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TAKEN FOR A RIDE: RETHINKING NEOLIBERALISM, PRECARIOUS LABOUR AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT FROM AN AFRICAN METROPOLIS

Early impressions: urban public transport as functional chaos

Utter chaos but somehow functional. This was the first impression I had, on my first visit to Dar es Salaam in 1996, of the city's transport system and of the privately-owned minibuses, or *daladalas*, as they are called in Swahili, which provide its public transport.¹ Such an impression came from the sight, ubiquitous in the city, of tireless workers frantically cramming passengers into aged buses – some of these vehicles were obviously past retirement date – and they are routinely loaded well beyond the vehicle's carrying capacity. Any passenger seemed welcome on board, except school pupils who owed their unpopularity with bus crews to their entitlement to concessionary fares. As a result, at stations and bus stops, school pupils in uniform would gang up in small groups to persuade conductors, with words and, if necessary, by sheer force, to allow them to board buses.

Decorated with drawings and writing by their workers, the buses act as a canvas for drivers' and conductors' opinions on various themes, including what it means to work on buses in an African metropolis. The drawing on the back of one bus of two wrestling fighters fiercely facing off before a fight, captioned by the writing 'Warning: No ring, no rules, no referee', aptly sums up *daladala* trademark cut-throat competition with one another and the

¹ The name *daladala* comes from the Swahili name for the 5 shilling coin, the *dala*, which in turn came from the fact that the coin was worth one dollar when it was first introduced in 1972. As the first fare private operators charged in 1983 was 5 shillings, bus conductors used to ask passengers for *dala, dala*.

machismo that often accompanies it. Fuelled by such competition, overloaded buses speed through the city, overtake dangerously, ride through red lights, on pavements and outside allocated routes in search of passengers. One tragic consequence of these practices has been that far too many Dar es Salaam residents have died, as *daladals* are involved in a huge proportion of lethal car accidents in the city, as high as 93 percent in 1992 (*Daily News*, 17 May 1993). Nonetheless, it is under such a system that the majority of people in Dar es Salaam, a city that has been rapidly growing for the past six decades and is now home to over 4 million residents, have travelled around since 1983. From that year, private buses were allowed to provide public transport following the demise of the state-owned public transport company which had until then provided the service under monopoly regime - a shift Dar es Salaam shared with many cities in developing countries.²

This book presents the results of my efforts to deepen this early impression and understand the origins, logics and tensions of what at first appeared as functional chaos. This entailed a journey through the history, economic organisation and politics of public transport in Dar es Salaam, in its transition from state provision of the service, in the 1960s and 1970s to its progressive privatisation, liberalisation and informalisation, from 1983 to the present. Looking at Dar es Salaam through this prism, this book aims to contribute to two thematic literatures: on both African cities and their informal economies. Intriguingly, reference to chaos, dystopia, and their opposites, order (if unconventional and not Euro-centrally defined) and functionalism, and attempts to reconcile these poles, are very common in the vast literature that exists on each of these themes. In a sense, they define the ‘clash of ideas

² On Nairobi, see Khayesi(1999); waMungai and Samper (2006); Salon and Gulyani (2010); on Kumasi, see Adarkwa and Tamakloe (2001); on Accra, see IBIS Transport Consultants Ltd (2005); on Abidjan, see SSATP (2000); for two overviews with two pages on the urban transport outlook on a wide range of sub-Saharan countries’ main cities, see Kumar and Barrett (2008); Kouakou and Fanny (2008).

about where African cities are heading today' (Freund 2007, 165; see also Gandy 2005, for a review of both dystopic and hopeful narratives on Lagos). A useful starting point to understand what is at stake in this case study of one transport system in one African city is thus to navigate this literature, and to review its leading voices, rather than aiming for exhaustiveness of the coverage of the literature on the African city. My goal is to sketch out the reasons for such a conflicting understanding of the African urban landscape and its informal economies, and the research agendas that both derive from, and inform, such divergent readings.

Structure and agency in the African city

The leading example of perspectives on the urban experience in developing countries which place a strong emphasis on dystopia and chaos work by Mike Davis (2006). Behind the apocalyptic tone of his *Planet of Slums* lies the fact that urbanisation in Asia, Africa and Latin America – unlike urbanisation in the 19th century in the now developed world – has not been accompanied, and driven, by economic growth and industrialisation. This defines its historical novelty, and explains the tragic reality of 'pollution, excrement and decay,' in which more than one billion people live in the shanty towns of cities in developing countries. The employment situation in them is as grim as the housing conditions. Davis reminds us that these are 'cities without jobs'. The number of job seekers has grown rapidly, while the capacity of the formal economy to absorb labour has decreased rather than expanded. As a consequence of this imbalance, the majority of people are pushed towards work in the informal economy, the last resort employer of this 'surplus humanity'.

Davis' apocalyptic approach therefore strongly emphasizes the structural causes that led to this planet of slums without jobs. The lack of industrialisation and of employment

creation, Davis argues, reflects the demise of the post-colonial state development project in the 1970s and the pernicious consequences of neoliberalism and of structural adjustment programmes that came in its wake from the 1980s onwards. The urban poor has thus been hit twice as the withdrawal/failure of the public sector in providing key services such as water, health, education, sanitation and housing has gone hand in hand with the lack of jobs, in a labour market ‘as densely overcrowded as the slums themselves’. A *daladala* worker seems to nod to Davis, by writing on his bus ‘*Usiku mbu, nzi mchana*’ [‘Mosquitoes at night, flies in the day’].

The strength of Davis’ contribution, and arguably its intended goal, is the systematic debunking of mainstream fantasies of slum improvements and of the room for poverty eradication and economic mobility within the informal economy. His focus on how structural forces influence the nature of the urban poor’s experience of the city in developing countries is important, if chilling. This very focus on structures, however, has been, for some, excessive. A common criticism of this apocalyptic narrative is its tendency to sensationalism and its lack of attention to the historical agency that the poor might exert, either to change the grim conditions in which they live and work, or even to survive them (Locatelli and Nugent 2009; Satterwhite 2006). As Myers notes, Davis is ‘so fixated on exploding slums, with no hope for poverty alleviation, and urbanism ... and so driven towards the worst of the worst-case scenario and ‘pathologies’ that we, the readers, can only abandon hope, and turn tail heading elsewhere’ (Myers 2011, 6).³ Others have argued that more descriptive ‘exploding’ of the slums is necessary. Lumping the entire population of Soweto, home as it is to about 2

³Against this reading of Davis’ work on slums as hopelessly pessimistic, it is important to note that Davis ended his *Planet of slums* by laying out the plan to write, with Forrest Hylton, a sequel book on the history and future of slum-based resistance to global capitalism’ (Davis 2006, 201; 207), on the basis of ‘concrete, comparative case studies’, exploring ‘the bewildering variety of responses to structural neglect and deprivation’ and ‘the myriad acts of resistance’. This sequel book was never written, for reasons that I do not know. However, the very fact that it was planned raise questions about dismissing Davis’ work as blind to issues of agency by the poor.

million residents in Johannesburg, under the category of slum resident, conceals its 'phenomenal diversity, including wealthy suburbs, serviced by modern shopping malls and a golf course, as well as 'respectable working class communities' (Zeilig and Ceruti 2007, 3).

