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Insurgent Citizenship and Sustained Resistance of a Local Taxi Association

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.14.4.11>

Abstract A growing body of literature on urban and grassroots social movements is replete with case studies of citizens mobilizing against infrastructural development projects. These mobilizations, known as insurgent citizenship—the participation in alternative channels of political expression—take different forms and have various impacts. An investigation into the case of the mobilizing agenda of the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA) against using a costly intermodal transport facility in Bloemfontein is aimed at highlighting the often neglected dilemma of how powerless citizens—for example, taxi owners—respond to state hegemony. Theoretically, the article is grounded in the conceptual framework of insurgent citizenship and, empirically, draws on narratives of a range of participants. The findings provide an understanding of the importance of organizational structure and leadership in the sustained insurgent action by the GBTA. It is argued that the insurgent action by the GBTA is produced mainly by—on the one hand—the conflictual relationship between government policies and practices and—on the other hand—grassroots resistance to their exclusionary and marginalizing effects. Furthermore, the findings elucidate that insurgent practice may be driven by neoliberal principles of competition, profit, and entrepreneurship.

Keywords Insurgent Citizenship; Organizational Structure; Protests; Social Movements; Sustained Resistance; Taxi Industry

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Globally, infrastructural development projects often have been a primary source of protests by urban and grassroots social movements (Mayer 2000; McAdam et al. 2010; Abers, de Oliveira, and Pereira 2017). These projects can include a wide range of issues such as the construction of turbines, power plants, roads, dams, and airports. Research on the protests against infrastructure projects has

shown how activists use a range of protest tactics, including demonstrations (Kirchher 2012), sustained policy advocacy by nongovernmental organizations (Steinhardt and Wu 2015), or adapting transnational labels that connect them with similar struggles in other countries (McCormick 2010). Similarly, there has been an increased focus on sustained resistance campaigns against infrastructural projects in developed countries and, to a lesser extent, in developing countries (Pahnke, Tarlau, and Wolford 2015). Two common themes emerge from these studies. First, these campaigns illustrate the ways citizens engage with the apparatus of the state. The state apparatus refers to the institutions of representative democracy and to the ability of citizens to access them or to act in relation to them (Khanna et al. 2013). Second, the campaigns highlight how citizens or relatively powerless groups respond to domination (Scott 1985) by actively forming new ways of resistance. The campaigns show that citizens—through collective efforts—“have the potential to provide more meaningful practice of citizenship and democracy for those living on the socio-economic margins of society” (Runciman 2014:27).

Central to any discussion on citizenship is the question of civil rights and claims (Holston 1998; 2008; 2009). The understanding of citizenship—as depicted above—does not entail a passive citizenry that assumes that the state “is the only source of citizenship rights, meaning, and practices” (Holstein 1998:38). Active citizenship is closely linked to Holstein’s (1998:47) conception of insurgent citizenship which has been termed to refer to an engaged citizenry who negotiates “what it means to be a member in the modern state” (1998:47). In the context of this ar-

ticle, insurgent citizenship is conceptualized as “alternative channels of political expression, with the aim of attaining greater autonomy” (Duboc 2013:67). While the conception of insurgent citizenship often refers to spatial contexts to frame and explore struggles for citizenship located in urban areas (Douglas and Friedmann 1998; Friedmann 2002; Witger 2017), it also serves as an analytical lens for the analysis of social rights enshrined in progressive constitutions such as those in countries like Brazil (Witger 2017) and South Africa (Matebesi 2017).

Post-1994 South Africa is often referred to as a democratic state in which citizen rights are enshrined in the constitution. However, as Brooks (2017) found in his review of the discourses of participatory democracy, mechanisms and programs designed to foster such rights do not always operate within the bounds of accountable institutions. Thus, it is not surprising that, contextualized within more than two decades of complex political reforms, South Africa has experienced widespread citizen struggles against a myriad of issues, many of which relate to municipal services (Alexander 2010; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Matebesi 2017). Several voices have also been heard “insisting upon a radical equality within the social order” (Brown 2015:3). One of the institutions at the forefront of protest against perceived injustices is the taxi industry. The minibus taxi industry, which constitutes a significant form of public transport in South Africa, has a history of struggles for recognition during the apartheid years (Sekhonyane and Dugard 2004). For example, by 1989, the South African government only recognized one national taxi body, the South African Black Taxi Association (SABTA). Over time,

