Chapter One
Introduction

BRT Arrives in South Africa

From Curitiba and Bogotá to Ahmedabad and Beijing, bus rapid transit (BRT) has promised to be a quick, cost-effective and efficient method of urban transportation that combines the speed and quality of rail transportation with the flexibility of a bus system. BRT is a rubber-tired mode of urban public transportation that combines buses, busways and stations with intelligent transportation systems, operational and financial plans, integrated ticketing, and a branded identity. It has been a dominant feature of urban planning for decades in cities as diverse as Bogotá, Curitiba, Guangzhou, Lima, Los Angeles, Mumbai, and New York, among others. Whereas previous studies have considered the characteristics of BRT (Deng and Nelson 2011; Jarzab et al. 2002; Levinson et al. 2003) or its impact on transportation planning (Ferbrache 2019; Paget-Seekins and Munoz 2016), this book is the first attempt to understand the global proliferation of BRT.

Much of its current popularity is due to the vehement promotion undertaken by Enrique Penalosa, Bogotá's Mayor from 1998 to 2001 and again from 2016 to 2019, and his ties with the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) (Wood 2014b, 2019b). More than two decades since Bogotá's Transmilenio opened to global acclaim, BRT has become one of the most prominent policy solutions of the 21st century. Around the world, Transmilenio-style systems are commended by BRT advocates for improving mobility, by reducing travel time and improving comfort and reliability; and its transformation into best practice is often attributed to its affordability, brief implementation phase and gener-

How Cities Learn: Tracing Bus Rapid Transit in South Africa, First Edition. Astrid Wood.

ous political payoffs. It is presented as a best practice appropriate within a variety of geographical and socio-political settings, and able to tackle problems related to economic exclusion and inequality, urban sprawl and sustainability, and transportation inaccessibility.

The Bogotá model of BRT first arrived in South Africa in July 2006 at a special session of the Southern African Transport Conference (SATC), the largest transportation convention in the region and a critical platform for dialogue on issues ranging from finance to public transportation. Lloyd Wright, a global expert on BRT, was invited by the National Department of Transport to host a day-long workshop on the principles, attributes and engineering specifications of BRT. This learning was reinforced in August 2006 when Lloyd Wright visited politicians and transportation planners in Cape Town, eThekwini, Johannesburg and Tshwane to present the attributes of BRT. Interested cities then took a select group of politicians, planners, operators and consultants to Bogotá to see how BRT operates and meet with transportation operators. Policymakers returned from these study tours eager to introduce BRT locally.

Since 2006, BRT has been adopted in six South African cities to improve transportation services, especially for the urban poor. Cape Town, eThekwini, Johannesburg, Nelson Mandela Bay, Rustenburg, and Tshwane are currently in various stages of planning and implementation: in August 2009, just three years after learning of the Bogotá model of BRT, Rea Vaya Phase 1A opened in Johannesburg as the first full-feature BRT system in an African context; in May 2011, Cape Town's MyCiTi Phase 1A became operational; in May 2012, eThekwini Council approved plans to proceed with the first three lines of Go Durban!; and in July 2012, the cascade continued with Rustenburg and Tshwane beginning construction on Yarona and A Re Yeng. Not all cities have had a simple, straightforward experience, however: since 2008, Nelson Mandela Bay's attempt to introduce BRT has been stalled by municipal politics and poor planning, and in spite of considerable efforts, the project remains in a state of postponement.

While the South African systems are unmistakably modeled after the achievements of those in Bogotá, the process through which South African officials learned of, and implemented BRT, remains unexplored. In mapping the learning process, this book considers how and why city leaders adopt circulated best practice.

Understanding the South African City

The adoption of BRT in South Africa reflects the historical spatial planning of apartheid (Christopher 1995; Parnell 1997; Parnell and Mabin 1995; Robinson 1996, 1997) and the challenges facing post-apartheid policies to remedy these dysfunctional schemes (Haferburg and Huchzermeyer 2014; Harrison et al. 2008, 2014; Parnell and Pieterse 2014). South African cities were shaped primarily

by policies of strict racial segregation but also rigorous separation of economic and residential zones, which denied Black residents full access to the city and its economic base (Davies 1981; Home 1990; Lemon 1991; Western 1985); and had the secondary objective of increasing travel times considerably for non-White residents (Pirie 2013, 2014). Apartheid settlement strategies located townships on the periphery of cities and heavily subsidized public transportation to enable workers to travel long distances at low fares (Beall et al. 2002; Turok and Watson 2001). Under the old regime, only those with passes were permitted to travel between the townships and the city, and thus movement was generally only permitted on weekdays between home and work. Because of the inheritance of these restrictions, to this day there is effectively no pattern of non-work travel between the suburban areas and the city center. The introduction of BRT is an attempt to unsettle these socio-spatial settlement patterns.

