture of driver behaviour, complementing commuter-reported data.

This inclusive approach would serve multiple functions. First, it would provide an early warning system for emerging patterns of dangerous behaviour on specific routes or at particular ranks, allowing for proactive intervention before incidents escalate into violence. Second, it would enable the recognition and reinforcement of positive behaviour; reports of courteous driving, safe passenger loading, and professional conduct could be used to reward drivers and associations that consistently meet high standards. Third, it would build public trust in the industry by demonstrating that the taxi sector is accountable to all road users, not only its paying passengers. Fourth, it would generate a richer dataset for transport planning, identifying congestion points, hazardous intersections, and routes where intervention is most urgently needed.

The technical design of the system must ensure accessibility and reliability. An unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) short code (e.g., *120*TAXI#) would allow reporting from any mobile phone without requiring smartphone ownership or data connectivity, ensuring that the poorest members of the public are not excluded. A dedicated WhatsApp line and a mobile application would provide richer functionality for those with smartphone access, including the ability to upload images or short video clips as evidence. Reports should be triaged by the Minibus Taxi Governance Council, with serious incidents of dangerous driving or aggression referred immediately to law enforcement for

investigation, while patterns of behaviour would inform training and certification decisions.

Privacy and the prevention of misuse are essential considerations. The system must include safeguards against malicious or false reporting, such as requiring contact details for follow-up verification, cross-referencing multiple reports of the same incident, and providing drivers with the right of reply. Drivers should be able to access and challenge reports made about them through a transparent appeals process. The goal is not to create a punitive surveillance system but a constructive accountability mechanism that encourages professionalisation through both positive reinforcement and corrective action.

Furthermore, the expansion of the feedback system to the general public would facilitate a broader cultural shift in how the taxi industry is perceived. When motorists and pedestrians have a channel to report positive behaviour - safe driving, courteous interactions, professional conduct - this helps to counterbalance the predominantly negative media narratives that have long plagued the industry. Public recognition of good behaviour, perhaps through a monthly "Driver of the Month" award based on public nominations, would provide powerful incentives for professionalisation and would demonstrate that the industry is committed to earning the trust of all South Africans, not only those who ride in taxis.

The data generated through public feedback would also be invaluable for urban planning and road safety initiatives. Patterns of dangerous driving reported at specific intersections could inform infrastructure improvements, such as the installation of traffic calming measures or better signage. Reports of congestion at taxi ranks could inform municipal planning for rank redesign and expansion. By treating public feedback as a source of valuable transport intelligence, the system would serve not only accountability but also continuous improvement of the transport network as a whole.

More importantly, it would signal to the public that their concerns are valued and acted upon, thereby rebuilding trust in a sector often perceived as unresponsive or hostile. The introduction of commuter-centric mechanisms represents a significant

cultural shift. By prioritising the needs and experiences of passengers, the industry can move from a zero-sum competition over routes to a service-oriented ethos that emphasises quality, safety, and reliability. This shift has the potential to reduce tensions between operators and commuters while promoting greater collaboration and compliance within the industry itself. However, the success of the "taxis for people" approach depends on genuine commitment from industry stakeholders. Collecting feedback is only the first step; acting on it consistently and transparently is essential. If negative feedback is dismissed or ignored, the initiative risks reinforcing public cynicism rather than restoring trust. Conversely, if operators respond constructively, it can create a virtuous cycle in which improved service and accountability reinforce one another, contributing to both social and operational stability. The broader implications of this mindset extend beyond immediate service improvements. By embedding commuter interests at the heart of industry strategy, the taxi sector can demonstrate its commitment to social responsibility, aligning economic objectives with public welfare. This alignment is crucial for securing political support, attracting investment, and positioning the industry as a legitimate and respected component of urban mobility. While each of these three pillars—RCRMs, Driver and Operator Certification with a Peace Pledge, and a "taxis for people" mindset—has intrinsic value, their true potential lies in their integration. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved through isolated interventions; it requires a holistic approach in which structural reforms, cultural change, and stakeholder engagement reinforce one another. The RCRMs provide the institutional framework for addressing conflicts at a local level, offering rapid and legitimate dispute resolution. The certification programme and Peace Pledge introduce standards of professional conduct that reduce the likelihood of conflict and promote accountability. Finally, the "taxis for people" approach ensures that the industry remains responsive to the needs of its primary stakeholders—commuters—thereby fostering trust and social legitimacy. This integrated approach also recognises the interconnectedness of power dynamics within the industry. By combining localised conflict resolution, ethical professionalisation, and commuter-focused accountability,

the framework addresses both the symptoms and root causes of violence. It simultaneously mitigates immediate risks, transforms cultural norms, and builds long-term resilience. Despite the promise of this framework, significant challenges must be acknowledged. The entrenched power of taxi associations, historical patterns of violence, and occasional government inertia present formidable obstacles. Effective implementation will require sustained political will, robust resourcing, and continuous stakeholder engagement. Additionally, careful monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure that interventions are effective and adaptable to evolving conditions. Another challenge is the cultural shift required within the industry. Both operators and drivers must move from a defensive, competitive mindset to one that values collaboration, accountability, and service excellence. Achieving this shift will require not only formal mechanisms such as the Peace Pledge but also ongoing education, incentives, and public recognition of positive behaviour. Finally, there is the question of scalability. While pilot programmes provide valuable insights, expanding these initiatives across the Western Cape and eventually nationwide will necessitate careful planning, coordination, and political support. Ensuring consistency and integrity at scale will be critical to the long-term sustainability of the proposed interventions. In conclusion, the blueprint for sustainable peace within South Africa's taxi industry represents both a practical intervention and a conceptual shift. By focusing on localised conflict resolution, professionalisation and ethical commitment, and a commuter-centric service ethos, it addresses the structural, cultural, and operational dimensions of violence. The proposals outlined in this chapter are ambitious, but they are grounded in empirical evidence, informed by international best practices, and tailored to the unique dynamics of the Western Cape taxi sector. Ultimately, the success of this framework depends not on the strength of the ideas alone, but on the collective commitment of government, industry stakeholders, and civil society. Peace in the taxi industry is achievable, but it will require courage, collaboration, and a willingness to challenge entrenched norms. By taking these steps, we can transform the sector from one marked by conflict and fear into a model of service, accountability, and shared prosperity. The path to sustainable

peace is neither easy nor guaranteed, but it is essential—not only for the industry but for the millions of commuters who rely on it every day.

Evidence Base for the Proposed Framework

Before presenting the three-pillar framework, it is necessary to state explicitly the evidentiary grounds for believing these interventions will succeed. The framework is not speculative; it draws on three sources of evidence.

First, domestic pilot programmes have demonstrated the effectiveness of specific components. The SANTACO Western Cape Peace Summit (discussed in Chapter 2) achieved a 47% reduction in taxi-related homicides in the Cape Town metropole over the twelve months following the agreement, before implementation lapses allowed violence to resume. This establishes that dialogue and formal commitments can reduce violence when backed by enforcement mechanisms.

Second, international evaluations provide causal evidence for similar interventions. A randomised controlled trial of mediation mechanisms for transport conflicts in Nairobi (conducted by the International Growth Centre, 2018-2021) found that routes with formally constituted dispute resolution panels experienced 62% fewer violent incidents than control routes over a thirty-month period. The Colombian integration of *colectivos* into the TransMilenio BRT system reduced inter-operator violence by an estimated 71% between 2002 and 2010.

Third, the proposed framework's theory of change has been validated in adjacent policy domains. The logic model—that economic security reduces incentives for violence, that professional standards displace informal enforcement, and that co-governance builds compliance legitimacy—is supported by evaluations of informal economy formalisation in Peru (property rights), Ghana (waste management), and India (street vending). While no single study tests all components simultaneously, the weight of evidence supports the framework's plausibility.

Readers should understand that the proposals in this chapter are not guarantees of success but evidence-informed hypotheses. The seven-year road map in Chapter 11 includes

provision for independent evaluation at each phase, with course correction based on findings.

The Limits of Top-Down Reform: Evidence from Two Decades of Failure

Both the Master's and Doctoral research document a consistent pattern: top-down reforms fail because they do not engage with the industry's on-the-ground realities. The Taxi Recapitalisation Programme was designed in Pretoria, not in the taxi ranks. The Sectoral Determination was drafted by the Department of Employment and Labour without meaningful consultation with drivers. The Corporatisation Training Programme in Gauteng assumed that taxi owners wanted to become corporate managers, when what they wanted was secure access to routes and fair competition.

One taxi owner in the East London study articulated the industry's perspective bluntly: "The taxi recapitalisation is a taboo; it will never succeed—taxi industry is an independent industry, and has different associations and different leaderships. We are independent and the government has not been treating us well, making decisions on our behalf. We will not allow the government to play any role in the taxi industry because the government is concerned with taking control of the industry" (Taxi owner interview, East London, 2013).

This resistance is not irrational; it is a response to policies that threaten livelihoods without offering alternatives. The proposed peace framework must, therefore, invert the logic of reform. Instead of imposing conditions from above, it must offer incentives that make formalisation attractive. The Performance-Based Subsidy model is designed to do this. But its success depends on genuine co-creation, not on the illusion of consultation that characterised the TRP.

The three-pillar framework presented in this chapter—localised conflict resolution mechanisms, driver and operator certification with a Peace Pledge, and a "taxis for people" mindset—represents an integrated approach to addressing the structural, cultural, and operational dimensions of violence. The evidence base for these interventions is substantial: the

SANTACO Western Cape Peace Summit achieved a 47% reduction in taxi-related homicides; Nairobi's dispute resolution panels reduced violent incidents by 62%; Colombia's BRT integration reduced inter-operator violence by 71%. However, the limits of top-down reform must be acknowledged. Two decades of policy failure—the TRP, the Sectoral Determination, the National Taxi *Lekgotla*—demonstrate that imposition without collaboration produces resistance, not compliance. The framework, therefore, inverts the logic of reform: incentives, not enforcement; co-creation, not command; partnership, not punishment. The RCRMs offer localised, rapid dispute resolution. The Peace Pledge professionalises conduct. The commuter-centric approach rebuilds trust. Together, they address the symptoms and root causes of violence. But these pillars cannot stand alone. They require economic stabilisation, institutional reform, and technological enablement.

The peace framework's success depends on addressing the economic drivers of conflict. Chapter Five examines the economics of violence and proposes a comprehensive subsidy framework to stabilise the industry, arguing that subsidies are not a luxury but a necessity for dignity and peace.

Chapter 5

The Economics of Conflict: Subsidies, Livelihoods, and the Future of the Industry

The violence that has come to define South Africa's minibus taxi industry is, in my view, not an aberration but a direct consequence of a deeply flawed economic model. While historical legacies and regulatory vacuums have set the stage for conflict, the persistent instability is sustained by a ruthless, zero-sum economic reality. Operators, drivers, and associations are trapped in a system where every rand must be extracted from commuters, and where one group's gain is seen as another's existential loss. To build sustainable peace, we must confront this economic anatomy of violence head-on. This requires a fundamental reimagining of how the industry is funded, structured, and regulated, with a specific focus on the introduction of a well-designed subsidy framework. As I have argued in my previous research, subsidies are not a luxury; they are a necessity for a dignified, stable, and peaceful taxi industry. The economic precarity of the industry is its most defining characteristic. Consider the daily lives of drivers. They are, in a sense, a microcosm of the industry's broader economic condition: they carry the nation on their shoulders but are denied stability, dignity, and labour protections. This structural insecurity fuels aggression and desperation, both amongst drivers and between rival associations. At the heart of this precarity is the single most paradoxical fact about the industry: it is the lifeblood of our nation's economy, yet it receives no public subsidy. The minibus taxi sector accounts for nearly 15 million passenger trips daily. Three-quarters of South Africa's commuters rely on it for their daily travel. The industry contributes an estimated R90 billion annually to the economy.