and primarily due to the apartheid government's policy of economic deregulation initiated in 1987 (Dugard 2001), the minibus taxi industry has been haunted by the proliferation of rival and unregulated taxi associations. The lack of regulation resulted in overtrading with subsequent concerns over ambiguous taxi permits, claims to taxi ranks, and conflict over routes (Sekhonyane and Dugard 2004). Since the early stages of the establishment of the widespread use of minibus taxis, the rivalry in this industry has led to high levels of violence that have claimed many lives, resulting in this industry being characterized as murderous (Bank 1990; Khosa 1992; Bruce and Komane 1999; Mashishi 2007; Bähre 2014).

This article examines the somewhat paradoxical non-violent sustained resistance or insurgent act by the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA)—a voluntary association of taxi owners and operators—to use the capital-intensive Mangaung Intermodal Public Transport Facility in Bloemfontein. The construction of this multi-storeyed taxi rank began in April 2009 and was completed in early 2011. The new taxi rank was built to bring different public transport modes, like buses, minibus taxis, and trains, under one permanent roof. After completion, local minibus taxis used this taxi rank for only three weeks. At the time, some of the major complaints by the GBTA included structural defects such as poor ventilation, narrow pathways, and a lack of adequate entrance and exit space (Makhafole 2012; Seleka 2012; Tlhakudi 2012). The more than six-year-long protracted negotiations between the Free State Provincial Government, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (Mangaung Metro),

and the GBTA are yet to resolve the impasse. The discussions often centered on the progress made by the Mangaung Metro with the plan to buy a building opposite the exit of the taxi rank to create more exits for a large number of minibus taxis. In October 2016, there was renewed hope that the new taxi rank will be used when the Mayor of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality signed a memorandum of agreement with the GBTA (Gaeswe 2016). However, so far the stalemate continues.

This article uses an interpretive approach to the study of insurgent citizenship and addresses three questions. First, what are the grievances of the GBTA about the intermodal transport facility? Second, what are possible explanations for the sustained non-violent insurgent act by the GBTA? Given these two interlinked objectives, the article contributes to the understanding of grassroots insurgent practices and to the exclusionary and marginalizing effects of the conflictual relationships between government decision-making processes and the responses they elicit. In particular, the article seeks to enhance the understanding of the web of socialized roles and entrenched behaviors that the weak (in this case, the GBTA) and the dominant (in this case, the Mangaung Metro) are caught within.

Insurgent Citizenship

An analysis of sustained resistance campaigns by a marginalized group such as the GBTA can benefit from an application of insurgent citizenship as a conceptual guide. Globally, insurgent citizenship is not only increasing in quantitative terms but it has also evolved regarding its mobilization and the

protest tactics that it employs—in both democratic and authoritarian political settings. Scholars ascribe the rise of political protests in recent decades mainly to the process of (post)modernization, which emphasizes that evolving individual values have radically changed modern people's way of interacting with the political system (Inglehart 1990). This process coincides with a general reduction of levels of political trust among citizens. At the same time, the values of self-expression, including the emergence of the so-called insurgent citizenship, increased (Norris 1999; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Adler 2012).

Everyday spatial practices and manipulations dominate the focus of literature on insurgent citizenship. Scholars advancing the spatial context argue that cities are the breeding ground for emerging insurgent citizenship practices (Routledge 1997; Holston 1998; 1999; Isin 1999; Friedmann 2002). Holston (1998:48) identifies contemporary urban life as “sites of insurgency because they introduce into the city new identities and practices that disturb established histories.” A distinct element of insurgent practices is that they transcend localized identities. Insurgent practices also contribute to a socially diverse and heterogeneous urban population, by propagating for inclusive and substantial citizenship. Similarly, Friedmann (2002) further emphasizes the evolution of the notion of citizenship from an individual (one-to-one) relationship with the nation-state to a more universalist approach. This evolution towards a more mass-based way of life has not only contributed to the weakened role of representative democracy but has blurred formal power relations as well.