Today, South African cities are characterized by contrasts and dualisms: high-rise residential towers turned slums; Victorian houses surrounded by privatized greenery; endless stretches of banal suburban development punctured by low-cost government-sponsored housing; European cafés and upmarket shops with hawkers selling homemade wares and promising to guard the luxury cars. The one commonality across the fragmented post-apartheid landscape is the proliferation of the automobile – its presence dominates the physical landscape of the city as well as the cultural milieu. Obviously, the South African city is not unique in this feature, but the degree to which apartheid's forced segregation stretched the city amplifies this condition. Although this understanding of the spatial character of the South African city as uneven is generally applied ubiquitously, there are profound differences across South African cities reflecting their distinctive topography and resulting settlement patterns, as well as their sociocultural composition, economic vitality and historic planning and contemporary governance. My assessment of the spatial form and associated mobility dynamics sheds light on the complex and challenging advancement of inclusive South African cities.

South African history is riddled with transportation experiments: horse-drawn streetcars were introduced in the 1890s, electric trams operated until the Second World War and trolleybuses ran in the high-apartheid period until Johannesburg, the last city to do so, terminated services in 1986. There are a number of detailed empirical accounts of the trams and trolleybus systems in Cape Town (Gill 1961; Joyce 1981), eThekwini (Jackson 2003), Johannesburg (Sey 2012; Spit and Patton 1976) and Nelson Mandela Bay (Shields 1979), as well as analyses of the development of the road system (e.g. Rosen 1962 in Johannesburg) and the emergence of the minibus taxi industry (Khosa 1991, 1995; McCaul 1990). Because South African city form and function makes it difficult to support a sunken subway – Johannesburg is built atop a maze of underground gold mining shafts and Cape Town rests largely on marsh and infill – transportation officials and engineers have struggled to modernize the commuter rail and

municipal bus services. The commuter rail network is poorly maintained and its fixed lines prove inadequate in the expanding metropolises. Bus systems are similarly struggling to service the low-density urban form. The modernist aspiration of car ownership and its associations with independence and wealth is reinforced in practical terms through the dispersed city form, which separates people from economic and social opportunities.

For the most part, the urban populace relies on a politically powerful and largely under-regulated fleet of overcrowded, poorly maintained minibus taxis that operate irregular services. The minibus taxi industry has captured the majority of market share against subsidized modes, carrying about 60 percent of trips, nationally. The industry emerged in the 1980s in reaction to the failures of government to supply adequate bus and train services to the townships (Khosa 1991, 1995; McCaul 1990). In the sprawling landscape of contemporary urban South Africa, the minibus taxi is generally preferred to government-sponsored bus and rail services because it is considered more convenient in terms of routing and frequency (Clark and Crous 2002). While there are certainly arguments in support of the minibus taxi industry with proponents describing it as a self-made, Black entrepreneurial venture, in general commuters are dissatisfied with the slow, capricious quality of the informal services (Salazar Ferro et al. 2013). The South African policymakers I interviewed described an almost doomsday scenario filled with uncertainty, labeling it a "commuter crisis" akin to the global financial crisis and calling for fundamental reform to the transportation network.[1]

As a result of these features, transportation planning has been understood as central to the transformation of South African cities. Transportation has historically been used to divide the spatial layout of cities. Planned roads have been used to separate planning typologies in both planned and unplanned settlements, and transportation systems have been used to control who can access the city and how they move. In South Africa, planners have been especially focused on building modernist highways to accommodate the White elite who could afford to drive. The fact that transportation is experienced by a range of people across incomes and experiences, means that it also serves as an arena for social mixing and these interactions have unbridled opportunities for change. Policymakers in South Africa have been attuned to these openings, and efforts to remedy the inequality of transportation have been at the forefront of urban planning and policymaking since 1994. Transportation has also been, and continues to be, a site of resistance. The success of the 1957 Alexandra bus boycotts in Johannesburg was a pivotal moment in the anti-apartheid movement; and in the post-apartheid era, transportation continues to be a point of contention in service delivery protests.