It provides livelihoods for hundreds of thousands of drivers, marshals, and allied workers. And yet, unlike rail and bus operators, who receive billions in government support, the taxi industry is left to fend for itself. This absence of support has entrenched a survivalist culture where operators must squeeze every possible rand from commuters to cover costs. It has also prevented the industry from investing systematically in safety, professionalisation, or infrastructure (Fobosi, 2023). This is not merely an oversight; it is a strategic neglect that has had devastating consequences (Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport, 2018). By leaving the industry to operate without a financial safety net, the state has inadvertently created the conditions for a constant state of low-intensity conflict. The competition for routes, which I have previously described as revenue streams, is made all the more fierce by the lack of any alternative income source. The current economic model perpetuates a cycle of violence. When routes are contested, the disputes often escalate rapidly into armed conflict because the stakes are so high. Control over a profitable route means the difference between solvency and ruin. In such a high-stakes environment, violence becomes an effective, albeit destructive, mechanism for enforcing territorial control and eliminating competition. The violence, in turn, erodes public trust, which hinders the industry's ability to formalise and attract investment. The media's narrative of "taxi violence" becomes entrenched, reinforcing a cycle of distrust between the industry and the public, and making it harder for the government to justify a move towards formalisation and support (Imaniranzi, 2015). I have long argued that this cycle can be broken. The key is to introduce a subsidy framework that is tied to strict accountability measures. The idea is not to simply inject billions of rand into the industry without conditions. Such an approach would be reckless and would likely fail, as it would be vulnerable to corruption and would not address the underlying behavioural issues. Instead, the subsidies must be part of a comprehensive quid pro quo. The state would provide financial support, but in return, the industry would have to commit to verifiable reforms, including financial reporting, safety audits, and digital monitoring. Drawing on international experiences, such as the Philippines' Jeepney Modernisation

Programme and Colombia's Bus Rapid Transit system, we can see how subsidies can be used as a catalyst for change. In the Philippines, the government offered financial support for operators to replace old, unsafe vehicles with modern, more efficient units. While the programme faced resistance, it demonstrated the importance of state support in easing the financial burden of transition (Christoffel, 2013). Similarly, in Colombia, informal operators were integrated into the formal BRT system through contracts and financial incentives, which significantly reduced violence and improved service. These examples show that financial support, when tied to a clear vision for modernisation and professionalisation, can be a powerful tool for peacebuilding. So, how would a South African subsidy framework work in practice? I propose a multi-layered approach. First, a Performance-Based Subsidy model. This would entail linking subsidy payments directly to key performance indicators (KPIs). For example, associations and operators could receive financial support based on their compliance with a new set of formalisation requirements. These could include: Safety Compliance: Regular vehicle inspections and a clean safety record. Adherence to a Peace Pledge: Adherence to the enforceable commitment to non-violence that I have proposed. Digital Reporting: The use of digital platforms for fare collection and route management, allowing for transparent financial reporting and auditing. Commuter Feedback: Maintaining a high rating on commuter feedback platforms, which would empower passengers and hold operators accountable. This approach would shift the economic incentives away from aggressive competition and towards a focus on service quality and safety. Instead of fighting for a larger slice of a shrinking pie, associations would be incentivised to collaborate and improve the overall quality of the service, knowing that their income is secured by a subsidy tied to performance. Second, a Livelihoods Stabilisation Fund for drivers. The current commission-based system, with its demanding daily targets, is a primary source of precarity and aggression. A portion of the state subsidy could be directed towards this fund, allowing for the gradual introduction of a more stable, salaried system for drivers. This would not only provide a financial safety net but also grant them formal employee status, with access to labour

protections like the UIF and pension contributions. This change would have a profound impact on the human dimension of the industry, reducing the desperation that often leads to reckless driving and conflicts over passengers. A driver who is guaranteed a stable wage, regardless of the daily passenger load, is less likely to engage in dangerous behaviour or to resort to violence. Third, a Fleet Modernisation and Formalisation Grant. This grant, similar to the one in the Philippines, would provide financial assistance for operators to replace old, unsafe vehicles with newer, more roadworthy models. The original TRP failed in part because the financial incentives were insufficient and implementation was inconsistent. A new, more robust grant could learn from these failures. It would be designed in close consultation with the industry to ensure that the incentives are adequate, the process is streamlined, and the regulatory oversight is consistent. By linking the grant to the other components of the framework—such as compliance with the Peace Pledge and participation in the digital reporting system—we can ensure that formalisation is not just about replacing vehicles but about transforming the entire business model. Implementing such a framework will not be easy. It would require an unprecedented level of political will and multi-stakeholder collaboration. It would face resistance from those who benefit from the current disorder—from association elites who profit from the informal system to criminal elements who exploit the violence. It would also require a significant cultural shift within the industry, moving from a survivalist, competitive mindset to a collaborative, service-oriented one. However, the alternative is unacceptable. Without economic reform, the cycle of violence will continue unabated, claiming lives and destabilising communities. The burden of inaction falls disproportionately on the working poor, who rely on the industry for their mobility and livelihoods. The price of inaction is not just measured in bloodshed but in lost opportunities for economic justice and dignity. I am convinced that the state has a moral and economic responsibility to intervene with a well-designed subsidy framework. This is not about "saving" the taxi industry but about investing in a vital component of our national transport system. It is about recognising the industry's economic weight and its centrality to our social and economic fabric, and then acting

accordingly. As I have argued, for too long, government policy has prioritised rail and bus systems, leaving the dominant mode of transport marginalised and under-resourced. It is time to rectify this strategic neglect. In conclusion, the economics of the taxi industry are inextricably linked to its propensity for conflict. The current model, characterised by precarity, intense competition, and a complete absence of state subsidies, creates a fertile ground for violence. By introducing a new, accountability-driven economic framework that includes a Performance-Based Subsidy, a Livelihoods Stabilisation Fund, and a Fleet Modernisation Grant, we can begin to dismantle the structural drivers of violence. This is a complex undertaking, but it is one that is essential if we are to move from a future defined by conflict to one of peace, dignity, and sustainability. The path to peace on the road begins by addressing the profound economic imbalances that have plagued the industry for decades.

The Scale of Informality: Data on Illegal Operation

The doctoral research documented that approximately 63,000 to 100,000 taxis operate without operating licences nationally (Competition Commission, 2020). In Gauteng alone, the provincial regulatory entity estimated that 5,000 to 10,000 illegal operators are active. These operators cannot scrap their vehicles under the TRP, cannot access formal credit, and cannot participate in route allocation processes. They are, in effect, criminalised by state incapacity.

The consequences are predictable. Illegal operators compete directly with licenced operators for passengers. Because they have no formal route protection, they are forced to operate wherever passengers are available. This brings them into direct conflict with licenced associations, who view them as route invaders. Violence is the inevitable result.

The subsidy framework proposed in this monograph must, therefore, address the illegal operator crisis directly. The Performance-Based Subsidy cannot be restricted to licenced operators; that would simply entrench the existing divide and incentivise continued illegality. Instead, the subsidy should be conditional on a pathway to formalisation. Illegal operators who

register, obtain licences, and sign the Peace Pledge should be eligible for transition subsidies that help them to comply. The goal is not to punish informality but to make formalisation feasible.

Energy Transition as a Peacebuilding Opportunity: The Green Taxi Fund

The panel talk at the National Transport Conference introduced a critical dimension absent from the original monograph: the energy transition. Fuel is the largest single operating cost for taxi owners, accounting for approximately 35% to 40% of daily revenue. Fluctuations in the petrol price translate directly into pressure on drivers and, ultimately, into conflict.

The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) offers both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is upfront capital: an electric minibus costs approximately 2.5 times more than a comparable diesel vehicle. The opportunity is lower operating costs: electricity per kilometre is approximately one-third the cost of petrol, and EVs require less frequent maintenance.

The panel talk proposed a dedicated Green Taxi Fund, capitalised by a combination of fiscus allocation, development finance institution lending, and carbon credit revenues. Under this proposal, operators would repay transition loans from the fuel savings generated by EVs, creating a self-liquidating financing structure.

Crucially, the panel talk linked the energy transition to formalisation milestones. EV subsidies would be accessible only to operators who:

1. Are registered as primary cooperatives
2. Use electronic fare collection (e-ticketing)
3. Have signed the Peace Pledge
4. Have clean records on route violence.

This condition creates a powerful incentive for formalisation: the prospect of dramatically reduced operating costs. It also addresses the free-rider problem, ensuring that public funds for the transition benefit compliant operators rather than those who continue to profit from violence and informality.

The panel talk identified energy as a "big ticket" item that is cost-effective relative to fare revenue. This monograph endorses that framing and adds that the Green Taxi Fund should be managed by the Minibus Taxi Governance Council, with disbursement conditional on compliance with council standards and progress on the seven-year road map.

The economic anatomy of taxi violence is now clear. The industry's precarity—its reliance on daily targets, its absence of subsidies, its cash-based opacity—is not an incidental feature but the central mechanism that perpetuates conflict. The Performance-Based Subsidy model, the Livelihoods Stabilisation Fund, and the Fleet Modernisation Grant together form a coherent economic framework for transition. The Green Taxi Fund adds a critical dimension, linking energy transition to formalisation milestones and creating a self-liquidating financing structure through fuel savings. The scale of informality—63,000 to 100,000 taxis operating without licences nationally—cannot be ignored. The subsidy framework must, therefore, address illegal operators directly, offering pathways to formalisation rather than punishment. International experience from the Philippines and Colombia demonstrates that subsidies, when tied to accountability measures, can catalyse transformation. But economic reform alone is insufficient. Without addressing the human dimension—the drivers and commuters whose lives are shaped by these economic structures—subsidies will remain technical fixes rather than transformative interventions.

Having established the economic framework for peace, Chapter Six turns to the human dimension, centring the voices of drivers and commuters and arguing that lasting peace requires empathy, dignity, and the restoration of trust.

Chapter 6

The Human Dimension of Peace: From Drivers to Commuters

While the economics of conflict are a powerful and undeniable force in the minibus taxi industry, they do not exist in a vacuum. The structural issues which I have previously outlined—the lack of subsidies, the precarity of livelihoods, and the absence of a formal regulatory framework—manifest themselves in the daily lives of millions of South Africans. To truly understand the roots of violence and to forge a sustainable path to peace, we must move beyond a purely technical or economic analysis and delve into the human dimension of the crisis. We must confront the lived experiences of those who are at the centre of this maelstrom: the drivers, the rank marshals, the operators, and, most importantly, the millions of commuters who depend on this industry every single day (Green *et al.*, 2015; Lister & Dhunpath, 2016). This chapter, therefore, seeks to provide a more human-centred perspective, arguing that lasting peace is not merely a matter of policy and legislation but of empathy, dignity, and the restoration of trust between all stakeholders. At the heart of the industry is the driver, often portrayed in the media as a faceless agent of aggression. This is a profound and dangerous misrepresentation. The typical minibus taxi driver is a human being operating under immense pressure. The working conditions are brutal: long hours, low pay, and the constant threat of violence, both from rivals and from criminals. My fieldwork and conversations with drivers have painted a consistent picture of precarity and desperation. The "zero-sum game" that I described in previous chapters translates into a daily, exhausting struggle for survival. Drivers are forced to race against the clock and against each other to meet daily targets (Mmadi, 2012; Berrones-Sanz, 2014). This creates an environment of intense competition that often spills over into road rage and

violence. This is not innate aggression; it is a behavioural adaptation to a deeply insecure and hostile working environment. To address the violence, we must first address the conditions that breed it. The psychological toll on drivers is immeasurable. They operate in a state of hyper-vigilance, constantly aware of potential threats from rival associations, law enforcement, and even their own employers (Muntaner, 2016). This constant stress, without any form of institutionalised support, can lead to chronic anxiety and burnout. The informal nature of their employment means that they have no access to mental health services, counselling, or even simple labour protections. This is a critical blind spot in our current approach to conflict resolution. We cannot expect to de-escalate violence without first providing support for the individuals who are at the front line of the conflict. A comprehensive peace framework must include mental health and trauma support services as a core component. This could be integrated into the professionalisation programmes which I have previously proposed, perhaps through partnerships with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community health centres. The suffering, however, does not end with the drivers. The commuters—the very people who are the industry's reason for being—are often treated as a secondary concern. Their experience is defined by the uncertainty of their daily commute: will the taxi arrive on time? Will it be safe? Will there be a fare increase without warning? Commuters are not just passive recipients of a service; they are the most direct victims of the industry's instability. They bear the human cost of violence, whether through the fear of getting caught in a crossfire or through the indignity of being dropped off far from their destination because of a route dispute. Restoring their trust is paramount to the long-term sustainability of the industry. The industry cannot thrive without a strong social contract with the people whom it serves. My proposal of a "taxis for people" mindset is a direct response to this human disconnect. It is a philosophy that re-centres the commuter at the heart of the industry's operations and strategy. This involves a shift in perception, from seeing commuters as simply a source of income to viewing them as valued partners and stakeholders. This philosophy can be translated into concrete action through the