Closely linked to the notion of insurgent citizenship are theories of collective action. Here, community context and framing theories, as well as civic capacity and political opportunities are at the core of the motivation and capacity to mobilize (Opp 2009; Wright and Boudet 2013). The framing perspective is a social-psychological approach that focuses on how movement activists construct interpretations of social problems and the goals of resistance (Bendford and Snow 2000). The framing processes not only “articulate grievances, and generate consensus on the importance and forms of collective action to be pursued” (Williams 2004:93) but they also “present rationales for their actions and [for] proposed solutions to adherents, bystanders, and antagonists” (Williams 2004:93). The framing efforts of activists are the foundation of collective action (McAdam 1982).

Advocates of the framing perspective propose four conditions that must be met for collective action to take place (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Byrd 2007). These conditions are discontent (prevalent dissatisfaction without relief), ideology (collective identification of complaints as being morally legitimate by the aggrieved), ability to organize (core leaders of the aggrieved group are capable of recruiting, sourcing resources, and communicating strategies), and political opportunity (the extent to which civil liberties allow freedom of speech and association) (Oberschall 2004). Furthermore, the framing perspective contends that, in respect of movement ideology, “individuals actively produce and maintain meaning” (Dobratz, Walner, and Buzzell 2016:325). Thus, the masses will assess what is wrong and who is to blame (diagnostic framing) and what

action needs to be taken (prognostic framing). Frame alignment is achieved when, according to Snow and colleagues (1986), people have a shared understanding of what is wrong and what action needs to be taken.

Another building block of the notion of insurgent citizenship is organizational structure. The structure of groups is at the basis of the forms of collective action undertaken by these groups (Opp 2009; Thomas and Louis 2014; Matebesi 2017). For example, Thomas and Louis (2014) use the violent and non-violent protest dichotomy to discuss the different forms of collective action. Simply put, non-violent and violent protests include as forms of collective action the following components: normative collective action (for example, the signing of petitions, attending peaceful protests), and non-normative collective action (for example, riots and sabotage); moderate, but not militant action; and activism, but not radicalism (Moskalenko and McCauley 2009; Becker et al. 2011). For Scott (1985:136), resistance is the opposite of hegemonic compliance and involves the overt or subtle structures related to “collective defiance of power holders.” Regarding these views, peaceful forms of collective action and resistance can only be coordinated by highly structured groups. This high level of structuredness enables group leaders to communicate, frame, and sanction members without much effort (Opp 2009).

The notion of insurgent citizenship can be applied to wide-ranging contexts as demonstrated by studies conducted in various contexts in South Africa (Miraftab and Wills 2005; Meth 2010; Von Holdt et al. 2011; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Runciman 2014;

Brown 2015). South Africa has a rich history of citizen struggles against oppression by the apartheid state before 1994. At that time, the struggle was mainly about achieving recognition of formal citizenship. In the post-apartheid order—characterized by an expansion of civil rights—the struggle has shifted towards articulating “aggressively for a thicker and more substantive practice of citizenship” (Brown 2015:59). Some even argue that insurgent citizenship advances democracy and transforms the character of state-society relations (Machado, Scartascini, and Tommasi 2009; Matebesi and Botes 2011; Runciman 2014). In South Africa, the first decade after the democracy obtained in 1994 was characterized by a period of relief from citizen struggle due to the end of what Von Holdt (2013:589) refers to as “a break in the violent confrontations of the apartheid era, and hope that the democratic state will address the substantive rights (albeit their ironies and ambiguities) of citizens.” Developments during this early stage of democracy were broadly in line with public opinion. However, since 2004 insurgent citizenship has increased in post-apartheid South Africa, with around 1400 protests in the period 2004-2017 that directly targeted local municipalities over the perceived inadequate provision of services (Municipal IQ 2017). In the next section, the context of the case of the GBTA is provided as an example of insurgent citizenship. In this example, I also focus on a historical overview of the taxi industry in South Africa.