This book aims to explain how South African policymakers are trying to improve urban transportation, specifically addressing the process by which best practice is drawn from elsewhere to inform local planning and policy change. In South Africa, BRT is seen as the solution that simultaneously provides

transportation users with an affordable, reliable and safe transportation system, taxi operators with formalized and stable employment, and buses and rail operators with viable routes. Its larger purpose is to address the severe historical spatial divide along racial lines and post-apartheid splintered urbanism. The operational systems conjure up images of equality and dignity for all South Africans, moving freely and efficiently through urban space regardless of skin color or income, in a city free from the grip of informality, and instead managed by an efficient and capable municipal government. In this post-apartheid moment, transportation may be South Africa's best tool through which to bridge the divided city.

Transport Geography, Policy Mobilities and Learning in and from the South

City learning is hardly a new practice. Herodotus described information exchanges as early as 500 BCE; in the second century, Palmyra adapted Roman concepts of urbanity; and in the 1700s, Peter the Great employed Dutch architectural models in St. Petersburg (Healey 2013). In the early 20th century, cities shared their experiments with electricity, gas, sewerage and water services (Dogliani 2002; Gaspari 2002; Kozinska-Witt 2002; Saunier 2002; Vion 2002). These exchanges became a "precious resource" to subvert or strengthen local policy decisions (Saunier 2002: 519). These "transboundary connections" (Saunier 2002: 510) were often a method of "intergovernmental diplomacy" (Saunier 2002: 509), with scholars suggesting that these collaborations advanced urban development (Healey and Upton 2010; Saunier 2002; Saunier and Ewen 2008; Sutcliffe, 1981).

In the contemporary era, learning has become a regular and routine aspect of policy creation. Policymakers seek innovative lessons and models from elsewhere, assuming that "viewing a familiar problem in an unfamiliar setting expands ideas of what is possible, and can inspire fresh thinking about what to do at home" (Rose 1993: 30). Rose (1993) suggests that positive lessons provide insight for local policymakers, and negative lessons help them avoid others' mistakes. And Bennett (1991) confirms that when cities are confronted with local challenges, there is a natural tendency to look elsewhere for innovation. Learning, however, is deeply entangled with the politics of people and place, and it should be understood in terms of the cultural, economic, historical, and political connections and disconnections through which knowledge moves. Cities and their policymakers compete for prestige, and practices of exchange are rarely just about rationalist transfers of knowledge. Mobilized policy is often seen as "politically neutral truths", but beneath "this superficial impartiality" these lessons can serve as "political weapons" (Robertson 1991). Indeed, acts of knowledge sharing initiate particular policies and certain cities into conversations, while pushing others apart.

The South African city's propensity to apply foreign planning models is rooted in its history, where urban design and transportation innovations were imported from the colonial metropole. Colonialism created an atmosphere conducive to the temptation of imitation, in which the local environment lacked "genuine ties with the world surrounding them" (Mbembe 2004: 375), and instead linked itself to classical aspects of European cosmopolitanism. This is evident in architectural form: various technical and political interventions including "prefabricated iron-fronted shop buildings, barrel-vaulted arcades with prismatic glass skylights, cast-iron gas lamps, electric lighting, telephone wires…" (Chipkin 1993: 22), as well as horse-drawn trams and railroads. This "overseas cultural traffic" (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004: 362) flowed through colonial relationships with London, Paris and New York. During the emergence of professionalized planning, universities trained colonial planners in modernist techniques, later applied across the colonial world. In South Africa, town planners studied in London after the Second World War and, through these exchanges, developed what became classic apartheid planning mechanisms (Wood 2019a).

Today, the South African urban landscape is reflective of a global convergence of policy knowledge, and several ostensibly South African policies are also evidenced elsewhere: approaches to growth management, informal settlement upgrading, sustainability, and even securitization and gated communities (Bénit-Gbaffou et al. 2012; Morange et al. 2012) migrated from North America, Brazil and Europe, and were adopted in South African cities because of their success elsewhere; city improvement districts (elsewhere, business improvements districts) are located in precincts across Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as in Amsterdam, London and New York (Didier et al. 2012; Morange et al. 2012; Peyroux et al. 2012) and city development strategies, in particular Johannesburg's 2040 Growth and Development Strategy, are considered best practice and duplicated globally (Robinson 2011). While the regularity by which South African cities learn of and implement policies from elsewhere is evident, the process of, and rationale for, learning and adoption demands further theoretical unpacking.