By contrast, hope and a focus on the agency of urban residents are the distinctive features of a burgeoning literature that claims to put forward a way of understanding the African city, including its materiality, without the shortcomings and teleology that they perceive to define work informed by critical, and often pessimistic, political economy. Work by scholars such as Simone (2004a; 2004b; and 2005), Pieterse (2008) and Robinson (2006) has taken issue with the normative and Eurocentric nature of such dystopic narratives on urbanisation in the South, in a move away from materialist explanations of urban realities centred on economic failure. In Simone's words, urban life should not be seen as 'a series of policies gone wrong'. In contrast, agency and 'determination by urban Africans to find their own way' and 'the resourcefulness' and 'astute capacity' on which they draw hold the key to understanding urban society in Africa (Simone 2005, 1; see also Tati 2001). Along similar lines Pieterse (2008, 100) argues:

'... our present thinking about meeting the challenge of slums is profoundly impoverished precisely because we locate these places with their teeming complexities in a black box devoid of complex agency and determinacy, which is nonetheless unconsciously ascribed to parts of the modern city that are considered developed or settled ...'.

The implications of such an approach are both theoretical and political/practical. On the former, the goal is the formulation of a better (and post-colonial) urban theory, which is able to reinsert, from 'off the map' the urban experiences of Third World cities. 'All cities are best understood as ordinary', advocates Robinson (2006, 1), in stark contrast with the dystopic narrative on third world cities. At a practical level, what is at stake in opening our eyes to 'the phenomenology and practices of the 'everyday' (Pieterse 2008, 9) or 'the

ordinary' and to the capacity displayed by African cities to generate 'a new urban sociality even under dire conditions' (Simone 2004b, 314) is that such practices 'must be the touchstone of radical imaginings and interventions'. As African cities are built on 'people as infrastructure', policy formulation must, we are told, draw on such infrastructure. In doing so, as Pieterse boldly claims, the goal is 'to recuperate the constitutive humanity and, by extension, generative powers of the ordinary' (Pieterse 2008, 10).⁴

There is much to unpack in this narrative. What is the 'ordinary'? What do concepts such as 'people as infrastructure' and 'generative powers' really mean? From what sources do 'generative powers' derive and what do they generate? To what extent are such 'generative powers' able to make a dent on 'the difficulties and brutalities of grinding poverty and persistent terror', that Pieterse (2008,9) reassures us, he 'is not to romanticize'? And do such contributions have anything to say about how such grinding poverty is generated in the first place? Can one reasonably think of *radical* interventions to improve the lives of people living in poverty without addressing the *root* or *structural* causes of it? Does the 'acknowledgement of the powerful role of economic forces in shaping the urban milieu' necessarily imply 'any sort of teleology in urban history' (Storper and Scott 2016, 10)? Reading such work in search of answers to these questions reveals how its formulation of the proposed alternative remains woefully vague. Take for example, Simone's notion of 'people as infrastructure' which, he claims, helps us to understand that 'something else besides decay might be happening' (Simone 2004a, 407) in the inner city of Johannesburg. His writing

⁴ De Boeck and Plissarts(2004) monograph on Kinshasa differs from such narratives as it is based on a thorough engagement with fieldwork and the empirical, and includes breath taking photos. However, it shares some important similarities as its message tends to unduly romanticise, without much analysis, the ethics of a mythical rural past on which Kinshasa residents draw to navigate the city. Furthermore, despite a certain hopeful ring to much of its story, the book fails to articulate what the concrete possibilities for a better Kinshasa are, as is visible in the concluding section of the book. (Mis)named the '(im)possibilities of the possible', the conclusion presents the vision of another Kinshasa by two artists and no real basis of hope for 'ordinary' citizens.

emphasizes the ‘open ended, the unpredictable’ and’ provisional intersections of residents that operate without clearly delineated notions of how the city is to be inhabited and used’. There is a reference (although unsubstantiated) to the ‘intensifying immiseration of African urban populations’ (is this not normative?) and that the ‘majority of African urban residents have to make what they can out of their bare lives’ (Simone 2004a, 428). Yet, one reads, ‘this seemingly minimalist offer – bare life – is somehow redeemed’ due to its ‘innumerable possibilities of combination and interchange that preclude any definitive judgement of efficacy or impossibility’. But can this claim that within the African city impossible is nothing really stand up to scrutiny?

Writing from the Marxist political economy tradition, in a direct exchange with some of the scholars above, Watts (2004) underlined the significant theoretical and empirical limitations of this kind of work, and the link between the two. There was, he pointed out, very little empirical data, and no information whatsoever on how such data had been gathered. There was no information, apart from anecdotes, on ‘what forms of sociability’ were generated and ‘with what consequences’ (Watts 2004, 184). As this was not spelled out, what transpired was a ‘desperate search of human agency (improvisation, incessant convertibility) in the face of a neoliberal grand slam’. Nuttall and Mbembe (2010) disagreed, and argued that the lack of evidence reflected the fact that the nature of reality in African cities ‘is fundamentally elusive’ (Nuttall and Mbembe 2010, 196). They presented, in response, a manifesto on why it is so difficult to move beyond vague formulations:

‘The difficulty with having to act through the provisionality that ‘people as infrastructure’ implies is that the meanings of the tactics employed can hardly be pinned down. What works in these arrangements and under what circumstances is very difficult to disentangle from or extend to the larger realm of everyday operations. Categories such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, and employment status all

intersect but in ways such that each, taken on its own, loses explanatory power’
(Nuttall and Mbembe 2004, 200)

While pinning down how such categories play themselves out on the ground is indeed challenging, work by scholars who have not been so discouraged by the elusive nature of African urban reality is still capable of advancing knowledge in important ways. For example, Alexander and co-writers explore the ways in which class (included under ‘employment status’ in Nuttall and Mbembe’s list) and other markers of difference such as religion and gender regulate daily life in Soweto, Johannesburg (Alexander et al. 2013). It thus seems that Nuttall’s and Mbembe’s methodology, rather than being a consequence of the elusive nature of African urban realities, is a matter of preference and choice, and a choice that is shared by many other scholars writing on urban Africa. It is, however, questionable, as their preference for light or no engagement with the empirical, and the vague meaning of the reference to the ‘ordinary’, and to the ‘everyday’, with no clear evidence of what people actually do, critically undermines the analytical purchase of such approaches.

Furthermore, it produces extraordinary cities as they resemble, in a sense, cities of ghosts. Their inhabitants, the amorphous ‘urban poor’, or ‘people at the grassroots’, tend to float mid-air, unhinged from the material and the economic. It is this incapacity and/or lack of interest in pinning down materiality, the bones of everyday life and social order, and the resulting reliance on shallow concepts such as ‘people as infrastructure’, that makes implausible the claim that ‘radical imaginings and interventions’ should, or even can, be built on the social fabric created by the poor. In sum, such approaches appear as the mirror image of the apocalyptic narratives that they criticise. Their emphasis on the agency and functionalism of initiatives by the poor suffers from the lack of any substantive attention to the economic and political structures in which the poor are located, despite claims to the contrary. Pieterse worries that ‘There is a real danger that the material deprivation that

accompanies slum life becomes the sole lens through which these communities, households and urban actors are understood and engaged' (Pieterse 2008, 32). In contrast, my worry is that the steady flow of romantic and unsubstantiated celebrations of the choices and repertoires of 'people at the grassroots' crowds out an understanding of the concrete realities they face, and thus any possibility of assessing the meaning and impact of their actions, and of reflecting on the triumphs and tragedies that they experience in seeking to cope with and overcome the challenges of their lives.