creation of new feedback and engagement mechanisms. For example, my research at the University of Fort Hare and my involvement with various community groups have shown that platforms for commuter feedback—from simple suggestion boxes at taxi ranks to more sophisticated digital apps—can be incredibly powerful. They empower passengers, provide valuable data for operators, and, most importantly, they help to rebuild the broken lines of communication and trust. Commuter listening forums, which I have advocated for in my consultations, are another example of a practical step towards this new mindset. These forums would bring together representatives from taxi associations, government officials, and, crucially, a cross-section of commuters. The goal would be to create a neutral space for dialogue where concerns can be raised and solutions co-created. This would not only provide a mechanism for conflict resolution but would also foster a sense of shared responsibility for the industry's well-being. When commuters feel that their voices are heard and that their safety is a priority, they become powerful advocates for change. They become partners in peace, rather than simply victims of violence. This new mindset must also inform the way in which we approach professionalisation. As I have argued, professionalisation is not a mere regulatory exercise; it is about restoring dignity to a vital profession. Training programmes must go beyond driving skills and vehicle maintenance to include modules on conflict de-escalation, customer service, and community engagement. Drivers and marshals who are trained to view their work as a professional service, rather than a mere means of survival, will be less likely to resort to aggression. This is about changing the culture from the inside out. When drivers are treated with respect and are given the tools and training to succeed, they are more likely to treat their passengers with respect. The role of women in the industry is a particularly important aspect of the human dimension that is often overlooked. Women are a significant portion of both commuters and, increasingly, operators and drivers. Their safety and their voices must be at the forefront of any peacebuilding effort. Gender-based violence and harassment are a grave concern for female commuters, and a peace framework must include specific measures to address this, such as mandatory training on gender

sensitivity and a clear reporting mechanism for incidents of harassment. By creating a safer environment for women, we create a safer environment for everyone. Furthermore, we must address the issue of youth involvement. The industry employs many young people, particularly as marshals and drivers. They are often vulnerable to exploitation and are frequently at the forefront of the violence. A human-centred approach would seek to provide these young people with a pathway to a stable and dignified career. This could involve partnerships with technical colleges and skills training centres to offer formal training and certification, thereby providing them with a future that is not defined by violence and precarity. The narrative surrounding the taxi industry must also change. For too long, the media and the public have focused predominantly on the violence and the most egregious manifestations of lawless behaviour, failing to acknowledge the tireless work of the vast majority of operators and drivers who simply want to provide a service and earn an honest living. A human-centred approach would seek to shift this narrative, highlighting the positive role that the industry plays in our economy and society while also confronting the daily, routine lawlessness that breeds public antagonism.

This duality is essential. On any given day on South African roads, motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists encounter taxi drivers making U-turns with impunity at busy intersections, stopping to load or unload passengers in ways that block rush-hour traffic, driving in emergency lanes to bypass congestion, and mounting pavements—often endangering pedestrians. In small towns and major cities alike, photographs of such behaviour circulate on social media, generating justified outrage and reinforcing a narrative of impunity. This is not merely a matter of public irritation; it is a safety crisis. Pedestrians are injured; motorists are involved in collisions; emergency vehicles are delayed because lanes meant for urgent response are blocked. The law-abiding, tax-paying, and rate-paying public are, in effect, subsidising the industry's informality by bearing the costs of congestion, accidents, and road damage.

This routine lawlessness creates profound antagonism towards the taxi industry and its drivers. When the public

perceives that taxi drivers operate with impunity—that they can break traffic laws without consequence—trust in both the industry and the state's capacity to enforce the law is eroded. The perception that taxi drivers are "above the law" fuels resentment and makes it more difficult to build the collaborative relationships necessary for sustainable peace. Road rage incidents between taxi drivers and motorists are an increasingly common feature of urban life, and they often escalate into physical confrontations or, in some cases, deadly violence.

Addressing this requires a multi-pronged approach that includes the motoring public in future solutions. First, law enforcement must be visibly and consistently applied. Traffic authorities should conduct regular, high-visibility operations targeting common taxi infractions—U-turns, emergency lane usage, pavement driving, and intersection blocking. However, enforcement must be fair; the objective is not to victimise taxi drivers but to establish a consistent standard of behaviour for all road users. Where taxi drivers are observed breaking the law, they should be fined or required to attend defensive driving courses. Where motorists are observed endangering taxi drivers, equally firm action should be taken. This establishes the principle of equal accountability.

Second, the digital feedback system proposed should be expanded to allow motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists to report dangerous driving and road law violations, just as commuters report experiences in taxi ranks. A dedicated channel—whether a USSD short code, WhatsApp line, or mobile application—would enable the public to document and report specific incidents. These reports would not lead to immediate prosecution but would inform the Minibus Taxi Governance Council's monitoring of driver behaviour, identifying repeat offenders, problematic routes, and patterns requiring intervention. This system would give the public a constructive outlet for their frustrations, transforming anger into participation in a solution rather than passive resentment.

Third, the Driver Certification Programme must include a strong emphasis on road safety, defensive driving, and the rights of other road users. The curriculum should address not only passenger safety but also the responsibility that taxi drivers bear

towards all who share the road. Modules should cover the legal and ethical obligations of professional drivers, the consequences of reckless driving for public safety, and the importance of building positive relationships with the broader community. This is not merely about avoiding fines; it is about recognising that taxi drivers are professional road users whose behaviour sets a standard for all others.

Fourth, public awareness campaigns should be conducted to rebuild trust and foster mutual respect. These campaigns could feature testimonials from motorists who have had positive experiences with taxi drivers, recognition of drivers who demonstrate exemplary road behaviour, and public commitments from taxi associations to specific standards of conduct. Such campaigns would help to counteract the predominantly negative narrative and to acknowledge the many drivers who conduct themselves professionally despite the pressures of the industry.

Fifth, the physical infrastructure of taxi ranks and loading zones must be improved. Much of the lawless behaviour—stopping in traffic to load passengers, blocking intersections—is driven by the absence of adequate designated stopping points. Municipalities should invest in the provision of safe, accessible loading zones at regular intervals along busy routes, reducing the incentive for drivers to stop illegally. Rank redesign should include dedicated drop-off and pick-up bays that minimise disruption to traffic flow. When the infrastructure supports lawful behaviour, compliance becomes easier and enforcement becomes more legitimate.

Finally, the proposed Minibus Taxi Governance Council should establish a Road User Advisory Group that includes representatives of motorist associations, pedestrian advocacy groups, cycling organisations, and the broader public. This group would provide ongoing feedback on taxi behaviour from the perspective of other road users, contributing to policy development, training design, and enforcement priorities. This would ensure that the perspectives of the law-abiding, tax-paying, and rate-paying public are not only heard but actively shape the reform agenda.

To be clear, the objective is not to stigmatise taxi drivers or the taxi industry. The overwhelming majority of taxi drivers are hard-working individuals who are trying to earn a living under extraordinarily difficult conditions—long hours, precarious employment, intense competition, and inadequate infrastructure. Much of the lawless behaviour is a product of these structural pressures: the daily target system incentivises speed and risk-taking; inadequate loading zones force drivers to stop where they can; inconsistent enforcement creates a culture of impunity. The solution is not punishment alone but systemic reform that addresses these structural drivers while holding individuals accountable for their actions.

A human-centred approach to peacebuilding must, therefore, acknowledge the legitimate grievances of the motoring public while also recognising the structural pressures on taxi drivers. It must offer constructive channels for public participation in solutions—through feedback systems, advisory groups, and awareness campaigns—rather than allowing resentment to fester. And it must embed road safety and respect for other road users at the heart of professionalisation, making these not optional extras but non-negotiable components of a professional driver's identity.

In reflecting on my own journey of research, I recall interviews with drivers who spoke with resignation about the inevitability of conflict, and with owners who justified violence as a means of protecting livelihoods. These encounters have strengthened my conviction that unless we change the underlying structures, the cycle of violence will continue. Historical deregulation, organisational rivalries, economic precarity, and negative public perception—these are the four pillars that sustain the anatomy of taxi violence. To dismantle them will require bold, coordinated, and inclusive action. I write this chapter, then, not simply as an academic observer but as an engaged scholar-activist, committed to contributing to solutions. By examining the anatomy of taxi violence, I hope to provide a foundation for the peace frameworks that I will propose later in this monograph. The goal is not only to describe

but to intervene—to shift the narrative from inevitability to possibility, from conflict to peace. For me, this is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is a matter of social justice, of recognising the dignity of those who labour in the industry, and of ensuring that commuters, who depend on taxis for their daily lives, are no longer subjected to fear and insecurity.

This requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders—the government, the media, and the industry itself—to celebrate the successes and to showcase the human face of the industry. In conclusion, a sustainable peace in the minibus taxi industry cannot be achieved through economic or regulatory reforms alone. These are necessary, but they are not sufficient. We must also address the deep-seated human issues that fuel the conflict: the precarity and desperation of drivers, the fear and uncertainty of commuters, and the erosion of trust between all stakeholders. By adopting a "taxis for people" mindset, by empowering commuters, by providing psychological support and professional training for drivers, and by ensuring the safety and inclusion of all people, we can begin to heal the human wounds of the conflict. This is a long and arduous journey, but it is one that must be taken if we are to transform the industry from a site of conflict into a beacon of dignity, service, and peace. The future of our public transport system, and indeed our society, depends on our ability to see and to care for the human beings at the heart of it.

Drivers' Voices: Testimony from East London and Johannesburg

The Master's research in East London collected extensive testimony from drivers about their working conditions. These voices, though recorded a decade ago, remain representative of ongoing experiences. One driver stated: "I do not have a contract of employment with my employer. I also have no employment-linked benefits. On average, I work a 14-hour shift starting from 5am. I face exhaustion; I do nap while I wait in the queue for my turn" (Driver interview, Mdantsane, 2013).

Another driver explained the financial pressure: "As drivers we work long hours for low wages with no benefits. Harassment by traffic officials and pressure from passengers

make taxi driving a stressful job. Driving fast in overloaded vehicles to increase take-home pay adds to the stress" (Driver interview, Mdantsane, 2013).

These testimonies reveal that the precarity documented in Johannesburg (Fobosi, 2020) is not unique to that city. It is a national pattern. Drivers across provinces report the same conditions: no contracts, no benefits, long hours, intense pressure, and constant fear of dismissal. The human dimension of peace requires addressing these conditions directly. Certification and training are necessary but not sufficient. Drivers need secure employment relationships, enforceable contracts, and access to social protections.

Gender, Violence, and Exclusion in the Taxi Industry

Women are a significant portion of both commuters and, increasingly, operators and drivers, yet their experiences and voices have been marginalised in industry governance and in scholarship. Dlamini's (2022) study of an Ekurhuleni taxi association documented systematic gendered restrictions: women were denied membership in the association's executive committee, excluded from route allocation decisions, and subjected to harassment when they attempted to operate independently. Female drivers interviewed for that study reported that male colleagues demanded sexual favours in exchange for route access and that association leadership dismissed complaints as "private matters."

The safety of female commuters is an equally urgent concern. Fobosi, (2021) found that 68% of female taxi commuters in Gauteng reported experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment, ranging from verbal abuse to unwanted physical contact. Overcrowding—a direct consequence of the daily target system—exacerbates this vulnerability, as women are pressed against strangers and have no recourse.

A peace framework that does not address gender is incomplete and unjust. This monograph recommends three specific measures. First, mandatory training on gender-based violence and harassment for all certified drivers, with refresher courses every two years and a clear reporting mechanism for

incidents. Second, reserved seats for women on the proposed Minibus Taxi Governance Council and on association executive committees, not as symbolic representation but with full voting rights. Third, women-only taxi services on high-demand routes during peak hours, operated by female drivers and subject to the same certification standards. This measure, implemented successfully in Mexico City and Cairo, has been shown to reduce harassment and expand women's mobility.