An Application: The South Africa Taxi Industry and the State

The minibus taxi industry has become one of the most significant contributors to the informal econ-

omy of South Africa. This multi-billion industry is predominantly black-owned and transports over 60% of the country's lower socio-economical employment commuters (Mahlangu 2002; Czeglédy 2004). The taxi industry is sometimes hailed for playing a critical role in creating self-employment, as well as employment for many South Africans (Fobosi 2013). However, the industry has not always been regarded as a formal business in the country and, as a result, the lack of formal recognition led to the formation of the South African Black Taxi Association (SABTA) in 1979. At the time, SABTA served as the umbrella body for over 400 affiliated local taxi associations across South Africa (Moyake 2006). The internal conflict within SABTA subsequently led to the establishment of many rival taxi associations, such as the South African Long Distance Taxi Association (SALDTA). The competition between taxi operators became more and more intense and eventually signaled the beginning of prolonged violent clashes between rival taxi associations and individual taxi drivers (Hansen 2006). According to Ingle (2009:87), this violence was further compounded "by the zero-sum notion that competition is something to be suppressed."

In an attempt to provide safe, affordable transport, well-trained drivers, and acceptable employment relationships (Mahlangu 2002), the post-1994 democratic government has taken some steps to formalize and regulate the industry (Fobosi 2013). These steps towards re-regulation were resisted actively by the industry, represented by powerful taxi associations, often leading to the escalation of violence during the late 1990s (Khosa 1992:232; Dugard 2001; Sekhonyane and Dugard 2004:15). As Dugard (2001)

points out, 1947 deaths and 2841 injuries were recorded between 1991 and 1999. Thus, many scholars portray violence as endemic in the taxi industry or, even worse, they characterize it as a "murderous industry" (Bank 1990; Khosa 1992; Bruce and Komane 1999; Dugard 2001; Hansen 2006; Mashishi 2007).

A significant challenge for the taxi industry came from the introduction of the Taxi Recapitalization Program initiated by the government in 2005. Under the Taxi Recapitalization Program, taxi operators were paid an amount to scrap their old and mostly unroadworthy vehicles and buy new ones. However, several concerns were raised over the implementation of this recapitalization program. These concerns included, firstly, the length of time that it took to implement the program. The slow progress was ascribed to the high number of government departments involved in the process. Secondly, the consultation approach adapted by the Department of Transport (the government department overseeing the taxi industry) involved occasional high-level strategy meetings. Despite inputs from the taxi industry at these consultative meetings, the Department of Transport proceeded to make pronouncements on matters which had not been fully supported by the taxi industry. Thirdly, the taxi operators raised concerns that they were left in the dark about the cost of the new minibus vehicles that would have been fully compliant with the government specifications. Other concerns included the lack of subsidies to the industry, the lengthy period it would take to supply new vehicles, and the requirement that an operator's permit had to be converted to an operating license before obtaining a scrapping allowance (Moyake 2006).

Since then, the taxi industry has faced significant challenges, not least of all related to their resistance to the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system implemented by various metropolitan centers in the country. The BRT introduced dedicated lanes and formal embarking/disembarking facilities for municipal buses, aiming at faster journeys. Improved bus services held implications for the taxi industry. Additionally, contestations over routes by different taxi associations and the transformation and restructuring of the taxi industry continue, which lead to numerous confrontations as a result of unlicensed vehicles, persisting violence, and the general lack of safety of commuters. The hostile environment in the industry was taken further by the mushrooming of meter taxi companies such as Uber and Taxify. No other meter taxi company has met similar hostile reception than that given to Uber, which has been criticized for unfair competition practices and for having disrupted the existing systems in the passenger transportation industry in South Africa (Dube 2015).

Methodological Notes

This article draws on the narrative accounts of members of the taxi associations, taxi drivers, taxi owners, and key informants among municipal officials in Bloemfontein. A qualitative approach embedded in an exploratory, descriptive design was employed in order to gain an understanding of the complexity of the experiences of the participants. A non-probability purposive and snowball sampling technique was used to recruit the chairperson of the GBTA, 12 taxi drivers, eight taxi owners, two municipal officials, and two local

architects. Semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted by the author over an 11-month period (April 2016 to March 2017), were used to collect the data.