Structure and agency in the African informal economy

What do 'people at grassroots' or 'ordinary citizens' do every day in Africa? The majority spend a large part of their very long working days seeking a living in the informal economy. Statistics tell us that in no other region in the world is the informal economy as central to livelihoods and economic growth as in Africa. Therein the share of employment in the informal economy as a percentage of non-agricultural employment is over 70 percent, and the share of the Gross National Product (GNP) produced in the informal economy is over 40 percent.⁵ Central to the argument that there is more to the African city than dystopia is a hopeful reading of the potential of informal economy activities. As Simone puts it, informal 'economies and activities might act as a platform for the creation of a very different kind of sustainable urban configuration from those currently generally seen' (Simone 2005, 4).

It is therefore important to explore how such an approach conceptualises economic informality and on the basis of what evidence. Take, for instance, Simone's writing on 'The Informal' in Pikine, Senegal. A description emerges from anecdotal accounts which together

⁵ Recent research has importantly questioned the reliability of several datasets on African development (Jerven 2013; Jerven and Johnston 2015). While one needs to be wary of taking any statistical information at face value, there is no denying that the size of the informal economy is very large in Africa.

provide an image of an informal economy rich with examples clearly belonging to Davis' 'Museum of exploitation' (Davis 2006, 186). One reads (Simone 2005, 31; 38; 42; 62) the story of a driver of a local bus, accidentally injuring a child while 'veering off into a street-side market stall'. He was killed in retaliation and the vehicle was set on fire. One learns that 'in some areas of the city, up to 40 percent of children do not attend public schools because they are unable to pay even minimal fees. Through child labour, these children earn their education in 'informal schools', which Simone suggests to be, perhaps too benignly, 'an important context of instruction'. The reality of widespread under and unemployment is visible, as 'most young people are, in the end, not working, although they have small opportunities now and then', and so is people's pessimism about the possibility for change, as 'in Pikine everyone, from mayors to grassroots activists, complains about how difficult it is to change anything'. None of the vignettes presented supports the overall conclusion to the chapter, and its paradoxically upbeat tone, that 'in the interstices of complex urban politics, new trajectories of urban mobility and mobilization are taking place', and there are no clues as to how 'a very different kind of sustainable urban configuration' might flourish out of the informal economy. Conceptually, everything seems to fall into the murky category of 'sustainable urban configuration', including urban contexts in which poverty sustainably (or chronically?) reproduces itself. In sum, the very incapacity to take structural forces seriously that characterises Simone's contribution to the study of the African city reveals itself through, and fuels, his analysis of the informal economy. This amounts to a romantic celebration of survivalism and of 'people's agency'.

In a similar vein, Pieterse (2008, 114-115) suggests that:

'Clearly, for as long as the contemporary capitalist system persists, ... uneven and highly *exclusionary* (emphasis added), it is likely that it will serve the interest of the majority of the poor better to retain their *autonomy* (emphasis added) and cannibalize formal systems and resources where they can; and to bend parts of the city to their

will by defending and consolidating their micro-gains they succeed by simply surviving the viciousness of the city's economic reproduction'.

Two aspects are noticeable about the above claim that autonomy from the formal sector and exclusion from the capitalist system are the drivers of the poor's reliance on informal economic activities. First is the lack of evidence to justify it. Second is that it is a way of conceptualising economic informality that echoes that put forward by the single most influential writer on economic informality, Hernando de Soto (1989; 2001), to whom the analysis now turns.⁶

De Soto has been the 'self-appointed spokesman of the informal sector' (Breman 2013, 254) for over 25 years, first through his work on Peru (de Soto 1989) and, more recently, through his work on 'why capitalism triumphs in the West and has failed everywhere else' (de Soto 2001). His approach, labelled by many as dualistic, puts forward a simple idea, and a very seductive one for policy makers, that the informal sector exists in *separation* from the formal sector, and it is the refuge of the urban poor who are *excluded* from the formal economy. Reference to the informal poor's agency characterises this approach also, although its conceptualisation of agency differs. There is a pronounced market fundamentalism at work here, as the capacity of the poor to respond to market opportunities explains their resilience and their capacity to survive exclusion from the formal sector through ingenious and 'heroic' entrepreneurialism. The role played by structural forces in causing economic informality is conspicuously overlooked. De Soto suggests that state

⁶My point here is to draw attention to the striking similarities in these authors' conceptualisation of economic informality as a space of autonomy for poor people and not to equate the thrust of their overall contributions. While de Soto's work is to be understood as market triumphalism and fundamentalism, work by Pieterse and Simone cannot. Theirs is a more ambivalent position, in which a critical stance towards the impact of economic liberalisation on life in African cities, and the challenges that this presents for urban planners, sit alongside a mainstream anti-public sector stance. One example of the latter is Simone's unsubstantiated claim that 'targeted investments in human capital creation, employment and entrepreneurship, largely managed outside the public realm, will result in better health and living conditions' (Simone 2005, 4).

regulation of the economy, and the endless red tape with which the poor are confronted to register their small businesses, explain why such a large percentage of economic activity takes place in non-compliance with state regulatory frameworks. As de Soto has trenchantly put it, the poor ‘do not so much break the law as the law breaks them’ (de Soto 2001, : 23).⁷ The growth of the informal economy is thus framed as a choice by entrepreneurs, rooted in their spontaneous and collective response to over-regulation by predatory state apparatuses.

Similar to post-colonial narratives on the city, De Soto pays no attention to internal differentiation within the informal economy and to whether such differentiation impacts on how informality works for different kinds of people. This is part of his explicit downplaying of the explanatory power of class. Its usefulness, he suggests, has been made redundant by the (alleged) reality that self-employment and working for a family business are the dominant employment relations in the informal economy. As de Soto put it ‘Marx would probably be shocked to find out how in developing countries much of the teeming mass does not consist of oppressed legal proletarians but of oppressed extralegal small *entrepreneurs*’ (de Soto 2001, 229, quoted in Davis 2006, 179; Krueckeberg 2004, 2).

A wealth of studies on the informal economy in Africa (see among others, Azarya and Chazan 1987; Tripp 1997; MacGaffey 1991; Hansen and Vaa 2004), draw on and amplify, explicitly or otherwise, de Soto’s conceptualization of the growth of informality as a process of poor people’s empowerment and his assumption that entrepreneurial self-employment is the predominant employment status in it. The agency of ‘informal people’ in bringing about

⁷ In close alignment with de Soto, Simone states that ‘An informal sector is thus partially elaborated because of the excess and inappropriateness of regulations that persist in the absence of systematic and realistic ways of assessing domestic economies’ (Simone 2004, 26)

deregulation from below is emphasized, as is the importance of a shared moral economy driving the spontaneous, unorganized, but nonetheless effective resistance of the African urban poor to their unresponsive governments. As Tripp has expressed it, in a study on the informal economy in Tanzania which was well received by many, the relaxation of government control over the economy in the 1980s 'indicated the beginnings of some long overdue adjustments in state-society relations that made the state responsive to societal needs' (Tripp, 1997, 139).