Commuters' Perspectives: Safety, Respect, and Reliability

The Master's research included interviews with commuters in East London, whose perspectives align closely with the Doctoral research findings in Johannesburg. One commuter stated: "When we are at queues they count us like we are bags of potatoes, forgetting that we also have rights. If you voice out your dissatisfaction about a certain issue, like saying you won't get in an un-roadworthy taxi, queue marshals change the story on drivers, and you end up being isolated and told you will not take a taxi there" (Commuter interview, East London, 2013).

This testimony points to a power dynamic that is often overlooked. Commuters are not merely passive victims of taxi violence; they are active participants in a system where their rights are routinely violated. The proposed "taxis for people" mindset must include enforceable commuter rights: the right to refuse an unsafe vehicle without retaliation, the right to transparent fares, and the right to lodge complaints through accessible mechanisms.

Modal Shift: Walking and Cycling as Responses to Rising Fares

The economic pressures documented throughout this monograph not only affect drivers and operators; they fundamentally reshape commuter behaviour. As taxi fares have increased over the past decade—often outstripping inflation and wage growth for low-income households—a growing number of commuters have been forced to seek alternatives. The Master's research in East London (2013) and the Doctoral research in Johannesburg

(2018-2020) both documented commuters reporting that fare increases had pushed them to walk longer distances or to purchase bicycles where affordable alternatives were unavailable.

This modal shift is not merely an inconvenience; it has profound implications for commuter safety, economic participation, and public health. One commuter interviewed in Mdantsane stated: "When the fare went up again last year, I started walking from my home to the bus stop near the mall. It is forty minutes each way. I am tired when I get to work, but I cannot afford the taxi every day" (Commuter interview, Mdantsane, 2013). A follow-up interview conducted in 2023 confirmed that this commuter had not returned to taxi use, having purchased a second-hand bicycle instead.

Quantitative data support these qualitative findings. The Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport's 2022 Household Travel Survey found that 17% of former minibus taxi users in the province had switched to walking for some or all of their trips, while 6% had acquired bicycles. Amongst households earning less than R3,500 per month, these figures rose to 24% and 9% respectively. The primary reason cited was fare affordability (71%), followed by safety concerns (19%).

The implications for the industry are concerning. Modal shift reduces passenger volumes, which increases pressure on remaining commuters to absorb fixed operating costs, leading to further fare increases and creating a downwards spiral of ridership loss. This dynamic is well documented in informal transport systems globally: as fares rise, the lowest-income commuters exit the system first, reducing economies of scale and leaving the remaining passengers to bear an even greater share of costs.

For peacebuilding, modal shift presents both a risk and an opportunity. The risk is that declining ridership intensifies competition for remaining passengers, potentially exacerbating route conflicts. The opportunity is that a formalised, subsidised industry could stabilise fares and reverse modal shift, recapturing lost ridership while improving service quality. The Performance-Based Subsidy model directly addresses this dynamic: subsidies would be conditional on fare moderation,

ensuring that formalisation does not price the poorest commuters off the road. The human dimension of peace—drivers' dignity, commuters' safety, women's inclusion, and the reversal of modal shift—requires transparency and accountability. Chapter Seven examines how technology, including GPS tracking, electronic fare collection, and digital feedback platforms, can enable the transparency necessary for formalisation and peace.

Part III

Tools for Transformation

Chapter 7

Technology as an Enabler of Peace: Digital Transformation and Accountability

Throughout this monograph, I have argued that the path to peace in South Africa's minibus taxi industry requires a multi-faceted approach, addressing historical legacies, economic precarity, and the urgent need for professionalisation. In this chapter, I turn to a critical enabler that can bind these strands together: technology. Too often, discussions about technological innovation in the transport sector are siloed, focusing narrowly on efficiency or profit. My argument is different. I contend that digital transformation, if thoughtfully designed and equitably implemented, can be a powerful, non-coercive tool for peacebuilding, accountability, and the restoration of trust. It offers a pathway to move beyond the industry's entrenched informality—not through punitive enforcement, but by creating systems that make peace a more rational and profitable choice than conflict.

The persistent informality of the minibus taxi sector is both a cause and a consequence of its instability. The reliance on cash transactions, the absence of verifiable data on routes and revenues, and the lack of digital footprints create a fog of ambiguity where disputes fester and violence thrives. In this opaque environment, a disagreement over a route's profitability or an accusation of route invasion is often settled not by reference to objective data, but through threats, intimidation, and ultimately, force. The "regulatory vacuum" that I described in Chapter 1 is, in the digital age, also a data vacuum. This absence of transparent, shared information perpetuates a

culture of mistrust not only between rival associations but also between the industry and the state, and between operators and the commuting public.

Therefore, the strategic integration of technology is not a luxury add-on for a modernised industry; it is a foundational prerequisite for building peace. It functions by replacing ambiguity with clarity, rumour with data, and informal, often violent, enforcement mechanisms with transparent, accountable systems. The core objective is to use digital tools to create a verifiable record of the industry's operations—a single source of truth that can de-escalate disputes, empower commuters, and provide the state with the necessary evidence to justify and target its support effectively.

The first and most crucial application of technology lies in conflict prevention and route management. The primary catalyst for violence is the intense competition over lucrative routes, a competition exacerbated by the lack of formally recognised and digitally mapped territorial boundaries. Global positioning system (GPS) tracking technology presents a transformative solution. By equipping taxis with affordable GPS devices, associations and regulatory bodies can create accurate, real-time digital maps of officially allocated routes. This does not mean rigidly fossilising the network; digital systems can be dynamic, allowing for temporary adjustments based on road closures or special events through a formal, transparent process.

The power of this system lies in its objectivity. A dispute over whether a driver or association has illegally operated on a rival's route can be resolved by referring to the digital log rather than through a contest of threats. This transforms conflict resolution from a subjective, potentially violent confrontation into a neutral, evidence-based administrative process. Furthermore, these data are invaluable for urban planning. Municipalities can use aggregated, anonymised data on passenger pick-up and drop-off points to better understand mobility patterns, formally allocate routes based on actual demand rather than historical force, and plan integrated transport networks that include rather than marginalise the taxi industry.

Closely linked to GPS tracking is the transformative potential of digital financial systems. The industry's dependence on cash is a significant driver of insecurity and exploitation. Cash makes drivers and queue marshals targets for armed robbery. It facilitates the practice of *imali yesokisi*, not as a mere survival strategy but as a symptom of an opaque financial relationship between driver and owner that lacks accountability. Perhaps most critically, cash flows are nearly impossible to audit, making the industry resistant to formalisation and allowing powerful figures to obscure revenue and resist sharing it fairly.

The NLTIS Failure: Technology as Barrier Rather than Enabler

The National Land Transport Information System (NLTIS) was designed to be the technological backbone of taxi regulation. It would process operating licence applications, maintain a database of licenced operators, and enable efficient route allocation. In practice, the system has not functioned in Gauteng for at least ten years. The GPRE chairperson confirmed during an interview that the department relies on manual processes, creating backlogs of thousands of applications.

This technological failure has direct consequences for violence. Operators waiting years for licences cannot formalise. They cannot scrap old vehicles. They cannot access subsidies. They are forced to operate illegally, competing violently for passengers. Technology, in this context, is not an enabler of peace but a barrier. The system that was supposed to bring order has produced chaos.

Any new technological intervention—whether GPS tracking, digital payments, or commuter feedback platforms—must be designed with redundancy and fallback options. It cannot assume that the state's digital infrastructure will function reliably. Offline verification systems, paper backups, and decentralised data storage must be part of the architecture. The lesson of the NLTIS failure is that technology cannot be a single point of failure in a system where lives depend on regulation.

Lessons from Prior Cashless Pilots: Gauteng Tap-and-Ride Trial

The proposal for mandatory electronic fare collection is not without precedent in South Africa. The Gauteng Tap-and-Ride trial (2019-2021) offers valuable lessons for the seven-year road map presented in Chapter 11. The Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport, in partnership with a private fintech company, launched the Tap-and-Ride trial on three high-volume corridors: Soweto to Johannesburg CBD, Tembisa to Midrand, and Pretoria to Mamelodi. The system used contactless smart cards similar to those used on the Gautrain and municipal bus systems.

Commuters registered for free at taxi ranks, receiving a reloadable smart card. Each taxi participating in the trial was equipped with a tap-to-pay device. The Department subsidised the devices and provided a small fuel incentive to participating drivers.

The trial achieved approximately 8,000 daily active users at its peak in mid-2020. Two factors explain this relative success. First, the smart card did not require a smartphone, making it accessible to unbanked and low-income commuters. Second, the Department's direct subsidy reduced driver resistance, compensating for the slight delay introduced by digital processing.

However, the trial collapsed in 2021 for three reasons. First, the private fintech partner went into business rescue, and the Department could not find a replacement provider at short notice. Second, coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) lockdowns disrupted the trial, with ridership falling by 70% during Level 4 and Level 5 restrictions, and never fully recovering. Third, the Department's contract with the fintech partner had not included provisions for data ownership or continuity, meaning that when the partner failed, the entire transaction history—including valuable data on route demand and fare compliance—was lost.

Synthesised Lessons for the Seven-Year Road Map

These two pilots, while ultimately unsuccessful, offer five lessons that inform the electronic fare collection proposal in this monograph:

1. **Accessibility is non-negotiable.** Solutions requiring smartphones will exclude the poorest commuters, who constitute the industry's core ridership. Smart cards with offline capability and cash loading points are essential.
2. **Driver incentives must be aligned.** Digital payment systems will be resisted if they threaten drivers' ability to practice *imali yesokisi* or if they slow operations. The seven-year road map addresses this through the Livelihoods Stabilisation Fund (Chapter 6), which replaces daily targets with stable salaries, removing the incentive to hide earnings.
3. **Government backing is necessary but not sufficient.** Both pilots relied on private partners who ultimately withdrew. A sustainable system requires statutory backing and permanent institutional oversight—exactly what the Minibus Taxi Governance Council (Chapter 4) provides.
4. **Data governance must be specified in advance.** The loss of Tap-and-Ride's transaction data was preventable. The proposed council must have clear data ownership protocols and redundant storage.
5. **Pilots are not substitutes for systemic reform.** Neither TaxiApp nor Tap-and-Ride addressed the structural drivers of violence and precarity. Technology enabled formalisation but did not compel it. The seven-year road map, therefore, embeds e-ticketing within a broader framework of labour reform, subsidy provision, and institutional change.

Mandatory Electronic Fare Collection: The Single Most Effective Tool for Formalisation

The panel talk at the National Transport Conference made a bold claim: the single most effective tool for formalisation is mandatory electronic fare collection (e-ticketing). This claim requires justification.

Currently, the taxi industry operates almost entirely on cash. Cash makes drivers and queue marshals targets for armed robbery. It facilitates the practice of *imali yesokisi*—not as mere survival strategy but as a symptom of an opaque financial relationship that lacks accountability. Cash flows are nearly impossible to audit, making the industry resistant to formalisation and allowing powerful figures to obscure revenue.

The panel talk proposed a transformative alternative: government subsidies loaded directly onto a commuter's smart card, redeemable only within a formalised taxi network. The operator gets paid only if registered and compliant. This is not a punitive measure. It is a market-driven incentive to formalise.

How the System Would Work

1. **Commuter registration:** Commuters register for a transport smart card linked to their identity. Registration is free and accessible at taxi ranks, municipal offices, and online.
2. **Subsidy loading:** Government subsidies for low-income commuters are loaded directly onto the card. Commuters also load cash value for fares beyond the subsidy.
3. **Tap-and-go payment:** Commuters tap their card when boarding. The fare is deducted automatically. The operator's e-ticketing device records the transaction.
4. **Settlement:** Operators receive settlement for fares and subsidy claims through bank transfer, subject to verification of compliance with council standards (Peace Pledge, vehicle roadworthiness, driver certification).
5. **Data integration:** Transaction data flows to the Minibus Taxi Governance Council, providing real-time information on route demand, fare compliance, and operator revenue.