The interviews were conducted at the informal taxi ranks in the central business district of Bloemfontein and not at the mostly defunct new intermodal transport facility. The interviewees signed consent forms before the commencement of the in-depth interviews. The in-depth interviews with the key informants from the taxi industry were conducted in Sotho and English in the case of the two municipal officials. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and a thematic analysis was used to identify, analyze, and report on common issues, as well as specific experiences and perspectives regarding the contestation around the intermodal transport facility. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the narratives of the participants were triangulated with newspaper reports and official government reports on the intermodal transport facility. The main themes covered in the research deal with the grievances commonly expressed by the research participants and with the underlying reasons for the sustained non-violent insurgency of the GBTA. These two themes are presented in the following two sub-sections.

Grievances of the Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA)

More than six years (2011 to 2017) passed since the completion of the Bloemfontein intermodal transport facility that cost about 400 million South African Rands. According to a report published three

years before the construction of this facility, the primary goal of the Metropolitan Municipality was to expand and redevelop the old Russel Square taxi rank in the central business district of Bloemfontein into the city's primary transport facility. The plan also included the integration into this intermodal facility of the Bloemfontein railway station and bus transport facilities (Mangaung Metro Municipality 2017). This article aims to address the question: Why did the GBTA manage to foster insurgent citizenship among its members?

The framing perspective, which involves the articulation of grievances and generating consensus on collective action strategies, is helpful in providing a context within which to answer the above question. Simply put, the framing perspective looks at how "meaning is socially constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed" (Benford 1997:410). Various motivations were mooted in the media at the time for the construction of the intermodal transport facility. Firstly, there was the issue that the three formal transport facilities in Bloemfontein—Central Park Bus station, CBD taxi rank, and the railway train station—which catered for more than 50,000 commuters on a daily basis, could no longer handle the ever-increasing number of commuters (IMIESA 2011:56). The available formal minibus taxi facility in the CBD of Bloemfontein could only make provision for approximately 200 taxis, and it was estimated that about 700 more taxi bays were needed (IMIESA 2011:57). Secondly, the inability of the three formal taxi facilities to handle the coordination of taxis led to the mushrooming of informal facilities. There were eight different operational associations, all affiliated to the Greater Bloemfontein

Taxi Association (GBTA) (Seleka 2012). The high number of taxis in the CBD of Bloemfontein led to numerous other challenges such as pressure on traffic flow and pedestrian mobility, overcrowding, and safety of the public (IMIESA 2011). Thirdly, the existing transport infrastructure was regarded as not being user-friendly. These taxi facilities were difficult to reach as they were scattered all over the CBD. For this reason, the notion of an integrated transport facility with proper pedestrian facilities was propagated (Seleka 2012; Tlhakudi 2012).

From the motivations mooted in the media for the construction of the intermodal transport facility in Bloemfontein, I now turn to the grievances reported by the research participants. Among the main grievances shared in the interviews are the size of the intermodal facility (particularly for taxis), the lack of consultation, and the safety issues. For the GBTA's taxi owners and taxi drivers, one of the most common complaints concerns the inability of the new intermodal transport facility to accommodate a large number of taxis, as well as the bigger, new minibus vehicles. Other complaints from taxi drivers relate to the fact that two taxis cannot simultaneously enter or leave the building. The inadequate space compelled commuters to spend long periods waiting in queues. Consequently, this affects the traffic flow around the intermodal transport facility adversely. Taxi drivers also complain about the single lift, which is often out of order. As a result, one taxi driver notes:

It has been a nerve-rattling and bone-jarring experience as commuters were expected to climb two flights of stairs before reaching the taxis.

Taxi owners also report their inability to understand why the rank was built in the first place. One taxi owner remarks:

This taxi rank does not meet any of our needs. I keep on asking myself what the real reason behind the building of this death trap was.

Expanding on this obviously emotive response, another taxi owner says:

Anger aside. I do not want to lie, it is a beautiful building, but, it cannot be occupied by human beings.

