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MATTEO RIZZO

TAKEN FOR A RIDE

Grounding Neoliberalism, Precarious Labour,
and Public Transport in an African Metropolis

CRITICAL FRONTIERS OF THEORY, RESEARCH, AND POLICY
IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES



Taken for a Ride

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To Nic

Acknowledgements

Writing this book has been a pretty long journey. It began back in 1996 when, immediately upon arriving in Dar es Salaam, on my first visit to Tanzania as a Swahili and Political Sciences of Africa student, I developed an uncontainable interest in Dar es Salaam's public transport system and in particular its minibuses. Seemingly ubiquitous, colourful, and full of aphorisms, *daladala*, as these minibuses are known in Swahili, caught my eyes and ears, as a walk anywhere in the city has as its soundscape that of workers calling the stops to attract passengers on board. This fascination was soon accompanied by the obvious reflection that these private buses dominated the transport system of what was once one of the most famous socialist experiments in Africa, prompting my choice to focus my undergraduate dissertation on the city's public transport system, its history, and functioning. The topic was then revisited for my MSc dissertation (in Development Studies at SOAS, University of London). My doctoral work, still at SOAS, but on a different topic and discipline (economic and social history of late colonial and postcolonial development) took me to Dar es Salaam again in 2001–2, where days in the archive would always terminate with visits to a group of *daladala* workers whom I had studied in 1998. When I rejoined academia in 2008, following a three-year career break, my interest in public transport in Dar es Salaam had not yet vanished and so it remained the subject of short research trips in 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2014. In 2016, twenty years after I first set my eyes on the subject, my research ride ends and this book is going to press! The help, encouragement, and companionship of many people and institutions in Tanzania, the UK, and Italy—the three countries that bind this project together—have helped along the way.

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For someone interested in radical and interdisciplinary political economy, like myself, SOAS provides a remarkably exciting place in which to work. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dave Anderson, Alastair Fraser, Graham Harrison, Deborah Johnston, Claire Mercer, Carlos Oya, Tim Pringle, John Sender, Megan Vaughan, Leandro Vergara-Camus, and Elisa Van Waeyenberge for their careful reading of one or more chapters of the book, and their generous comments, and above all for encouragement at different times of this project. Henry Bernstein, Chris Cramer, and Ben Fine read the whole manuscript, and provided very constructive comments to strengthen its argument and readability. Their commitment to collegiality at times of very heavy workloads is truly inspiring.

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London

July, 2016

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List of Acronyms

AICD	Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic
BRT	Bus Rapid Transport
CCM	<i>Chama cha Mapinduzi</i> (Party of the Revolution)
CHADEMA	<i>Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo</i> (Party for Democracy and Development)
COTWUT	Communication and Transport Workers Union of Tanzania
CSAE	Centre for the Study of African Economics, Oxford
CTLA	Central Transport Licensing Authority
DARCOBOA	Dar es Salaam Commuter Bus Owners Association
DART	Dar Rapid Transit
DCC	Dar es Salaam City Council
DMT	Dar es Salaam Motor Transport Company
DRTLA	Dar es Salaam Transport Licensing Authority
EMBARQ	The WRI Initiative for Sustainable Urban Mobility
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFI	International Financial Institution
ILFS	Integrated Labour Force Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMTS	Integrated Mass Transit Systems
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation
ITDP	Institute for Transportation and Development Policy
LRT	Light Rail Transit
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KAMATA	<i>Kampuni ya Mabasi ya Taifa</i> (National Bus Company)
MCT	Ministry of Communication and Transport of Tanzania
MKURABITA	<i>Mpango wa Kurasimisha Rasilimali na Biashara za Wanyonge Tanzania</i> (Property and Business Formalization Programme)

List of Acronyms

MUWADA	<i>Muungano wa Watu Wanaosafirisha Daladala</i> (Daladala Owners' Association)
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of Tanzania
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAP	Project-Affected People
PLC	Cordial Transportation Services
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSATP	Sub-Saharan Africa Transport Policy Program
SUMATRA	Surface and Marine Transport Regulatory Authority
TANESCO	Tanzania Electric Supply Company
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
TARWOTU	Tanzania Road Transport Workers Union
TAZARA	Tanzania-Zambia Railway
TDA	Tanzania Drivers Association
TRA	Tanzania Revenue Authority
UATP	African Association of Public Transport
UDA	<i>Shirika la Usafiri Dar es Salaam</i> (Dar es Salaam Transport Company)
UDA-RT	Usafiri Dar es Salaam Rapid Transit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
UWAMADAR	<i>Umoja wa Madereva na Makondakta wa Mabasi ya Abiria Dar es Salaam</i> (Dar es Salaam <i>Daladala</i> Drivers' and Conductors' Association)
UWAMATA	<i>Umoja wa Madereva wa Mabasi Tanzania</i> (Tanzania Upcountry Bus Drivers' Union)
WEA	Workers' Education Association of Zambia
WRI	World Resource Institute
WTO	World Trade Organization

1

Taken for a Ride

Rethinking Neoliberalism, Precarious Labour, and Public Transport from an African Metropolis

1.1 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 *daladala*, 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 the trademark cut-throat competition between one *daladala* and another

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*.

and the 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 *daladala* are involved in a huge proportion of lethal car accidents in the city, as high as 93 per cent 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 four 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 a 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 organization, 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 privatization, liberalization, and informalization from 1983 to the present. Looking at Dar es Salaam through this prism, this book aims to contribute to two thematic literatures: on African cities and their informal economies. Intriguingly, references to chaos, dystopia, and their opposites, order (if unconventional and not Eurocentrically defined) and functionalism, and attempts to reconcile these poles, are very common in the vast literature that exists on both of these themes. In a sense, they define the ‘clash of ideas 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 aim for an exhaustive coverage of it. 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.

² On Nairobi, see Khayesi (1998); 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 Adoléhouné and Bonnafis (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).

1.2 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 is work by Mike Davis (2006). Behind the apocalyptic tone of his *Planet of Slums* lies the fact that urbanization in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—unlike urbanization in the nineteenth century in the now-developed world—has not been accompanied and driven by economic growth and industrialization. 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 such places 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’s apocalyptic approach therefore strongly emphasizes the structural causes that led to this planet of slums without jobs. The lack of industrialization and of employment creation, Davis argues, reflects the demise of the postcolonial 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 have 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’s contribution, and arguably its intended goal, is the systematic debunking of mainstream fantasies of slum improvements and of the potential for large-scale poverty eradication and economic mobility within the informal economy. His focus on how structural forces affect 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 scenarios and “pathologies” that we, the readers, can only abandon hope,