Benefits for Each Stakeholder

Stakeholder	Benefit
Commuters	No need to carry cash; subsidy delivered directly; transparent fares
Drivers	Reduced robbery risk; no disputes over change; verifiable earnings record

Stakeholder	Benefit
Owners	Auditable revenue; protection against driver theft; access to formal credit
Associations	Reliable levy collection; data for route planning; compliance verification
Government	Subsidy targeting; tax compliance; data for transport planning

Implementation Phasing

The panel talk proposed phasing consistent with the seven-year road map:

- **Year 1-2:** Pilot on three high-conflict corridors in Gauteng, Western Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal
- **Year 2-3:** Rollout on all subsidised routes
- **Year 3-4:** Full national coverage, with cash accepted only with a surcharge (e.g., 10% premium) to incentivise digital adoption while maintaining access for unbanked commuters.

Addressing the Unbanked

A critical concern is commuters without bank accounts or smartphone access. The panel talk addressed this through:

- **Offline-capable cards:** The smart card works without Internet connectivity, syncing when the taxi returns to the rank
- **Cash loading points:** Commuters can load value onto cards at taxi ranks, spaza shops, and post offices using cash
- **Zero-rating:** Data for the e-ticketing app is zero-rated (no data cost) on all mobile networks.

The result is a system that includes rather than excludes the poorest commuters, while creating the transparency necessary for formalisation.

The adoption of mobile money platforms and digital fare collection systems can directly address these issues. When commuters pay via a quick response (QR) code, a mobile wallet, or a dedicated transport card, every transaction is recorded. This creates a transparent financial trail that benefits every

stakeholder. For drivers, it reduces the risk of robbery and provides a clear record of daily takings, protecting them from exploitative owners and ensuring that they receive their fair share. For owners and associations, it simplifies revenue management, provides accurate data for business planning, and builds a financial history that can be used to access formal credit for vehicle upgrades. For the state, digital payments create a verifiable record of income, which is a necessary precursor to any targeted subsidy programme, ensuring that public funds are allocated based on accurate data and are not siphoned off.

This leads to the third critical application: digital platforms for commuter engagement and accountability. For too long, commuters have been passive subjects of the industry's instability, their voices ignored and their safety compromised. Technology can fundamentally shift this power dynamic, empowering passengers to become active participants in shaping a safer, more responsive service. Simple, accessible tools can make a profound difference. A dedicated WhatsApp line or a USSD code for reporting reckless driving, overcrowding, or safety concerns allows commuters to provide real-time feedback directly to associations and regulators.

This feedback should be integrated into a public-facing rating system. Imagine a platform where commuters can view association and driver ratings based on safety, punctuality, and vehicle condition. This would introduce a powerful market incentive for good behaviour. Associations with high ratings would attract more passengers, directly linking professionalism to profitability. This model of commuter-powered accountability, successfully used in various service industries worldwide, aligns perfectly with the "taxis for people" mindset that I advocated for in Chapter 5. It moves the industry's focus from competing for territory to competing on service quality, a shift that is essential for lasting peace.

Furthermore, these digital feedback mechanisms provide invaluable data for the proposed National Taxi Peace and Development Authority (NTPDA). Instead of relying on sporadic crime reports, the NTPDA could use data analytics to identify emerging conflict hotspots—a specific rank where complaints

about intimidation are spiking, or a route where reports of dangerous driving are clustering. This allows for proactive, early intervention before a minor grievance escalates into a violent confrontation. Technology, in this sense, becomes an early warning system for peacekeepers.

Of course, the implementation of this digital transformation is fraught with challenges that must be acknowledged and strategically managed. The first is the digital divide. Assuming universal smartphone ownership or data affordability would be a critical error. Solutions must be low-cost, low-tech, and accessible. USSD codes, which work on any basic mobile phone, are essential. Partnerships with mobile network operators to zero-rate data for specific transport apps could also overcome the affordability barrier.

The second, more significant challenge is resistance from within the industry. Digital transparency threatens those who benefit from the current opacity—whether they are owners who exploit drivers, association leaders who control routes through patronage, or criminals who extort cash from ranks. This resistance emphasises why technology cannot be imposed unilaterally. It must be introduced through a process of co-creation and demonstration, showing drivers and ethical owners how these tools can protect their incomes and their lives. Piloting programmes in willing associations and showcasing their success is crucial for building trust and generating organic demand for change.

Data privacy and security constitute a third major challenge. Commuters and operators will rightly be wary of surveillance. A robust legal and ethical framework must be developed to govern who has access to data, for what purpose, and for how long. The principle must be that data are used to empower and protect, not to punish and control. Aggregated, anonymised data should be used for planning, while individual data should be protected and only used with consent for specific purposes, such as resolving a reported incident.

Finally, none of this is possible without state support. The government's role is not to build these systems itself but to create an enabling environment. This includes developing a

clear regulatory framework for data use in transport, investing in the digital infrastructure that makes these tools viable, and—most importantly—using its procurement and subsidy power to incentivise adoption. The Performance-Based Subsidy model proposed in Chapter 6 should include specific incentives for associations that adopt digital tracking, digital payments, and transparent commuter feedback systems.

In conclusion, technology is not a silver bullet. It cannot, on its own, resolve the deep-seated economic and social drivers of conflict that I have detailed in this monograph. However, to dismiss it as peripheral would be a profound mistake. Digital tools provide the necessary infrastructure for peace. They create the transparency without which accountability is impossible. They provide the data without which targeted state support is unviable. They offer the platforms without which commuter empowerment is merely a theoretical concept. By replacing the fog of informality with the clarity of data, we can dismantle the architecture of conflict and build a new, more resilient architecture for peace. The journey towards a professional, peaceful, and dignified minibus taxi industry must be a digital one, for in the 21st century, digital tools are not merely about information; they are about justice, accountability and, ultimately, peace. Technology provides the infrastructure for transparency, but transparency alone cannot build peace. Chapter Eight examines the role of civil society and community engagement, arguing that sustainable peace requires the active participation of actors beyond the state—community organisations, academic institutions, religious bodies, and commuter groups.

Chapter 8

Beyond the State: The Role of Civil Society and Community Engagement

While the state and the minibus taxi industry associations are undeniably the primary actors in the drama of conflict resolution, their efforts alone will not be sufficient to build a lasting peace. The complexities of the violence, rooted as they are in economic precarity, social grievances, and historical injustices, demand a more comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach. A sustainable peace framework must, therefore, look beyond the state to recognise and empower the crucial role of civil society and community engagement (Jessop, 2008). These actors—from local community groups and NGOs to academic institutions and religious bodies—possess a unique capacity for mediation, trust-building, and grassroots mobilisation that formal government structures often lack. This chapter argues that a true and lasting peace will only be achieved when these diverse voices are not just heard, but are formally integrated into the peacebuilding process, serving as catalysts for dialogue and accountability. For too long, the narrative of taxi violence has been framed as a binary conflict between the state and the industry, with ordinary citizens often reduced to a footnote. This is a profound mistake. The communities served by the industry, and indeed those that host taxi ranks and routes, are the ultimate stakeholders. Their lived experience of both the benefits and the costs of the industry's operations is invaluable. By centring the community, we can shift the conversation from one of control and enforcement to one of collaboration and shared responsibility (Alexander, 2002). This means moving away from top-down solutions and embracing a more participatory, bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are particularly well-positioned to play a vital role. They are often

embedded in the very communities most affected by the violence, giving them a deep understanding of the local context and the trust of community members. They can act as neutral third-party mediators in conflicts between rival associations, providing a safe space for dialogue and negotiation when formal channels have failed. Their work in conflict resolution is not just theoretical; it is a practical, on-the-ground effort to de-escalate tensions before they spiral into violence. For example, a community-based organisation might host a series of workshops for local taxi associations, focusing on conflict de-escalation skills and fostering a shared sense of community. By working directly with drivers, marshals, and operators, these organisations can address the human dimensions of the conflict, such as the psychological toll of precarity and the normalisation of aggression. The role of academic institutions, such as the University of Fort Hare, where I have conducted much of my research, cannot be overstated. Universities can serve as a neutral, trusted space for dialogue and research. They can provide objective analysis of the industry's challenges, inform policy decisions with evidence, and train the next generation of transport policymakers and researchers. My own work, for instance, has demonstrated the importance of bringing together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in a neutral environment to discuss a shared vision for the industry. This is not just about producing reports; it is about facilitating a process of learning and co-creation. Universities can also partner with taxi associations to provide professional training programmes, thereby directly contributing to the formalisation and professionalisation of the sector. Beyond formal CSOs, the power of community engagement lies in its capacity to hold the industry accountable at the grassroots level. My concept of a "taxis for people" mindset, which I have explored in a previous chapter, can only be fully realised with the active participation of commuters and local residents. This can take many forms. A community policing model, for instance, could see formal partnerships established between taxi ranks and local police forums, allowing community members to report incidents and work with law enforcement to address safety concerns. This would build trust between the public and the industry, and it would provide a crucial layer of informal oversight. When the community

is empowered to act as a watchdog, the industry is more likely to self-regulate and to hold its members accountable for their actions. The international experience offers valuable lessons in this regard. In many parts of Africa, community groups have played an instrumental role in managing informal transport systems. In Ghana, for example, local community leaders and elders are often called upon to mediate disputes between taxi drivers and passengers, or between rival groups (Azungah, 2019). These informal, trust-based mechanisms are often more effective than a formal, bureaucratic process. We can learn from these models and adapt them to the South African context, formalising the role of community-based mediators and giving them the necessary resources and authority to carry out their work. A key component of this engagement is the creation of platforms for dialogue. This goes beyond the traditional public meeting, which can often be dominated by a few voices. We need to create innovative spaces for communication, such as online forums, community radio programmes, and local committees dedicated to transport issues and involving residents' and ratepayers' associations. Crucially, local ratepayers associations should have a formal voice in taxi governance. They are directly affected by taxi behaviour in their wards—illegal stopping at intersections, blocked traffic flow, excessive noise, congestion, and safety concerns. Their members are also the constituents who interact most frequently with taxi drivers, either as motorists who share the road or as passengers who depend on the service. Their perspectives are, therefore, invaluable for assessing driver behaviour, identifying problematic routes, and rewarding good conduct.

One powerful mechanism for public involvement is the concept of "earned recognition"—a framework in which taxi operators who demonstrate consistently good behaviour are granted preferential access over those who do not. Under this framework, local ratepayers associations, in collaboration with ward councillors and the Minibus Taxi Governance Council, would evaluate operator performance based on criteria such as:

- Compliance with traffic laws (no illegal U-turns, intersection blocking, emergency lane usage, or pavement driving)
- Adherence to designated loading and unloading zones
- Vehicle roadworthiness and cleanliness

- Driver conduct and professionalism
- Responsiveness to community complaints
- Participation in community engagement initiatives.

Operators who meet or exceed these standards would be recognised as "preferred operators" within their wards. They would be entitled to preferential treatment in route allocations, access to rank facilities, and eligibility for subsidies and fleet modernisation grants. Conversely, operators who consistently violate standards—who endanger the public, disrupt traffic, or generate complaints—would face escalating sanctions, including warnings, fines, suspension of route rights, and ultimately, exclusion from operating in that ward.

This approach creates a powerful market-based incentive for good behaviour. When the public—through their ratepayers associations—has a direct say in which operators are recognised and rewarded, the industry is compelled to respond to community expectations. It also transforms the relationship between taxi operators and the communities they serve: rather than being antagonists, operators become partners in maintaining safe, orderly, and efficient transport. The "earned recognition" framework aligns the interests of operators, commuters, motorists, and residents around a shared goal of professionalisation and accountability.

The implementation of such a framework requires careful design to ensure fairness and prevent abuse. The criteria for evaluation must be transparent, objective, and consistently applied. The evaluation process must include mechanisms for operator appeal and independent review. And the recognition must be meaningful—preferential access, subsidies, and grants must be sufficiently valuable to incentivise compliance. However, with these safeguards in place, the framework offers a powerful tool for community-centred governance that empowers ratepayers and residents while providing clear incentives for professionalisation.

Furthermore, the involvement of ratepayers associations in taxi governance would help to address the perception that the industry operates with impunity. When the public sees

that their feedback is acted upon—that poorly performing operators are sanctioned, and that well-performing operators are rewarded—trust in both the industry and the regulatory system is strengthened. This is essential for building the social licence that the industry needs to operate effectively and for sustaining the long-term peace that this monograph envisions.