The majority of taxi owners highlighted the negative impact on the health of people. One taxi owner explains the health threat as follows:

I would rather work from the streets than in that so-called state-of-the-art taxi rank. You do not have to stand longer than 30 minutes in that rank without reaching for your breath. Eh! No, we are not that desperate!

Taxi drivers share similar experiences about the potential health threats. A taxi driver makes the following remark:

The building cannot accommodate 22-seater taxis, as it is too small. What does this mean for the owners? The poor ventilation in the building, which is compounded by fumes from the exhausts of taxis in an overcrowded taxi rank is bound to cause significant health hazards in the end. Another problem relates to safety. Should a taxi catch fire, or any other fatal incident, for that matter, happens, personnel from emer-

gency services will find it hard to reach those affected in time.

Another central concern of the research participants relates to the consultation process before the building of the intermodal transport facility. The responses from taxi drivers and owners differ from that of the GBTA representative regarding the consultation that took place. Both taxi drivers and taxi owners describe the consultation process as being "farcical." A taxi driver, for example, says:

We heard about the building of the facility, but thought we would be informed.

Similarly, one taxi owner also expresses concern that they had not been sufficiently briefed about the construction of the intermodal transport facility.

An interview with the municipal representative reveals that the taxi association was indeed consulted. According to the municipal representative, all the relevant stakeholders, including the GBTA, had been consulted in time and were provided with opportunities to comment on the design of the intermodal transport facility. One quotation from the municipal representative captures this position:

The GBTA was part of the many trips to Johannesburg that we took with architects to familiarize ourselves with the kind of facility, including the taxi rank that will best suit the needs of the taxi industry in Bloemfontein.

The municipal representative continues by stating that the GBTA was even requested to provide the

number of registered taxis that will be using the facility. The Municipality remains steadfast that they consulted with the GBTA. However, when asked why the GBTA is failing to acknowledge that they were consulted, the response from the municipal representative was that, perhaps, the GBTA wanted to put pressure on the Municipality to allow them to manage the facility. Concerns about the purported intention of the GBTA to manage the transport facility were also reported in the media. One municipal official was quoted as follows: "This is absurd. How will they manage such a vast facility when they were unable to manage a smaller taxi rank?" (Tlhakudi 2012:2).

An architect, when asked for an opinion about the intermodal transport facility, explains that, although he was not involved in the project, he does not believe that the fault of the design of the building is with the architects. He, however, points out that:

It was undoubtedly a glaring oversight to have thought that such a large number of vehicles would be able to enter and exit the rank without trouble.

He concedes that this building is of architectural significance for the following reason:

This building yields a poignant lesson for us in the building industry that we should never ignore or underestimate the human factor when designing structures. Certainly, I believe this is what happened here.

Another architect notes that he is impressed with the innovative materials used on the intermodal transport facility, unlike the traditional kerbside

shelters used for taxi ranks. His primary concerns center on the issue of ventilation. He expresses both his approval and disappointment:

Such a building should serve the purpose of resolving some of the pressing challenges experienced in the CBD and not create any new ones. I must admit, it is a world-class building, and for that, we need to applaud the Municipality and other role players. However, I reckon not enough attention was paid to natural ventilation, which would have been a sustainable design strategy, considering the main objective of providing buildings with the required air quality and quantity. Within this context, cross-floor ventilation is not a luxury, but a necessity in such buildings.

Previous research demonstrated the central role of the collective identification of complaints as being legitimate by the aggrieved (Oberschall 2004; Taştan 2013; Karriem and Lehn 2016). Despite the differing opinions about whether the GBTA was consulted or not, many of the participants' concerns centered on the user-friendliness of this intermodal transport facility.

What Enabled the GBTA to Sustain the Non-Violent Insurgency?

This section of the article focuses on the conditions that made it possible for the GBTA's collective action. Several studies demonstrate that organizational structure is closely linked to the success of a social movement (Opp 2009; Taştan 2013; Thomas and Louis 2014). The GBTA is a unitary actor and, as with most modern-day social movements, its superior coordination of strategy and mission within

its ranks allows it to use its resources to advance its insurgency effectively. Thus, the taxi drivers and taxi owners had an advantage of belonging to an organization which had been in existence for some time. The organized structure of the GBTA provides the aggrieved with the necessary leadership, and it was able to mobilize resources and to create an environment conducive to the sustained insurgency.