The influence of these ideas on policy makers cannot be underestimated. Inspired by de Soto's insights, programmes promoting the formalisation of property rights and small businesses have been rolled out across developing countries, Africa included. A number of scholars have emphasised the weak evidential basis for the poverty-reducing power of these programmes (Gilbert 2002; Home and Lim 2004; Myers 2008). Their record in unlocking the productive potential of the poor has been far from positive. Tanzania has also launched one such programme, the Property and Business Formalization Programme ('*Mkurabita*', in its Swahili acronym), with the direct involvement of de Soto himself and armies of staff from his Institute for Liberty and Democracy. The land titles of over 219,000 properties were formalized in Dar es Salaam alone over five years. In stark contrast to the scenario envisaged by its proponents, the programme resulted in gentrification as poor residents were forced out of the central areas of Dar es Salaam (Muhajir 2011, quoted in Myers, 2011). While micro-credit has different roots, it is an intervention that dovetails effectively with the narrative of the informal poor as small-scale entrepreneurs, and on that premise it has attempted to foster their financial *inclusion*, with very mixed results. Above all, this approach, and the interventions that emanate from it, suffers from 'jobs dementia', as Amsden (2010, 60) memorably termed it: the belief that by supplying credit or training to self-employed entrepreneurs, demand for such businesses will, somehow, materialise.

There exists, however, a much less positive reading of the widespread informalisation of economies and of the nature of the state-society shifts that it has brought about. In contrast with de Soto and his followers, it emphasises class and the role of structural forces in causing informalisation. Work under the informalisation approach, first put forward by Castells and Portes (Portes et al. 1989) with reference to Latin America, emphasized the systematic link between the formal and the informal sector. It stressed that behind the pervasive informalisation of economies lay capitalists' new strategies to deal with the crisis in profitability which followed the oil crisis of the early 1970s. The growth of the informal economy here is better understood as a process, which reflects the strategy by formal businesses of going informal to avoid the costs of rights hard won by organised labour (Portes et al. 1989). In the words of Breman, whose fieldwork-based research on the Indian informal economy spans over 40 years, the informal economy becomes 'a regime to cheapen the cost of labour in order to raise the profit of capital' (Breman 2013, 1). The role of the state in explaining economic informalisation is also important, although in a radically different connotation to that outlined by the dualistic approach. State complicity with the interests of capital and employers, rather than its over-regulation of the economy, is a necessary condition for the informalisation of the economy. These are important points, although what matters is to avoid, once more, a functionalist and teleological reading of the growth of the informal economy entirely as a function of capital's interest. Not every occupation or development in the informal economy can be explained as such.

Crucially, attention to dynamics of socio-economic stratification within the informal economy leads scholars such as Portes and co-workers, and Breman to reject the characterisation of the informal economy as inhabited by own-account entrepreneurs. This, they state, is misleading, for two main reasons. First, it conceals the significant numbers of workers in the informal economy who are working for other people. De Soto's claim, and the

uncritical adherence to it in much research, that ‘most of the poor already possess the assets they need to make a success of capitalism’ (de Soto 2001, 6), sits at odds with evidence from a number of studies showing that it is precisely the lack of any asset other than their own labour that forces the very poor to sell their labour, in precarious and vulnerable conditions, to asset owners. This is not to deny that self-employment is not a widespread type of employment status in the informal economy, although as Breman reminds us, ‘What at first sight seems like self-employment and which also presents itself as such, often conceals sundry forms of wage labour’ (Breman 1996, 8). Rather, the point is to question the rosy and idealistic portrayal of self-employed entrepreneurialism and the lack of attention, once more, to the structural constraints that militate against genuine entrepreneurialism. In light of these, the reality of operating at a very small scale is better understood as survivalism, as saturated markets with low financial entry costs negatively affect (already low) profit margins.

In sum, as Meagher usefully puts it, ‘We need to break the black box of the informal economy’, ‘as the dualistic informality paradigm has become too blunt an instrument to capture the growing complexity and heterogeneity of contemporary unofficial economies’ (Meagher 2010, 16). Rather than assuming what the dominant employment relations are in the informal economy, and its potential for growth, we need to explore ‘the organizational dynamics and power relations’ within it.

Class matters

We return to where our journey started, with my early impression of Dar es Salaam’s transport system as ‘functional chaos’. A brief overview of key contributions to the study of the African city and its informal economies revealed how functionality and dystopia – and the various conceptualisations of agency (or lack of them) that they offer – are also central to this

literature. A critical review of such contributions highlighted their useful insights and pitfalls. This book is entitled 'taken for a ride' because its analysis challenges and aims to debunk two misleading narratives that have become dominant in writing on African cities and on their informal economies. The first, which can be dubbed as 'post-colonial', is that associated with the influential work of Pieterse, Robinson, and Simone. Its celebration of the functionality of African cities, and of the agency of the African urban poor, including of their initiatives in the informal economy, pays inadequate attention to the magnitude and nature of the structural forces at play in African cities and in the informal economy. It also fails to articulate whether and how the alternative order and social fabric woven by urban poor initiatives helps to address the structural problems of African cities or the structural disadvantage faced by the poor. A second narrative is that informed by De Soto's market fundamentalism. Its celebratory reading of informal economic activities as poor people's empowerment is equally unconvincing, as it lacks attention to the structural barriers that the poor are to overcome for genuine empowerment and as it presents a rosy conceptualisation of the nature of markets and how they work. The close examination of the reality of working in the informal economy in public transport in Dar es Salaam, and of the operations of private operators in unregulated markets, will suggest that the superior efficiency of the private individual in 'free markets', which has informed policy-making since the early 1980s, was no more than an ideological article of faith. It will also show that readers on urban Africa and their informal economies are not the only category who have been taken for a ride; passengers' experience of Dar es Salaam public transport following economic deregulation was very different from what the advocates of reforms had promised, as speeding and overloading became the trademark characteristics of the inefficient private operators which supplied public transport to the city.

In this book the question of the extent to which the informal poor exerts any agency in the process of development takes centre stage. Answering such a question in a meaningful

way requires greater attention to the insight that ‘men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past’, as Marx famously put it (Marx 1852). Thus first and foremost the urban poor must be located within an economic and social context. Making sense of the formidable structural forces the informal poor are up against is crucial to understanding their agency in the process of development, in a less romantic and more grounded fashion.⁸ At the same time, as the founders of Marxism reminds us, attention to economic structures needs to avoid determinism and teleology, thus preventing due focus on what agency the informal poor might possess and on the possibilities for change: ‘History does nothing, it ‘possesses no immense wealth’, it ‘wages no battles’. It is man, real, living man who does all that, who possesses and fights; ‘history’ is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its own aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims’ (Marx and Engels 1844/2012). It is therefore useful to clarify in what way, in this case study on urban public transport in Dar es Salaam and its development over time, I will endeavour to avoid the teleology and determinism that is suggested, too hastily, to be the defining feature of Marxist political economy, starting with my use of class as a category of analysis.

First, I use class as a relational concept. Ownership of capital (such as land and other assets, most notably buses in this case), as opposed to the sale of labour power to those with such capital, determines people’s class position in the structure of a given society, and their economic stakes. The social relations between capital and labour, and the dynamics of class formation over time, are the key drivers (albeit not the only ones) of processes of socio-

⁸ A handful of recent studies document wage work in informal labour markets as a key source of income for the ‘urban poor’ (see Jason 2008; Lourenco-Lindell 2002; Mitulla and Wachira 2003; Boampong 2010).

economic change. Their study must begin with questions such as ‘who owns what’ and ‘who does what with it’ as these are key to understanding the nature and actors of capitalist development. Only by posing such questions can one see that the private operators of bus public transport in Dar es Salaam are differentiated between those who own the vehicles and those who work on them. They also reveal that the employment relationship linking these two classes is central to the way in which the service of public transport is provided, with all its tensions. The consequences of unregulated employment relations affect not only workers but also Dar es Salaam’s public; speeding, overloading buses, and refusing transport to school pupils are to be understood as practices through which workers respond to exploitation by bus owners.