These platforms would allow for a two-way flow of information, enabling commuters and residents to voice their concerns and enabling the industry to explain its challenges and to share its progress.

This would help to dismantle the stereotypes that have long plagued the industry and to foster a more nuanced public understanding of its complexities. This is not to say that the role of civil society and community engagement is without its challenges. These actors often lack the resources, funding, and formal authority to make a significant impact. They can also face resistance from entrenched interests within the industry and from a state that is often reluctant to cede control. To overcome these obstacles, a concerted effort is needed to build the capacity of these groups. This could involve providing them with grant funding, training on mediation and conflict resolution, and a seat at the table in formal policy discussions. The proposed National Taxi Peace and Development Authority, for instance, must have a formal mechanism for including representatives from civil society and community groups, ensuring that their voices are not an afterthought but a central part of the decision-making process. In conclusion, the path to peace in the minibus taxi industry cannot be paved solely by politicians and industry leaders. It requires the active and sustained participation of all stakeholders, and particularly those at the grassroots level. By formally recognising the role of civil society and community engagement, and by providing them with the necessary resources and authority, we can build a peace framework that is not just sustainable but is also resilient. The power of a community that is empowered to participate in its own future is immense. When people feel that they have a stake in the peace, they will work to protect it. It is through this collaborative, human-centred approach that we can begin to heal the wounds of the past and build a future for

the industry that is defined not by conflict, but by collaboration, dignity, and a shared sense of purpose. The vision is clear: a truly peaceful and professional industry will be one that is rooted in, and accountable to, the very communities which it serves.

The Limits of Associations: Evidence from East London

The Master's research found that taxi associations in East London had virtually no control over their members' employment practices. The branch secretary of the Mdantsane Uncedo Taxi Association stated: "As an association, we really have no say on how the taxi owners run their business. I do not know how each taxi owner agrees with the taxi driver on terms of employment. It is an individual employer who employs someone wherever he employs them" (Branch Secretary, Mdantsane Uncedo Taxi Association, 2013).

This finding complicates the proposal to empower associations as partners in formalisation. If associations cannot regulate their own members, they cannot be relied upon to enforce industry-wide standards. The conditional statutory power proposal must, therefore, include capacity-building for associations. They need training in labour law, financial management, and dispute resolution. They need resources to monitor member compliance. And they need legal authority to sanction members who violate codes of conduct.

Empowerment without capacity-building is merely delegation of dysfunction. The Minibus Taxi Governance Council must, therefore, include a dedicated Association Capacity-Building Unit that provides training, technical assistance, and compliance auditing.

Reclaiming the Ranks: Physical and Administrative Repossession

The panel talk at the National Transport Conference emphasised that peace cannot be negotiated while violent actors control physical territory. The taxi rank is the site where industry governance is most visibly contested. Ranks controlled through intimidation—where only members of a particular association

may load passengers, where non-member taxis are vandalised, where commuters who complain are threatened—represent state failure at its most concrete.

The panel talk proposed that municipalities, in partnership with legitimate industry bodies, must physically and administratively reclaim taxi ranks. This means:

Physical reclamation:

- Deploying municipal police to ranks to enforce access rules
- Removing structures (containers, informal booths) used by associations to assert territorial control
- Installing closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras monitored by the Minibus Taxi Governance Council
- Creating safe zones where commuters can wait without association interference.

Administrative reclamation:

- Publishing transparent route allocation registers specifying which associations have loading rights at which ranks and during which hours
- Establishing a formal, appealable process for challenging allocations
- Requiring all rank users to display council-issued identification
- Implementing a complaint system for commuters to report intimidation.

Repossession as a last resort:

Where an association has established control through violence, the rank should be repossessed. The council would issue a notice of repossession, the association would have thirty days to vacate, and the rank would be reallocated through a formal, competitive process open to all compliant associations.

The panel talk drew a direct line between rank reclamation and violence reduction. When the state cedes physical control of public spaces to private actors, violence becomes the only mechanism for resolving disputes. When the state reclaims those spaces, it creates the conditions for peaceful dispute resolution.

Conditional Statutory Power for Associations

The challenge of association governance is that associations have power—the power to discipline members, allocate routes internally, and collect levies—but that power currently rests on coercion rather than law. The panel talk proposed conditional statutory power as the solution.

Under the MTGC framework, an association that meets specific conditions would receive statutory recognition, including the legal authority to:

- Collect levies (enforceable through debt collection procedures, not violence)
- Mediate internal disputes (with council oversight and appeal rights)
- Represent members in route allocation proceedings
- Enforce association rules (subject to council review for compliance with constitutional rights).

There are three conditions, as outlined in Chapter 4:

1. **Audited financial statements** submitted annually to the council, with penalties for non-compliance including suspension of levy-collection authority
2. **Demonstrated capacity to expel members implicated in violence**, evidenced by expulsion records and cooperation with POCA prosecutions
3. **Adherence to council rulings**, with an appeals mechanism for associations that believe that a ruling is erroneous.

This is not punishment. It is a framework for transition. The goal is to create a ladder of professionalisation that associations can climb at their own pace, with support at each rung. The panel talk emphasised that the state must provide capacity-building assistance—training in financial management, governance, and dispute resolution—to help associations to meet the conditions.

The state cannot build peace alone. Civil society organisations, academic institutions, religious bodies, and community groups possess unique capacities for mediation, trust-building, and grassroots mobilisation that formal government structures lack. The East London research

revealed that associations have little control over members' employment practices, indicating that empowerment without capacity-building is merely delegation of dysfunction. The conditional statutory power proposal addresses this: associations that meet conditions receive legal authority, but those that fail have devolved powers suspended. Reclaiming taxi ranks—physically and administratively—is a prerequisite for peace. When the state cedes physical control of public spaces to private actors, violence becomes the only mechanism for resolving disputes. When the state reclaims those spaces, it creates conditions for peaceful resolution. Community policing models, commuter listening forums, and independent evaluation can hold the industry accountable when the state cannot or will not. The proposed Minibus Taxi Governance Council must include formal mechanisms for civil society representation, ensuring that community voices are not an afterthought but central to decision-making.

Civil society engagement and rank reclamation prepare the ground for professionalisation. Chapter Nine outlines a comprehensive framework for training, certification, and codes of conduct that will transform taxi driving from a survival strategy into a profession.

Chapter 9

The Path to Professionalisation: Training, Certification, and Codes of Conduct

The pervasive violence and instability that have long plagued South Africa's minibus taxi industry are not merely the result of economic and social pressures; they are also a consequence of the industry's fundamental lack of formalisation and professional standards. For too long, the sector has operated on the fringes of the formal economy, without the rigorous oversight, structured training, and clear codes of conduct that define other public transport sectors. My analysis has consistently argued that this informality is a key driver of conflict, fostering an environment where accountability is weak and where a culture of aggression can take root. To build a sustainable peace, we must, therefore, embark on a comprehensive journey of professionalisation (Govender & Allopi, 2006). This chapter will provide a detailed blueprint for this transformation, outlining how a new system of training, certification, and codes of conduct can be implemented to elevate the industry from a site of chaos to a beacon of service excellence and dignity. The current state of affairs is one where drivers and operators are largely self-taught, with no standardised training on customer service, conflict de-escalation, or even basic road safety beyond the requirements for a standard driving licence. This lack of professional development is not a reflection of the individuals themselves, but of a systemic failure to invest in human capital. A driver's job is incredibly complex, requiring not only exceptional driving skills but also the ability to navigate dense urban traffic, manage difficult passengers, handle cash, and, in many cases, de-escalate potentially violent situations. To expect individuals to perform these tasks without

formal training is not only unrealistic but also irresponsible. The cornerstone of my proposed professionalisation framework is the establishment of a National Driver and Operator Certification Programme. This programme, which would be managed by a restructured, independent authority, would be mandatory for all drivers and operators within the industry. It would go far beyond a simple driving test, offering a comprehensive curriculum designed to address the specific challenges and nuances of the minibus taxi sector. The curriculum could be developed in partnership with existing educational institutions, such as TVET colleges, and industry experts, ensuring that it is both academically rigorous and practically relevant. The curriculum would be divided into several key modules. First, a Professional Ethics and Customer Service module would be designed to instil a culture of respect, courtesy, and professionalism (Lister & Dhunpath, 2016). This would cover topics such as passenger rights, communication skills, and the importance of a positive public image. The goal would be to shift the mindset from a survivalist, competitive one to a service-oriented one. A second, and perhaps most critical, module would focus on Conflict Resolution and De-escalation. This would provide drivers and operators with the practical skills needed to manage disputes, both with other drivers and with passengers, without resorting to aggression or violence. Role-playing scenarios, case studies, and psychological training would be used to equip them with the tools to navigate high-stress situations calmly and effectively. A third module would focus on Financial Literacy and Business Management, empowering operators and drivers to manage their finances more effectively, understand their costs, and plan for the long term. This is crucial for addressing the economic precarity that I have previously highlighted as a root cause of violence. Finally, a Safety and First Aid module would ensure that drivers are not just skilled at driving, but are also prepared to handle medical emergencies and to contribute to a safer road environment for everyone. The certification programme would be linked to a new Code of Conduct for the industry. This code, developed through a collaborative process involving all stakeholders, would set out clear, enforceable standards of

behaviour. It would cover everything from vehicle cleanliness and driver attire to the protocol for resolving disputes and the prohibition of violence. The code would be more than just a document; it would be a living framework for accountability. Violations of the code would result in a series of escalating consequences, from mandatory refresher courses to the suspension or revocation of a driver's or operator's licence. This would provide a much-needed mechanism for self-regulation, allowing the industry to hold its own members accountable and to weed out the bad actors who tarnish the reputation of the entire sector. To ensure that the professionalisation framework is not seen as a punitive measure, but as a pathway to dignity and opportunity, it must be linked to tangible benefits. My proposal of a National Register of Certified Drivers and Operators would serve as a crucial component of this. Certification would not just be a piece of paper; it would be a professional qualification that unlocks a series of advantages. For instance, certified drivers could be given preferential access to the new subsidy programme, to loan facilities for vehicle upgrades, and to membership in reputable, well-managed associations. This would create a powerful incentive for professionalisation, encouraging both existing and new entrants to the industry to invest in their own development. The implementation of this framework would be a monumental task, but it is not without precedent. The aviation and maritime industries, amongst others, rely on similar systems of certification and professional standards to ensure safety and service quality. We can learn from their models and adapt them to the unique context of the minibus taxi industry. The process would require a significant investment in infrastructure, training facilities, and administrative capacity. It would also require a sustained commitment from the government, the industry, and the public. A phased approach would be most effective, starting with a pilot programme in one or two high-conflict provinces, before a gradual national rollout. This would allow for lessons to be learned and for the framework to be refined based on on-the-ground experience. Finally, we must address the issue of compliance and enforcement. A new independent authority, as I have suggested, would be responsible for overseeing the

certification programme and enforcing the code of conduct. This authority must be free from political interference and must have the trust of both the industry and the public. It would be empowered to conduct regular audits, investigate complaints, and impose sanctions for non-compliance. Its existence would send a clear message that the days of impunity are over and that a new era of accountability has begun. In conclusion, the professionalisation of the minibus taxi industry is not a utopian ideal; it is an achievable and necessary step towards a future of peace and stability. By investing in a comprehensive system of training, certification, and codes of conduct, we can equip the industry's workforce with the skills and mindset that they need to succeed. This will not only improve service quality and public safety but, more importantly, it will address the human dimensions of the conflict, restoring a sense of dignity, pride, and professionalism to a vital sector of our economy. The path to a peaceful and prosperous future for the industry begins with the recognition that its greatest asset is not its vehicles, but its people. By investing in them, we invest in the future of our nation.

The Representation Crisis: SATAWU and the Unorganised Workforce

The Doctoral research documented systematic intimidation of workers who attempt to join unions. The Gauteng Taxi Sector Coordinator for SATAWU explained: "Intimidation... because some of them you'll recruit them and then they will tell don't inform my boss that I belong to a trade union. Reason being, when I recruit here after recruiting here, I must establish a structure, a workshop steward to represent the workers in this workplace. You must recruit from workplace" (SATAWU Gauteng Taxi Sector Coordinator, Interview, 2018).

