

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

Isibaya: Organized Chaos

A Study of Taxi Marshals as Street Level Bureaucrats and
their role in the everyday management of the minibus
taxi industry

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Abstract

This research explores the role that taxi marshals play 'on the street' – quite literally - within a significant-but-demonised transit sector- which is often described by scholars and media as chaotic and volatile. Understanding the MBT industry from a fresh angle, as an avenue for bringing together a policy-based understanding of the industry with one that examines the 'every day', would be valuable from a development planning perspective. Exploring the daily duties and practices of taxi marshals as 'micro-managers' of the industry using the 'Weberian' conception of bureaucracy allows us to move beyond a simple analysis of regulation (policy and rules) by examining the particularities of implementing and enforcing rules. By doing so, the study uses the theory of 'Street Level Bureaucracy' by Lipsky as an analytical tool to understand how marshals make their day-to-day decisions that affects the industry. As such, their discretion is explored in detail and further deciphered through the study of the micro-physics of power in micro-interactions between marshals, commuters and taxi operators.