Second, paying close attention to the specificity of this case confirms the extraordinary heterogeneity that characterizes the conditions of labour today (Radice 2014). The book draws on Bernstein’s conceptualization of this phenomenon in terms of ‘classes of labour’, whose common ground, notwithstanding their heterogeneity, is the need to secure ‘reproduction though insecure and oppressive – and typically increasingly scarce – wage employment and/or a range of likewise precarious small-scale and insecure ‘informal sector’ (‘survival’) activities ... in effect, various and complex *combinations* of employment and self-employment’ (Bernstein 2007, 6-7). This complexity certainly makes categories such as ‘worker’, ‘peasant’, ‘employed and ‘self-employed’ fluid. At the same time it should not distract from the fact that sale of labour power is the main source of income to the poorest.

Third, the identity, political consciousness and capacity to act collectively by ‘classes of labour’ cannot be ‘read off’ from their socio-economic position in society in a teleological or functionalist fashion; there are a series of complexities and determinations in moving from ‘the social facts’ to the ‘political facts’, as Mamdani (1996, 219) puts it (see also Cooper 1983). Thus the study of labour identity(ies) and the extent to which it is experienced and

expressed – or not – in class terms is an important line of enquiry in itself. Along these lines Harriss-White and Gooptu (2000) suggest that ‘class struggle is first a struggle over class and only second a struggle between classes’. They show how and why the informal workforce in India is divided and remains engaged in the ‘struggle over class’ whilst capitalist classes actively wage an offensive against labour. In contrast to the blindness of much scholarship to class in the informal economy in Africa, their work, as well as that by Breman (1996), Harriss-White (2003) and Lerche (2010), sets the bar very high in documenting the abysmal conditions in which unskilled labour fares in neoliberal India. It examines the contingent ways in which both labour oversupply and labour fragmentation prevent the experiences of class dynamics from translating into widespread political radicalism. By drawing comparatively on these examples of undogmatic Marxist work on informal labour, the book’s main contribution is the investigation of how ‘classes of labour’ fare in the context of Dar es Salaam bus public transport.

Neoliberalism, post-socialism and public transport

Neoliberalism is a key concept used in this book to understand Dar es Salaam and Tanzania, its policies and socio-economic conditions, and the changing organisation and performance of the public transport system in the city from the early 1980s to 2015. This is an analytical choice that needs qualifying, as there is an intense debate over the usefulness of the term ‘neoliberalism’ itself. So what does the term mean and what is at stake in its use? To be sure, the plurality of ways in which neoliberalism is understood makes the concept ‘chaotic’ (Jessop 2013, 65), ‘ill-defined’ (Mudge 2008, 703), ‘promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined’ (Brenner et al. 2010, 184) and even ‘confused and confusing’ (Turner 2008, 2). A useful starting point to navigate this confusion is to note that, like history for

Marx and Engels, ‘neoliberalism per se does nothing... Rather *people* act to promote politically and ideologically infused ends, and their actions and the premises that they are based in can be interpreted as part of a broader pattern of social action which one can label as neoliberalism’ (Harrison 2010, 28). Neoliberalism is therefore a political project, associated with a set of economic policies, and promoted through agents. Whilst wide ranging in focus, neoliberal policies are rooted in the idea that the promotion of an individual’s economic freedom and private capital is the best way to organise economies and societies. But there is also an ideological element to neoliberalism, a way of seeing the world, developmental challenges, economies and societies, that purposefully attempts to forge a hegemonic consensus on how the world works, who inhabits it, and consequently on what is to be done to solve its problems (Clarke 2005).

The concept ‘neoliberalism’ emerged in the late 1970s, to capture the process of deregulation that underpinned the political promotion of the freedom of the individual in ‘free markets’, the superior efficiency of which was influentially argued by economists such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek. The first experiments with neoliberalism were in the United States and the United Kingdom where, under the governments of Reagan and Thatcher, radical reforms- centred on economic liberalisation across the economy, attacks on the welfare state and on organised labour - reorganised the economy following the economic crisis of the late 1970s. At the same time, the purchase of these ideas on international financial institutions gave a foothold from which to attempt to give global reach to the neoliberal project.

Crucially, ‘neo-liberalism has never been short of state intervention. Indeed it has positively deployed it to promote not so much the amorphous market as the interests of private capital’ (Van Waeyenberge et al. 2011, 8). To further complicate matters, the way in which the interests of private capital have been promoted has changed over the years, leading,

schematically, to two distinct phases. The first, dubbed ‘shock therapy’, or ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism (Brenner and Theodore 2002), entailed promoting private capital through changes in economic policy that ‘rolled-back’ efforts to manage the market by the state; privatisation and economic deregulation were its key manifestation. The second, dubbed as ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism, saw a different role for the state, which was brought back into the scene to correct market imperfections and to improve its workings, often in response to problems created during the ‘shock therapy’. To capture this change with an example, and one that is relevant to this book, whereas in the 1980s neoliberalism in Dar es Salaam public transport manifested itself as budget cuts to the public provider of transport, its retreat from service provision, the opening of this service to private operators, and the progressive economic deregulation of their activity, in more recent times the focus has been on boosting the role of the state to reorganise the provision of this service under a Public-Private Partnership. Boosted by a multimillion dollar loan from the World Bank, the Tanzanian state has embarked upon a major project to radically alter the provision of public transport in Dar es Salaam. The public sector role in the partnership is to finance infrastructural work and to regulate the activities of transport providers which, as part of the conditions attached to World Bank lending, will be private. Thus, the PPP entails the use of public debt to fund the opening up of public transport in the city to private (and perhaps controversially foreign) capital of various forms.

If the focus of neoliberalism has thus changed over the years, the way in which the project has taken roots has been equally uneven. This is because the promotion of this political project, and more specifically the agendas of its agents in individual places/sectors, does not take place in a vacuum. It entails encountering possible or actual resistance to it, leading to context specific forms of ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ (Brenner and Theodore 2002). It is this changing focus of neoliberalism over time, its many dimensions and the

uneven way in which they manifested themselves in different places at different times, that has led some to call for an abandonment of the concept, for, the argument goes, it conceals more than it reveals.

Debates on how to study urbanisation and urban experience are a useful entry point to further explore this issue. For some, cities are ‘major sites of civic initiative as well as of accumulating economic and social tensions associated with neoliberal projects’ (Jessop 2002, 455; 452), and places in which their tensions are visible ‘more saliently in everyday life’. However, sceptics question ‘the extent to which the diversity of urban outcomes with which neoliberal policy circuits are associated necessarily contributes to a wider project of neoliberalization initially specified in its northern idiom’ (Robinson and Parnell 2011, 528-529). This is because ‘the multiple circulating policy discourses which accompany the international development project, create messy accounts of urban change’, processes that ‘are not easily attributable to something called neoliberalism’. Other scholars, while equally aware of the murkiness of the concept, have worked with it, for its rejection entails taking ‘analytical attention away from the underlying *commonalities* – for instance, an emphasis on market logics, private property rights, economic optimization and commodification – that pervasively recur amid otherwise diverse forms of regulatory experimentation and institutional reform’ and ‘an embrace of unprincipled variety and unstructured contingency’ (Brenner et al. 2010, 203).