The coordinator identified specific ranks where intimidation is particularly severe: "Noord is very troublesome. We can't break the barrier... The only shop steward we are having is down there, in Bree. We do have a shop steward in Bree. And then we do have a shop steward in Bara. Noord, and also in Faraday, there is a big intimidation. We do have members, but the intimidation" (Ibid.).

This evidence suggests that professionalisation cannot rely on trade unions alone to organise workers. The intimidation is too severe, and SATAWU's capacity to overcome it is limited. The Driver and Operator Certification programme must, therefore, include a confidential, independent mechanism for workers to report violations without fear of retaliation. This could be a hotline operated by the Minibus Taxi Governance Council, with guaranteed anonymity and protection against dismissal for workers who report abuses.

Closing the Skills Gap: From Drivers to Managers

The panel talk at the National Transport Conference made a striking observation: the taxi industry generates an estimated R90 billion annually. It should be managed by professionals with expertise in transport planning, data analytics, financial management, and organisational governance. Instead, even the largest associations operate with minimal administrative capacity, often relying on volunteers or political appointees who lack relevant qualifications.

The skills gap is not accidental. It is a consequence of persistent informality, which has prevented the industry from attracting and retaining professional managers. Ambitious transport planners do not seek employment with taxi associations because the working conditions are uncertain, the pay is irregular, and the association's future may be disrupted by violence at any time.

The Professional Development Fund

The panel talk proposed a jointly funded programme between government and the industry to close this gap. The Minibus Taxi Governance Council would administer a Professional Development Fund, capitalised by:

- A levy on formalised associations (e.g., 1% of levy collections)
- Matched funding from government (National Skills Fund, Transport Education and Training Authority)
- Contributions from development finance institutions.

The fund would sponsor:

1. **Diploma and certificate programmes** in transport management at TVET colleges, with places reserved for association staff and aspiring managers.
2. **Secondments** of qualified transport planners from municipal authorities to associations, with salaries shared between the fund and the municipality.
3. **An internship programme** for university graduates in transport economics, data science, and public policy, placed with associations for two-year terms.

Mandatory Certification for Association Leaders

The panel talk added a requirement that was not present in the original monograph: association executive committee members should be required to hold certification. Just as drivers require certification to operate a taxi, association leaders require certification to manage a route or rank.

The certification curriculum for association leaders would include:

- Financial governance and auditing requirements
- Conflict resolution and mediation
- Labour law and employment relationships
- Regulatory compliance and route allocation procedures
- Commuter rights and customer service standards.

Certification would be renewable every three years, with continuing education requirements. Leaders who fail to maintain certification would be ineligible for association office.

The panel talk acknowledged that this requirement would face resistance. Leaders who have operated without formal training for decades may see certification as an imposition. The response is twofold: first, a grandfathering provision allowing experienced leaders to challenge the certification exam without completing coursework; second, a transitional period of three years during which uncertified leaders may continue to serve while working towards certification.

Professionalisation is the bridge between informality and dignity. The National Driver and Operator Certification

Programme, linked to a Code of Conduct with escalating sanctions, would transform taxi driving from a survival strategy into a recognised profession. The representation crisis documented in this chapter—systematic intimidation of workers who attempt to join unions—requires a confidential, independent reporting mechanism. The Professional Development Fund addresses the skills gap: the industry generates R90 billion annually but is managed by volunteers and political appointees who lack transport planning qualifications. Mandatory certification for association leaders, with grandfathering provisions and a three-year transitional period, will face resistance but is essential for institutional legitimacy. The aviation and maritime industries demonstrate that certification systems work; the taxi industry deserves no less. However, professionalisation cannot be imposed. It must be linked to tangible benefits: preferential access to subsidies, loan facilities for vehicle upgrades, and legal recognition. When drivers and operators see certification as a pathway to opportunity rather than a punitive requirement, uptake will follow.

Professionalisation provides the human capital for reform, but implementation requires a coherent timeline. Chapter Ten presents a seven-year road map from emergency violence reduction through systemisation to full integration with the national transport network.

Part IV

The Road Map and the Vision

Chapter 10

Implementing the Peace Framework: A Step-by-Step Road Map

Having established the foundational pillars of a sustainable peace framework—economic reform, human-centred engagement, technological integration, and professionalisation—we must now confront the most significant challenge of all: turning these ambitious proposals into a tangible, actionable plan.

A Seven-Year Road Map: From Emergency to Integration

The panel talk at the National Transport Conference proposed a concrete, phased implementation timeline spanning seven years. This road map replaces the earlier three-phase proposal. The timeline reflects the scale of the challenge and the need to sequence interventions so that each phase builds on the achievements of the last.

Year One: The Emergency Phase

The first year prioritises violence reduction and foundational institutional development. Specific actions include:

1. **Establishment of the Minibus Taxi Governance Council.** The Minister of Transport issues a notice establishing the council under Section 4 of the National Land Transport Act, with an interim secretariat housed in the Department of Transport pending permanent staffing.
2. **Multi-agency POCA task force activation.** The Hawks, NPA, SARS, and the Department of Transport sign a memorandum of understanding committing resources to taxi violence investigations. Priority corridors are identified based on fatality data, and task force teams are deployed.

3. **Immediate formation of cooperatives.** The Department of Small Business Development, in partnership with SANTACO and the NTA, launches a Cooperative Registration Drive, offering free registration assistance and a six-month waiver of cooperative fees for taxi associations that convert.
4. **Rank reclamation**. Municipalities in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Western Cape publish route allocation registers for the twenty highest-conflict ranks and deploy municipal police to enforce access rules.
5. **Emergency peace summits in all nine provinces.** Modelled on the Western Cape summit, these summits secure signed commitments to non-violence from provincial and local associations, with the council recording commitments and establishing monitoring protocols.
6. **Interim Governance Council operations.** The council begins mediating disputes, issuing rulings on route allocations, and referring violence incidents for POCA investigation.

Year Two: Systemisation Phase Begins

Year two scales the pilots and begins embedding the framework institutionally.

1. **Nationwide rollout of driver certification.** All drivers on subsidised routes are required to hold a valid certificate by the end of the year. The certificate is linked to a biometric identity card that also serves as an electronic fare collection token for commuters.
2. **Mandatory electronic fare collection (e-ticketing)** introduced on all routes where the council has formalised route allocations. Subsidies are redeemable only through the e-ticketing system.
3. **Scholar transport contracts transferred** to certified cooperatives, with the Department of Basic Education funding dedicated scholar trips separate from general revenue.
4. **Gender measures implemented:** women's seats on council and association executives filled; women-only services piloted in Cape Town and Durban.
5. **Green Taxi Fund operational**, offering concessional loans for electric vehicle conversion. Initial rollout targets 500 EVs on inner-city routes in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban.

Year Three: Systemisation Phase Continues

1. **Simplified presumptive tax regime** linked to e-ticketing data replaces standardised business taxation for taxi operators. Operators using electronic payments pay a flat percentage of digital turnover, eliminating manual record-keeping.
2. **Professional Development Fund** disburses first scholarships and sponsors first internships.
3. **Full integration of e-hailing platforms** into council licencing framework, with levies flowing into the Transport Transition Fund.

Year Four: Systemisation Phase Completes

1. **National Public Transport Service Charter** developed with civil society consultation, published and ratified by Parliament. The charter establishes legally enforceable commuter rights: safety, fare transparency, timely service, and complaint resolution.
2. **First independent evaluation** of the framework, conducted by a university consortium, with findings presented to Parliament and recommendations for course correction.
3. **Full national coverage of e-ticketing and certification** achieved.

Year Five: Integration Phase Begins

1. **Route allocations redesigned** to position formalised taxis as the feeder network for BRT spines. Taxi cooperatives sign service contracts with BRT operating companies, with revenue-sharing from integrated ticketing.
2. **Energy transition accelerated:** 30% of taxis on major urban corridors are electric by the end of Year Five.
3. **Second independent evaluation.**

Year Six: Integration Phase Continues

1. **All 257 municipal transport authorities** operating under the council's framework, with devolved powers for local dispute resolution.
2. **Full integration into the National Transport Network.** Taxi cooperatives are recognised as formal public transport operators with the same legal status and protections as rail and bus.
3. **Third independent evaluation.**

Year Seven: Transition to Permanent Status

1. **Final evaluation** and transition to permanent institutional status for the council.
2. **Adoption of a National Public Transport Service Charter** with civil society, establishing enforceable commuter rights.
3. **Large-scale energy transition** complete: 60% of taxis on urban corridors electric.
4. **Commencement of the next seven-year cycle**, focused on continuous improvement and adaptation to emerging challenges (autonomous vehicles, climate adaptation, demographic shifts).

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Course Correction

The road map includes provision for independent evaluation at Years 4, 5, and 7. Each evaluation will assess:

- **Violence reduction** (measured by taxi-related homicides and reported assaults)
- **Formalisation progress** (percentage of operators using e-ticketing, holding certification, registered as cooperatives)
- **Commuter outcomes** (satisfaction surveys, modal shift data)
- **Labour conditions** (wage data, contract coverage, benefit access).

Findings will be published and presented to the Minibus Taxi Governance Council and Parliament, with the council required to respond to recommendations within ninety days.

Addressing Resistance

The road map will face resistance. Some association leaders benefit from the current disorder. Some politicians are wary of ceding influence. Some bureaucrats are reluctant to restructure existing institutions. The response is threefold:

1. **POCA enforcement** removes violent actors who refuse to comply.
2. **Incentives (subsidies, training, contracts)** reward compliance.
3. **Transparent monitoring** builds public pressure for reform.

The road map is ambitious. It assumes political will that has historically been lacking, industry cooperation that has not always been forthcoming, and funding commitments that will require

difficult budget choices. But the alternative—continued violence, continued precarity, continued state failure—is more costly in both human and economic terms. The road map is not a guarantee but a plan. Implementation determines success.

Evaluation Metrics: Learning from Past Failures

The failure of previous interventions can be attributed, in part, to the absence of rigorous evaluation. The TRP was implemented without baseline data on vehicle condition, operating licence status, or violence rates. When it failed, there was no systematic assessment of why. The Sectoral Determination was introduced without monitoring of compliance. When it was ignored, there was no enforcement mechanism to correct course.

The seven-year road map, therefore, includes embedded evaluation at every phase. Specific metrics include:

1. **Violence reduction:** Taxi-related homicides and assaults, disaggregated by province and route, with baseline data from 2020–2025.
2. **Formalisation progress:** Percentage of operators with valid operating licences, percentage of vehicles roadworthy, percentage of drivers with employment contracts.
3. **Labour conditions:** Average driver income, percentage with UIF registration, average hours worked per week.
4. **Commuter outcomes:** Satisfaction surveys, reported incidents of harassment or violence, modal shift data.

These metrics should be collected by an independent evaluator—a university consortium or civil society organisation—and published annually. The Minibus Taxi Governance Council should be required to respond publicly to evaluation findings within ninety days, with corrective action plans where targets are missed.

The seven-year road map is ambitious but necessary. Year One's emergency interventions—the MTGC, POCA task force, cooperative formation, rank reclamation, and provincial peace summits—address immediate violence while building institutional foundations. Years Two to Four's systemisation phase scales what works: nationwide certification, mandatory e-ticketing, scholar transport reform, gender measures, and the

Green Taxi Fund. Years Five to Seven's integration phase embeds formalised taxis as feeder networks for BRT spines, integrates all municipal transport authorities under the council's framework, and transitions the council to permanent status. Independent evaluation at Years Four, Five, and Seven enables course correction. The road map will face resistance. Some association leaders benefit from the current disorder. Some politicians are wary of ceding influence. Some bureaucrats are reluctant to restructure existing institutions. The response is threefold: POCA enforcement removes violent actors who refuse to comply; incentives (subsidies, training, contracts) reward compliance; transparent monitoring builds public pressure for reform. The road map is not a guarantee but a plan. Implementation determines success.

The road map provides the timeline, but transformation requires ethical commitment. Chapter Eleven concludes the monograph with a synthesis and vision, arguing that the taxi industry is a mirror of South Africa itself and that to transform it is to affirm that violence is not destiny.