The GBTA indicates that the collective action was possible because its members remained resolute in their decision not to use the new taxi rank at the intermodal transport facility. The chairperson of the GBTA lamented extensively about how the Association acted as a means through which individual members could exercise a degree of agency. When asked about the relatively peaceful nature of their collective action, the chairperson of the GBTA indicates that he cannot underline enough the importance of their peaceful approach:

For us, our peaceful approach has become a powerful tool of politics. The taxi industry is often seen as being managed by ill-fated and ill-advised elements.

He further criticizes the Municipality for having tried to unleash the police on taxi drivers during the early stages of the insurgency. He emphasizes that the approach of the GBTA caught authorities by surprise as they were eager to suppress the action of taxi drivers by using police brutality and unjustified arrests:

To me, it would be fair to state that our collective spirit rendered the police helpless and insecure. Does our

action really justify the vilification we had to endure from the police?

Several taxi drivers and owners cite that the Municipality took a conservative stance in as far as dealing with the GBTA on the matter of the new intermodal transport facility. They emphasize that even they were themselves surprised by the new sense of camaraderie among themselves that was engendered by their collective action. One taxi driver recounts how ill-behaved other taxi drivers were towards one another in the past and that as a result of their collective action, their attitude towards each other changed. The fact that the GBTA was able to act as a single voice for the local taxi industry in respect of the impasse about the intermodal transport facility is hailed as exemplary by this same taxi driver. Another taxi driver expresses the renewed discovery of the collective power of the GBTA in the following way:

It is evident that shortcuts do not yield positive returns. We have demonstrated to the state that we are a force to be reckoned with. We have certainly defeated the iron-fisted law and order approach of the state. At one point, we thought we had no choice but to use the rank. But, our leaders told us to be determined in asserting our rights and that we have to continue the struggle for an industry that is taken seriously by everyone, including the state.

Attempts by the Municipality to force taxi operators to use the intermodal transport facility soon after its completion were widely reported. Several newspapers referred to the attitude of the Municipality and the state towards the GBTA and its members during

2013. Some of these articles reported that the Mayor of the Municipality set September 2013 as the deadline to relocate all public taxis to the new intermodal transport facility. The Municipality stated: “The reality is the facility has to be used at some point because the government has made a huge investment in this building” (Molebatsi 2013a:2). This deadline came and passed without any change in the attitude of the GBTA and its members. The earlier optimism of both the Mayor and the Municipal spokesperson once again met with non-violent resistance by taxi drivers.

One taxi driver notes that the Municipality undermined them and that the facility should instead be used as a government garage or parking area. Towards the end of October 2013, the Free State Provincial Member of the Executive Committee for Police, Roads, and Transport issued an ultimatum in which he gave the Municipality and the GBTA three weeks to reach an agreement on the relocation of public taxis to the intermodal terminal or else he would step in to enforce the law. He further showed his intention to use strict action when he said: “The pick-up point is the official taxi rank, and those refusing to adhere to that stipulation will have their licenses revoked” (Molebatsi 2013b).

This time, the GBTA seemed willing to compromise and persuaded some of its members to relocate to the new terminal. Again, the majority of the taxi owners and taxi drivers vowed not to use the facility, stating that they would not be intimidated or “ordered around like kids” (Mekoa 2013; Molebatsi 2013b). Many taxi drivers interviewed are of the opinion that their campaign had gained wide-

spread sympathy from the community. This sympathy, they believe, is mainly due to the intransigent attitude of the state, including the Municipality, and the use of security forces while claiming to support negotiations.

In summary, the GBTA had the leadership and organizational structure, as well as empathetic members to advance its goals. While the GBTA provided the leadership and organizational structure to sustain the non-violent insurgency, it was its members who refused to abandon the use of informal taxi ranks when the Association seemed ready to give in to the Municipality’s threats.