The disagreement amongst scholars on the usefulness of neoliberalism as a concept thus centres on questions that have to be validated, above all, empirically. In doing so, the task at hand is, in Hart’s words, ‘coming to grips with how identifiably neoliberal projects and practices operate on terrains that always exceed them’ (Hart 2008, 678). Those who advocate the centrality of the term to understand the world we live in direct our attention ‘to understand how local transformations relate to broader terms’ (Harvey 2005, 87). Those who

doubt its usefulness do so on the grounds that the promotion of and resistance to neoliberalism are not the main game in town, and an excessive focus on them risks missing out on broader processes of economic, political and cultural development. Instead, they suggest, our attention should verge towards ‘the value of a progressive politics beyond a focus on neoliberalism and anti-neoliberalism’ (Robinson and Parnell 2011, 529). The debate therefore boils down to assessing to what extent reality on the ground is illuminated or distorted by the deployment of the concept of neoliberalism and to what extent one can find evidence of ‘multiple circulating policy discourses’, of which a neoliberal discourse is just one.

This book makes the claim that, from the early 1980s to the present, Tanzania’s wider political economy, including changing policies in the public transport system, can be understood as embodying certain logics of neoliberalism. As I will go on to show, there is much to be lost in rejecting the concept of neoliberalism when making sense of how the public transport system in Dar es Salaam functions, or does not function, and the way in which it has changed. The promotion of neoliberalism, in complex and different ways over time, proved to be the main force behind these changes. It set ‘the political and economic agenda, limit[ed] the possible outcomes, biase[d] expectations, and impose[d] urgent tasks on those challenging its assumptions, methods and consequences’ (Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005, 3–4). Indeed, Dar es Salaam’s experience of a shift in the provision of public transport from public to private mirrors that of every main African city. However, the actual shape neoliberalism took in Dar es Salaam public transport and its politics was unique. Grounding neoliberalism in this particular context therefore necessitated attention to the domestic politics and path-dependency of its promotion, and to the challenges and resistance that this triggered. This required, first and foremost, identifying the range of different actors who had

stakes in the sector, and on what sorts of power, if any, they drew in their attempts to influence developments in it.

Postsocialism is an insightful analytical lens to understand neoliberalism, its politics in Tanzania, and the ambivalent positions of the Tanzanian government towards economic reform, including the direction of public transport in Dar es Salaam. The Tanzanian government has been seen as a model implementer of economic liberalisation in many ways, but far from straightforward in its commitment to it, as values and discourses from the socialist period both called for and informed its attempts to intervene in the economy. Research on Eastern and Central European countries, and on China, has thrown important light on the hybrid and contradictory thrust of policy-making in countries embracing economic liberalisation following the demise of socialism (Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Grabher and Stark 1997; Hann 2002; Stenning 2005; Walder 1995). Among Africanists, Pitcher and Askew incisively argued for more historical depth in much research on neoliberalism in the continent and in particular for an understanding of ‘whether, or how, a socialist past might shape a postsocialist present’ (Pitcher and Askew 2006, 3). There was a call to explore the ‘institutional and discursive legacies’ left behind by socialism, and to the ‘idioms and symbolic frameworks, collective strategies and individual practices’ deployed by those who ‘interpret, reject or respond to the momentous political and economic changes that have occurred’ since the end of socialism.

In paying attention to Tanzania’s socialist past and what is left of it, one must begin by noting that its ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) first and then ‘*Chama cha Mapinduzi*’ (CCM), has been in power since independence.⁹ Since then, TANU/CCM transitioned from being the spearhead of ‘*ujamaa*’, as Tanzanian socialism was

⁹ CCM was formed in 1977, the year in which the Afro-Shirazi Party and TANU, ruling parties in Zanzibar and Tanzania’s mainland respectively merged.

named, from 1967 to the mid 1980s, to being the implementer of one of the most comprehensive experiences of economic liberalisation in Sub-Saharan Africa, and one for which Tanzania became one of the donors darlings. Through the process, the uses of the socialist past have been open-ended, as different actors have exploited in different ways ‘the fluidity and elasticity of concepts’ (Pitcher and Askew 2006, 5) that were central to the building of a socialist nation under ‘*ujamaa*’, such as egalitarianism, social justice and state ownership. These have been re-appropriated and/or reworked, to both resist economic and political liberalisation and to justify it. Jamie Monson’s (2006) insightful study of resistance to the privatisation of the Tanzania Zambia Railway (TAZARA) - the ‘freedom railway’ linking Zambia to Tanzania built with Chinese money during the ‘*ujamaa*’ period - illustrates how socialist values and discourses were invoked to oppose economic reforms (see also Ghanadan 2009, Kelsall 2003). The socialist regime called on the principle of international socialist solidarity when it exhorted construction workers to see the railway that they were building as theirs, and their work as a contribution to a national and regional liberation project.¹⁰ Such language was turned on its head by local leaders and communities who resisted the closing down of stations and other measures to cut the railway costs and increase its revenue, as well as its rumoured privatisation, precisely by arguing that these were steps that took the railway away from the people, instead putting it at the service of the interests of the IMF and the World Bank (Monson 2006). Socialist values and concepts were not exclusively a weapon to resist reforms. They were also reworked by those in power to fit the new direction of policy-making following economic liberalisation. For example, during *ujamaa* ‘self-reliance’ was to be achieved through the leadership of the state, its ownership of

¹⁰ TAZARA was also known as the ‘freedom railway’ as by connecting the Zambian copperbelt to the port of Dar es Salaam it freed the Zambian economy from reliance on the railways of White-ruled Rhodesia on which it had hitherto depended.

national assets, and its public action (Lal 2012, 214).¹¹It was by invoking ‘self-reliance’ (*‘kujitemea’*) that president Nyerere refused structural adjustment loans, and the forsaking of Tanzania’s national sovereignty in setting its own economic policy that such loans entailed (Aminzade 2013, 239). However, following economic reforms ‘self-reliance’ took a number of new meanings, and it increasingly referred to the neoliberal entrepreneurial *individual*, whom public officials exhorted to rely on his/her-own initiative after the rolling back of the state (Askew 2006, 31; Lal 2012, 230). Later, Nyerere, and the legacy of his values as the founding father of the nation, proved equally fungible, as they were invoked in different, and often antithetical, ways by the ruling party, its opposition, and more broadly by actors and authors critical of the path of economic liberalisation undertaken by the CCM (Becker 2013, Brennan 2014, Chachage and Cassam 2010, McDonald and Sahle 2002).

The economic context, characterised by sustained jobless growth and by the increasing prominence of foreign investors, helps to explain the government’s ambivalent stance towards the direction of policy. Since the turn of the century, Tanzania has been among the fastest growing economies in Africa, and in the world, its GDP having grown annually by more than 6 %between 2001 and 2013 (UNDP and United Republic of Tanzania 2015,23). As such, Tanzania is part and parcel of the ‘Africa rising’ narrative (*The Economist*, 3 December 2011;McKinsey Global Institute 2010).Such rates of GDP growth granted its leadership the praise, and generous support, of the international aid community, which heralded the country as an example of what economic liberalisation can deliver for growth. However, the impact of over a decade of sustained growth on poverty reduction has been disappointing, as the percentage of people living in poverty declined far too slowly,

¹¹ It is important to note that ‘self-reliance’ had taken different connotations during *ujamaa* itself, as it referred to both a goal and a practice, and targeted difference audiences, from the *individual* to the *nation*, linked together by a layer of institutions (the district, the ward, the village, and so forth), all of which had to be self-sufficient (Lal 2012).

from 35.6% in 2001, to 33.6% in 2007 and then to 28.2% in 2012% (National Bureau of Statistics 2002; UNDP and United Republic of Tanzania 2015, xii). Earlier enthusiasm by donors about the path taken by the economy sobered into a concern about ‘Sustaining and *sharing* (emphasis added) economic growth in Tanzania’ (Utz 2008).