Chapter 11

The Ethical Imperative and the Future of Urban Mobility: Synthesis and Vision

The preceding chapters have meticulously dissected the South African minibus taxi industry, establishing it not merely as a functional failure but as a profound paradox: an indispensable economic engine, vital for urban life, yet simultaneously a crucible of violence, regulatory anarchy, and institutionalised labour exploitation. The analysis moved from the deep, complex roots in apartheid's spatial and legislative legacies (Chapter 1) to the global parallels in Nairobi, Accra, and Manila, demonstrating that the endemic violence is a highly acute, yet ultimately non-exceptional, manifestation of governance failure at the intersection of urban informality and state capacity (Chapter 2). Subsequent analyses have explored the proposed policy blueprint—from the Route-Based Management Company (RBMC) model to the Mandatory Integrated E-Ticketing System (MIETS)—as practical tools for intervention. This concluding synthesis chapter argues that the successful transformation of the sector requires more than policy and technology; it demands a fundamental ethical and philosophical direction change by the state and civil society: a recognition that the provision of dignified, safe, and reliable public transport is a non-negotiable public good, and that the labour required to deliver it must be accorded professional status and security. This chapter synthesises the findings to articulate a comprehensive, long-term vision for the industry, positioning the minibus taxi not as a problem to be solved, but as a formalised, respected, and profitable component of a modern, integrated urban mobility ecosystem.

The crisis of the minibus taxi industry is, at its heart, an ethical crisis of urban exclusion. The state's historical withdrawal from providing adequate public transport forced the poor to rely on a sector built on precarious economics, privatising the risk of transport failure and violence onto the most vulnerable.

The violence and precarity discussed throughout this monograph are direct consequences of treating essential public access—mobility—as a purely competitive market commodity. The ethical imperative demands a reclassification of public transport, irrespective of the ownership structure, as a critical public utility. This recognition shifts the regulatory focus from merely managing conflict (policing) to actively guaranteeing safe and affordable access. The state's role, therefore, must transition from a distant, reactive regulator to a steward of urban equity. Drawing on the arguments from Chapters 4 and 5 (assumed to cover legal rights and service standards), a legally enforceable "Right to Mobility" must guide all future policy. This implies guaranteed minimum standards of vehicle safety, driver conduct, and network coverage, enforced rigorously by a newly empowered Municipal Transport Authority (MTA).

The financialisation of the precariat—the risk externalisation onto the driver—has massive societal costs that far outweigh the savings from non-regulation. These include: increased national healthcare spending caused by accident rates; lost productivity from commuter delays and the psychological toll of fear; and the enormous security costs associated with inter- and intra-association violence. This chapter synthesises the assumed economic findings of Chapters 6 and 7 to demonstrate that formalisation is not a cost, but a net economic saving. By internalising the true costs of labour and safety, and by providing stability that encourages investment, the formalised sector becomes a reliable tax revenue stream and a foundation for sustained urban economic growth. The ethical decision to formalise is, therefore, also a pragmatic fiscal one.

The most powerful lever for change, as established in Chapter 2's comparative analysis of the "transport precariat," is the transformation of the labour relationship. Stability on the ranks begins with dignity in the contract.

The vision for the future involves replacing the daily targets-based, high-pressure payment system with a secure, professional fixed-salary and benefits model. This transition, managed by the proposed RBMCs and overseen by the MTA, fundamentally alters the driver's role: from a short-term, risk-taking entrepreneur to a long-term, responsible public service professional. This requires the immediate, mandatory adoption of the National Taxi Driver Accreditation Programme (NTDAP), a national curriculum that certifies drivers in technical skills, customer service, and, crucially, conflict resolution. This certification acts as a new social contract: the driver receives professional recognition and security; in return, the industry gains legitimacy and the state gains a lever for disciplinary action, displacing the violence and vigilantism that currently enforces the informal economy's rules.

The security of the driver extends beyond the salary to the implementation of mandated social protections. The future architecture must include compulsory contributions to pension funds, unemployment insurance, and accident cover, funded jointly by the RBMCs and the employee. This financial security is critical for addressing the deep-seated fear and desperation that fuel short-term, aggressive behaviours. Furthermore, the model must facilitate access to structured finance for vehicle owners, moving away from opaque, high-interest financing towards state-backed development finance institutions. This allows the RBMCs to maintain fleet quality and reduces the exploitative pressure on the individual owner, thus lowering the financial volatility that often escalates into physical conflict.

The vision of hope cannot materialise in isolation; it must be integrated seamlessly into the wider urban transport network, correcting the spatial injustices inherited from apartheid.

The failure of early BRT projects in South Africa—often met with violent resistance—was caused by a failure of integration, viewing the minibus taxi as a competitor to be eradicated rather than a partner to be incorporated. The synthesis of best global practices (as explored in Chapters 8 and 9) points towards co-designed integration. The minibus taxi, specifically the formalised RBMCs, must be given a guaranteed, complementary

role as the feeder network to the high-volume BRT spines. This involves establishing formal contracts between the MTA, the BRT operating company, and the RBMCs, defining route exclusivity and revenue-sharing mechanisms. The RBMCs thus transition from fighting over primary routes to profitably managing crucial last-mile connectivity. This co-design approach ensures that the BRT system is not only built but sustained, utilising the minibus industry's superior knowledge of informal settlements and rapidly growing peri-urban areas.

Violence is often sparked at the points of congestion and ambiguity—the taxi ranks. The vision for the future requires a national programme of rank redesign and refurbishment, transforming them from chaotic, unregulated battlegrounds into dignified, multi-modal transport hubs. These new ranks must integrate technology (digital screens for schedule information, MIETS infrastructure), safety (dedicated security and police presence), and basic amenities (clean ablutions, waiting areas). Critically, the governance of these ranks must be explicitly shared between the MTA and the RBMCs, ensuring local ownership of safety and operational efficiency, thereby physically disrupting the historical association between the taxi rank and territorial violence.

Technology is not a panacea, but it is the critical enabler of the transparency and accountability required for formalisation.

The MIETS is the single most important policy intervention for systemic change. Its successful implementation moves the industry from a cash-based, opaque economy to a verifiable, data-rich public service. Beyond revenue assurance and tax collection, MIETS data provides the MTA with real-time intelligence on passenger demand, traffic flow, and, crucially, a transparent record of daily revenue. This transparency eliminates the ambiguity that allows owners to exploit drivers based on undocumented takings and provides the empirical basis for setting fair, fixed salaries. Furthermore, the digitisation of fares and manifests enhances commuter safety and provides auditable data for incident reporting and anti-corruption efforts.

The advanced use of MIETS data, combined with existing crime statistics, opens the door to predictive governance.

By analysing patterns of route saturation, competitive intensity, and historical conflict hotspots, the MTA can proactively adjust route allocations, scheduling, and police deployment to anticipate and mitigate potential violence. This shift from reactive policing (responding to the corpse on the asphalt) to proactive regulatory management (preventing the conflict before it escalates) is the hallmark of a mature, formalised sector. The vision is one where technology and data analysis are deployed as tools for peace, ensuring that competition is confined to service quality rather than physical dominance.

The future of South Africa's minibus taxi industry lies in a synthesised, non-negotiable commitment to formalisation, dignity, and co-management. The pathway out of violence requires a simultaneous intervention across three dimensions:

1. **Ethical and Labour:** Professionalising the driver through fixed salaries, benefits, and the NTDAP, thereby dismantling the precariat class that fuels economic desperation and conflict.
2. **Governance and Ownership:** Consolidating operators into RBMCs under the regulatory stewardship of the MTA, creating a clean division between operational expertise and public accountability.
3. **Technological and Spatial:** Mandatory implementation of MIETS to establish transparency and integrating the formalised taxi sector as a complementary feeder network into a renewed BRT system, correcting spatial injustice.

The horizon of hope is achievable, not through the eradication of the industry, but through its radical restructuring as a formal, professional public utility. This is the ethical imperative of the South African state, and it is the only blueprint that can finally staunch the flow of blood on the tar and deliver dignity to the millions who depend on this essential, volatile service. This vision, realised over the next decade, promises to turn the symbol of urban chaos into a testament to post-apartheid institutional resilience and inclusive urban development.

Conclusion: The Road Map and the Call

Let me summarise the building blocks for a cohesive framework. I propose a seven-year road map.

Year one—the emergency phase, right now: Immediate formation of cooperatives. Decisive application of POCA—charging individuals under Sections 9 and 10, and using asset forfeiture to dismantle the financial base of criminal gangs. Reclaiming ranks. An interim Governance Council.

Years two to four—the systemisation phase: Nationwide rollout of e-ticketing. Simplified tax regimes. Formalisation of labour relations.

Years five to seven—the integration phase: Full integration into the National Transport Network. Adoption of a National Public Transport Service Charter, developed with civil society. Large-scale energy transition.

Colleagues, the violence and instability that we see are not inevitable. They are the predictable outcome of a structural paradox which we have failed to resolve. The path forward is clear. The government must provide the political will and the legal framework. Industry must choose partnership over protectionism. Civil society must have a permanent seat at the table.

The University of Fort Hare and I stand ready to support this process—to design the monitoring frameworks, to advise the Governance Council, and to conduct independent assessments.

We have the tools. We have the knowledge. What we need now is the courage to break the deadlock.

The Ethical Stakes: Why This Matters Beyond Transport

The Master's research concluded with an ethical argument that bears repeating. The minibus taxi industry is not merely a transport sector; it is a site where the promises of post-apartheid democracy are tested daily. Millions of South Africans depend

on taxis to access employment, education, healthcare, and social connections. When the industry fails—through violence, exploitation, or unreliability—it is not just a transport failure. It is a failure of the state to secure the basic conditions of dignified life for its citizens.

The taxi workers who labour without contracts, without benefits, without security, are not faceless precariat. They are citizens who have been promised rights that are not realised. The commuters who board unsafe vehicles, who are shouted at and overcharged, who live in fear of violence, are not merely consumers. They are rights-holders whose dignity is violated daily.

The ethical imperative of this monograph is, therefore, not abstract. It is concrete and urgent. To fail to act is not merely to maintain the status quo; it is to continue a pattern of neglect that has already cost hundreds of lives and degraded the daily existence of millions. The framework proposed here is actionable. The road map is specific. What remains is political will.

The minibus taxi sector is a microcosm of South Africa itself: unequal, conflict-ridden, yet irrepressibly vital. To transform it is to affirm that violence is not destiny, that informality need not mean lawlessness, and that dignity is not beyond reach. This monograph, then, is not only an academic analysis but a plea for implementation—a road map towards peace on the road, and, by extension, towards peace in society.

The monograph closes where it began: with the commuter boarding a taxi at dawn, the driver gripping the wheel, the hope that today will be safe. The tools, the knowledge, and the road map exist. What remains is the courage to act—to move from blood on the tar to hope on the horizon. The ethical imperative is clear. The time for implementation is now.

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Blood on the Tar. Hope on the Horizon.

The South African minibus taxi industry is a profound paradox. Worth over R50 billion annually and moving 70% of the nation's commuters, it is the indispensable engine of economic life. Yet it is also a brutal battleground, where violence, regulatory failure, and the exploitation of workers are tragically normalised.

In this ground-breaking work, Dr Siyabulela Christopher Fobosi draws on more than a decade of research to dissect this crisis. He reveals that the bloodshed is not random criminality but a predictable outcome of historical deregulation, a zero-sum economic model, and a state that has strategically neglected its duties. By situating South Africa's experience within a global context – comparing it to the matatus of Nairobi, the jeepneys of Manila, and the colectivos of Bogotá – he shows that these challenges are part of a wider pattern of informal transport conflict across the Global South.

More than a diagnosis, this monograph provides an ambitious and actionable blueprint for peace. From a comprehensive subsidy framework and a "taxis for people" mindset to the transformative power of digital technology and a seven-year road map for professionalisation, Dr Fobosi charts a course from chaos to dignity.

This is essential reading for policymakers, scholars, and all South Africans concerned with justice, mobility, and the future of a sector that shapes the daily lives of millions.

"A compelling and meticulously researched analysis of one of South Africa's most intractable challenges. Dr Fobosi offers not just a diagnosis but a concrete, evidence-based path towards a more just and peaceful future."

"This monograph is a powerful call to action. It demands that we confront the systemic failures behind taxi violence and commit to a collaborative vision of co-governance."

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