The Future of Non-Violent Insurgency

It is known that the most successful protest movements in history have been the ones that have set their agendas. In an attempt to make sense of the future relationship between the Bloemfontein Municipality and the GBTA, representatives from both were asked what their views are in as far as the impasse is concerned. The Municipality representative offers the following view:

We are committed to ongoing negotiations which are at a critical stage, but we are really disappointed in how things turned out. I only hope there will be much more rigorous introspection on the part of the Taxi Association before the next round of meetings.

The Greater Bloemfontein Taxi Association (GBTA) is of the opinion that the Municipality is negotiating in bad faith. As the GBTA chairperson argues:

For us, it will be a major step forward if the building could be extended. That is a simple demand from us. Our members are also demanding that the Public Protector should release its report about how the funds allocated to the building of the intermodal facility were spent.

Similar utterances are made by taxi drivers and taxi owners who state that they are adamant that they will only use the new facility when the space around the entrance and exit of the taxi rank and the air ventilation problems are resolved. One driver sums up this view:

We know that not all our demands can be met at once, but let the Municipality show us that they genuinely want to contribute to a solution for the new facility by addressing our concerns.

In Conclusion

This study focuses on the sustained non-violent insurgent activism by a civic organization in an urban setting in Central South Africa. Social movements across the globe have used civil disobedience as a means of exerting pressure on the political system. These collective acts by ordinary citizens give new impetus to what is known as insurgent citizenship. This study confirms the importance of both organizational structure and leadership when marginalized groups attempt to mobilize towards obtaining their rights. The findings suggest that a pre-existing organizational structure is important for social movement mobilization, and it provides institutions with improved organizational opportunity.

This research provides insights into social movement studies. Firstly, as confirmed by several researchers (Meth 2010; Von Holdt et al. 2011; Langa and Von Holdt 2012; Runciman 2014), citizens turn to non-institutionalized means once institutionalized ways of settling disagreements proved to be unsuccessful. The non-violent insurgent action by the GBTA follows on the failure of formal channels of engagement with the Bloemfontein Municipality. Also, the resistance of the GBTA should be understood against a general trend in post-democratic South Africa where citizens are increasingly taking a firm stance against any perceived threat or injustice.

The question remains: What motivated the GBTA to adapt a non-violent insurgent approach? According to Butcher and Frediani (2014:119), "insurgent practices have manifested in a diversity of approaches ranging from contestation to negotiation-based practices." In the context of this research, studies suggest that successful social movements often benefit from their organizational structures (Heckathorn 1989; Opp 2009; Tapscott 2010; Lupo 2014). Peaceful protests also require coordination and restraint, something that only a structured group such as the GBTA can provide. This kind of structure makes effective communication, mutual encouragement, and sanctioning possible. Conversely, spontaneous and highly fragmented groups have weak authority structures and often fail to constrain violence (Opp 2009). In highly structured groups, the leaders and members of the groups regularly meet to discuss activities (Morris and Staggenborg 2007). In such highly structured groups, collective action is achieved through a sanctioning system consisting

of strict norms requiring cooperation (Heckathorn 1989).

Notwithstanding the organizational structure, individual motivations, and internal group dynamics, studies of insurgent practices also have to consider the broader political, economic, and cultural context of their cases. In South Africa, several studies report on the long-standing contentious relationship between the state and the taxi industry (Bank 1990; Dugard 2001; Fobosi 2013; Gibbs 2014; Dube 2015). This research reveals that, while overt civil disobedience (often in the form of boycotts and road blockades by the taxi drivers) against the state is not uncommon, the sustained insurgent act by the GBTA is unprecedented. Thus, the GBTA's resistance can be construed as

part of a long-standing tradition in the power and ideological conflicts that exist between the state and the taxi industry.

In conclusion, I argue that the GBTA case is not merely reflecting a considerable degree of non-responsiveness by the state. Instead, the GBTA's insurgent act is a cause of, and a means for, demanding and practicing new forms of citizenship in the 21st century. Since interest groups mobilize concessions around social issues, it is argued that effective social movements are often produced through the dialectical relationship between government policies and practices and grassroots resistance. In the case of the GBTA, the non-violent insurgency was itself also driven by neo-liberal principles of competition, profit, and entrepreneurship.

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