The reasons for the slow rate of poverty reduction stem from the composition and nature of economic growth in Tanzania and, crucially, the impact of this on employment dynamics. The relative size of agriculture shrank from over 50% of GDP in 1987 to 28% in 2010, while over the same period industry and the service sectors grew, respectively, from 15% to 24% and from 38% to 48% of GDP (Wuyts and Kilama 2014, 21). However, the impacts of these sectoral shifts on the structure of employment were negligible, as the sectors driving economic growth, mining (as the most dynamic subsector within industry) and service, are economic ‘activities with high productivity but low employment generation’ (UNDP and United Republic of Tanzania 2015, xv). Their growth thus did little to absorb the rapidly growing labour force of Tanzania. Manufacturing (another industry sub-sector) did not contribute significantly to job creation either, as it grew at a relatively slower pace than mining and it was concentrated in the production of goods with limited value added. As a result, despite their growth, industry and service combined could employ less than 20% of the country’s workforce. The vast majority of the labour force worked instead in low productivity and poor quality jobs either in the informal economy or in agriculture, the latter accounting for nearly four/fifths of employment (Wuyts and Kilama 2014, 34). In sum, the fact that growth in productivity concentrated in sectors with negligible employment growth goes a long way to explaining why Tanzania’s economic growth has been jobless and thus did not result in significant poverty reduction.¹²

¹² Demographic trends are also significant here. The fact that Tanzania has one of the fastest rates of demographic growth in the world, at 2.7% per annum, is an important part of the story, as it implies

Another fundamental characteristic of the Tanzanian economy, together with its jobless growth, has been the growing weight and visibility of foreign investors in the economy following economic reforms, and the legitimacy challenges that this posed to the Tanzanian leadership in the context of economic growth and very slow poverty reduction. The relaxation of government control was a key component of the strategy adopted by the government, under pressure from donors, to attract foreign investors from 1985 to 2000. Successful as this strategy was, it also brought in its wake a growing resentment about the inclusiveness of the post-socialist order of things and in particular a recrudescence of anti-foreign feelings that had a long history in Tanzania (Aminzade 2013). Conflict over land in the mining sector, and in agriculture, including violence surrounding cases of ‘land grab’ by foreign investors, were heavily covered by the media, and a subject of debate in Parliament. Foreigners were central to the ‘contentious politics of neoliberalisation’ (Aminzade 2013, 276), as media, activists and MPs, from both the ruling party and the opposition, questioned the capacity of the government to safeguard the interests of Tanzanians alongside and/or from those of the foreign actors who disproportionately benefited from economic growth. It is in this context, and in light of the challenges of legitimacy that it posed to the government, that a number of high profile policy reversals observable from 2000 onwards can be understood.¹³ The employment crisis amid economic growth in Tanzania, the salience of post-

that its economic growth needed to be shared among a rapidly growing population, to the tune of 1.2 million births each year (UNDP and United Republic of Tanzania 2015, 18-19). However, it would be misleading to identify demographic growth as a crude explanation of why economic growth has not translated into significant poverty reduction. After all, the economy grew significantly faster than its population every single year from 1995 to 2015.

¹³ Not everyone would agree to this interpretation. A 2013 *Financial Times* special report on the Tanzanian economy, revealingly entitled ‘Statist ways hold back progress’, contained the observation by a ‘leading businessman’ that ‘If something becomes successful, the government interferes’, laying the blame for such interventions on public sector corruption. Interestingly, such a position echoed that of the World Bank in earlier years. As the results of structural adjustment programmes began to appear less rosy than the World Bank had earlier expected (World Bank 1989), lack of commitment to reforms by ‘political elites, who resisted

socialist politics, the new anti-foreign feeling and how the government ambivalently navigated these challenges are also central to this story on the changing nature of public transport in Dar es Salaam. How and why will become clearer through an overview of the chapters in the book, to which the analysis now turns.

Methodology of the book and its chapters

The key ingredients of the interdisciplinary research strategy that informs this book are its reliance on a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, my own fluency in Swahili, and a prolonged engagement with the field, consisting of over fourteen months of fieldwork, and spanning from 1998 to 2014. The two longest research spells were in 1998 and 2001-2002, together accounting for over 9 months of fieldwork. I then carried out shorter research spells, each lasting approximately three weeks, in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014. These allowed me not only to follow up leads from earlier research but also to observe important changes in the Dar es Salaam public transport system over time, which further prompted my attention to the twists and turns of its political economy. In light of this, it is useful to present the main research questions, as they developed over time, alongside the research techniques adopted to answer them. They explain how and why the wide range of empirical data that informs the analysis of this book were assembled or generated.

Newspapers, a remarkably underused source in the study of development, were the starting point of my efforts to understand the context of my research and they have informed the analysis of every chapter of the book, bar one. As public transport is a central economic

and distorted SAP for self-interest' and not SAPs themselves (Mkandawire and Soludo 1998, 81; see also Olukoshi 2003) were identified as the cause of the problem. Governance accordingly became a new additional area of work of the World Bank (1994).

sector in the life of any city, and as such very much in the public eye, newspaper coverage of the city's public transport issues provided not only the entry point to sketch out the key trends within the transport system, but also important insights into what were its main tensions, as well as details of the names and institutional affiliations of the key players. This is how many, although not all, of the players involved in the politics and/or policy-making on public transport were first identified, to then further investigate their insights through interviews. Other sources and/or research techniques were more specific to individual chapters, the content and sources of these to which I now turn.

Chapter 2 sets the scene, and sketches the structural forces that influenced the demand for, and supply of, public transport in Dar es Salaam from Independence, in 1961, to the present. A complex set of causes, both internal and external, prevented the Tanzanian state from increasing the supply of public transport to match growing demand. These are reviewed. The mismatch between transport demand and supply led to chronic transport shortages and ultimately forced the government to abandon its initial refusal to allow the private sector into service provision. Thus, in 1983, *daladala* entered the market, and by the early 1990s they had become the only supplier of public transport. The chapter explores the link between the momentous shifts in policy-making at international and national level, most notably the rise of neoliberalism and the adoption of structural adjustment policies, and the direction of policy-making on public transport in the city. The main research questions were: a) how the public and private sector roles in the provision of public transport in Dar es Salaam changed over time; and b) whether the outcome of the deregulation and privatisation of public transport and the performance of the private sector justified the belief in the merits of economic liberalisation held by its advocates. The chapter reveals how urban passengers of public transport in Dar es Salaam have been taken for a ride literally and also in a more figurative sense. The rationale behind the reforms, which centred on the assumption about the

superior efficiency of the private sector if left operating in unfettered markets, proved to be an article of faith. The chapter also highlights the contradictory stance of the government towards economic deregulation, the tensions that it generated and the winding down of the socialist agenda that it entailed. The initial opening to private operators, in 1983, was seen by the leadership as no more than a temporary and pragmatic digression from its preferred model of state-provided public transport. Further, a number of initiatives on urban public transport adopted by the state since the very late 1990s, when the process of liberalization and deregulation reached its peak, reveal the attempts by Tanzanian public authorities to reclaim some policy space, and their political context. However, in their weakness to address transport problems, these failed attempts also expose the lack of capacity by the state to both formulate and enforce regulation of the activities of private operators.

In chapter 3 the analysis zooms in on the economic organisation of the private transport sector with an in depth focus on its labour relations. Asking ‘who does what’ and ‘who owns what’ in the bus public transport sector in Dar es Salaam enabled the debunking of the common assumption that entrepreneurial self-employment is the dominant status of employment in the informal economy. Documenting the significance of class differentiation in the sector, the chapter reveals how insecure and informal employment relations are central to understanding the outcomes of deregulation and privatization and its many inefficiencies. It starts by looking at official statistics on the informal economy in Tanzania, which suggest, like everywhere else in Africa, that wage labour is the exception in the informal economy, and self-employment the norm, to show the pitfalls of such statistical information. These are then contrasted this with results from a questionnaire, completed by over 600 operators, that establish the clear distinction between those who own buses, and those who sell their labour power as transport workers. Drawing on grey literature, newspapers and my own interviews with bus owners, the chapter discusses the socio-economic profiles of the owners and the

profitability and constraints of the business. Utilising interviews with workers, the chapter explores the uneven balance of power between bus owners and informal unskilled wage workers in the context of unskilled labour oversupply. It also traces the pernicious consequences of the lack of regulation of the employment relationship on the workforce itself and on society. Speeding, lethal accidents involving private buses, the overloading of vehicles and refusal of transport to passengers entitled to social fares, most notably school pupils, are the most tangible ways in which workers exert their agency as a group on the transport system. This is not, however, the dominant narrative as to why public transport is in such poor state. Over the years, newspaper coverage of transport problems reveals a narrative that criminalises the workforce, blaming their hooliganism and greed for the inefficiencies of the transport system. 'Life is war', then, as a transport worker aptly wrote on the windscreen of his bus.

Why did workers fail to respond? In chapters 4, 5 and 6 the focus is on the economic and political sociology of informal transport labour in Dar es Salaam. The benefits of prolonged engagement with the field are visible here, as developments unfolding over the years prompted a rephrasing of the above question over time. Two distinct phases characterised workers' political stance towards employers and the state. During fieldwork up until 2002, it could be observed that workers fell short of making demands on employers or on the state, although their behaviour did show signs of collective consciousness. Later rounds of fieldwork in the late 2000s, however, found a much changed political landscape of passenger transport in Dar es Salaam due to the establishment of a transport workers' organisation. At least formally, the very presence of an institution, founded by transport workers for transport workers, reversed the political asymmetry that had characterized urban transport policy making until then. How workers organised then became the main research question. Through fieldwork in 2009, 2011 and 2014, I explored the reasons behind workers'

more assertive and successful attitude towards the state and employers, in partnership with the Tanzanian transport union.

Chapter 4 analyses the barriers that prevented between 20,000 and 30,000 informal bus workers from responding collectively to their criminalisation and to the economic squeeze by employers. Starting from a reflection on the sources of workers' power (Wright 2000; Silver 2003), and by comparatively drawing on Asian literature on informal labour, the chapter shows how labour oversupply, its fragmentation amongst different 'classes of labour' performing different tasks as 'transport workers', and geographical dispersion, explain workers' lack of effective collective response to their plight. The chapter also reflects upon the forms and limits of *existing* workforce solidarity by drawing on the longitudinal study of the rise and fall (1998-2005) of a labour association by transport workers. The study of such an association, consisting of people from various 'classes of labour' in one bus route, aided this line of enquiry in three ways. First, the associational goals that *some* workers set for themselves, and the values that these reflected, makes possible an understanding of workers' strategies to negotiate precariousness, and of whether their collective action embodied a moral economy of the poor, and with what potential. Engaging with overly optimistic claims on the potential for political change of 'everyday' practices by the urban poor, I argue that to stress the potential of this instance of associationism for 'changing the rules' (Tripp 1997) of the game would be highly misleading. Second, by attending some of its meetings, reading the minutes of others, interviewing its leaders and ordinary members, and observing the daily interaction and tensions between different categories of transport workers across the association's life, the chapter explores the ways in which labour oversupply, labour fragmentation and the spatial unit of work impacted on workers' identity, as they eroded their common ground. The study of the association's politics therefore opens a window into the 'struggle over class' (Harriss-White and Gooptu 2000). Last, but not least, the patterns and

rhythm of labour circulation *within* the sector are an important element in understanding both the precariousness faced by transport workers and their political behaviour. Access to the association's archive, and most notably its data on the turn-over of members, allows some appreciation of the modalities of labour fluidity over time.

In chapter 5 the research investigated the factors and circumstances that allowed the workers to switch from *managing* the effects of precarious employment to *challenging* its causes, first through the founding of an association of *daladala* workers, and then through a partnership with the Tanzanian transport trade union. Drawing on correspondence between the Transport Union and the workers' association, which I was kindly allowed to access, and on interviews with the leaders of the workers' association, of the trade union, and with transport workers themselves, the analysis explores the strategy chosen by workers to make demands for rights at work on employers and the state. The analysis stresses the significance of this case study by engaging with the wider literature on globalisation and its impact on labour possibilities, and more specifically on how to organize the unorganized in the informal economy and the goals which workers' political mobilisation can (or cannot) achieve in increasingly liberalised and informalised economies.

In chapter 6 the long-term dynamics of occupational mobility or immobility of *daladala* workers are unpicked. By drawing on the list of the 121 transport workers who were members of the association in 2002, and by tracking their occupational whereabouts in 2009 and again in 2014, the main research question was to what extent work as a *daladalaman*, notwithstanding its hardship and insecurity, fuelled dynamics of micro-accumulation and upward mobility. Semi-structured interviews with 25 of these workers aimed to elicit workers' own views on their own occupational trajectory and on the strategies and constraints to navigating the labour market.

In chapter 7 the focus is on the Bus Rapid Transit project (BRT thereafter), the new face of public transport in Dar es Salaam. This was initiated as a public private partnership, funded by the World Bank. Its implementation dated back to 2002 and the starts of its operations started in 2016. DART aimed to radically transform public transport in the city through large-scale infrastructural work, including the upgrade of over 130 km of the main arterial roads of the city –many of which were to double in width – 18 new terminals, 228 stations and the introduction of new buses which would be larger and less polluting than *daladala*, that stood to be phased out of service from the city’s main public transport routes. The key research question asked what interests drove the adoption of BRT in Dar es Salaam and explored the tensions that characterised its implementation and resistance to BRT. Drawing on newspaper coverage of the project, on literature on BRT across the world, and on interviews with key informants, the chapter discusses the rapid growth of BRTs in the 2000s and 2010s and the vested interests of the BRT evangelical society (composed of international finance and its NGO brokers) which promoted them as the ‘win-win’ solution to tackle the crisis of public transport in developing countries. Evidence discredits such a ‘win-win’ narrative by showing what some Tanzanian actors stood to lose from the implementation of BRT in Dar es Salaam and their capacity to resist the project. It is by drawing on a contextualised political economy of the BRT project that one can understand why the project proceeded so slowly between 2002 and 2015. The tensions over the displacement of existing para-transit operators by foreign investors, the inclusion of the existing public transport workforce, employment destruction, and the affordability of the new service, and how they were managed by the Tanzanian government, are a window into ‘actually existing neoliberalism’ and postsocialism in Tanzania.

The conclusion summarises the key arguments of the book and reflects on the broader significance of this study of power, precarity and informality in public transport in an African city. Time to depart now, green light, orange light, red light: GO (*daladala* style)!