In South Africa, a desire to copy from urban experiences elsewhere is reinforced today through the language of south–south exchange, which suggests that localities across the global south may find better solutions by looking to one another rather than to their colonial metropole. Southern cities are presumed to share commonality with their postcolonial neighbors, and by exchanging their experiences and experiments, it is thought that they might develop more imaginative and effective solutions to remedy their urban challenges. This political argument has fueled the circulation of supposedly southern-generated best practices like BRT. Questions remain, however, regarding the extent to which this learning impacts development in southern cities, either by reinforcing former colonial ties through contemporary practices of exchange or by shattering those dependencies, instead generating southern solutions to southern problems. Elsewhere I have argued that south–south learning may lead cities toward more effective policy solutions,

but efforts need to be made to ensure that learning is not merely political window-dressing (Wood 2015b). This is especially important in providing substance to support localities in their determination to reject apparent best practices. Evidence from this book supports contemporary academic and practical efforts at decentering epistemic knowledge, by encouraging (South African) cities to draw from a wider array of examples from within South Africa and across the postcolonial world.

A focus on BRT adoption provides an opportunity to reinterpret both the historical and contemporary South African city as a site of "mimicry" and "mimesis" (Mbembe 2004). Mbembe (2008: 7) suggests "if there is ever an African form of metropolitan modernity, then Johannesburg will have been its classical location"; and Robinson (2003: 260) concludes, "Johannesburg is an antidote to [a] divisive tradition in urban studies and a practical example of how cities can be imagined outside of the global/developmentalist division". Mimicry, however, does not occur simply because reforms from elsewhere are better, but rather because the very action of copying may accelerate local policymaking. Nevertheless, Mbembe argues that even cities "born out of mimicry are capable of mimesis", by establishing "similarities with something else while at the same time inventing something original" (2004: 376). This helps explain how South African cities learn of a policy or practice from elsewhere, transfer it across boundaries, and localize it to suit the South African city.

How Cities Learn contributes to efforts to transform transport geography into a more inclusive and global endeavor, by examining the production and distribution of transportation knowledge in the global south. In a related project, we argue against the continued dominance of northern transportation models and best practices, and instead highlight locally derived experiments in both the global north and south (Wood et al. 2020). This means not only featuring the achievements of cities that are "off the map" (Robinson 2006), but also de-centering the locations in which best practice is solidified and sent forth. A decolonial approach to transport geography challenges its technocratic objectivism and mathematical modeling, which limit the promotion of southern experiments. Transportation scholars have begun to engage with these strategies – for instance, a special issue featuring urban mobilities in the global south (Priya Uteng and Lucas 2018) – but much more needs to be said of transport geography from, of and by the global south.

This book is grounded within South African urban transportation research. It draws on calculations of shifting mobility patterns by Roger Behrens in Cape Town (2013, 2014, 2015), Jackie Walters in Johannesburg (2009, 2013) and Christoph Venter in Tshwane (2013), as well as Gordon Pirie's (2013, 2014) studies of transportation practices, policies and perspectives. Recent studies of BRT user experience (Behrens and Wilkinson 2003; Maunganidze and Del Mistro 2012; Schalekamp and Behrens 2008), government efforts to reform the taxi industry (Schalekamp and Behrens 2013; Schalekamp et al. 2010), cycling

(Jennings 2015) and transit-oriented development (Bickford and Behrens 2015), also provide the bedrock for this analysis. Additionally, it overlaps BRT adoption with broader considerations for rapid urbanization across the continent, infrastructure development and its potential for poverty alleviation, climate change and resilience, especially in disenfranchised communities, and the juxtaposition between urban economic vitality and social justice.

This book employs "policy mobilities" (Peck and Theodore 2010a; McCann and Ward 2011) to contribute to transport geography by examining how policymakers address issues of mobility and immobility, and how these decisions are made in reference to similar practices taking place elsewhere. It explains the process by which BRT has been embraced, encompassed and even at times excluded by local policy actors, their interactions with global advocates and inter-referencing across space and time. In so doing, it attends to the ways in which transportation solutions are engineered in relation to socio-political spaces, specifically interrogating the process through which certain transportation innovations are deemed best practice.

How Cities Learn makes four key contributions to the policy mobilities literature by examining the process from one location: South Africa. First, it highlights the ways in which particular models of best practice travel, not autonomously by virtue of their own universalist qualities, but rather via a complex political economy, both internationally and domestically.

Second, the book exposes the pivotal role of often overlooked local actors in the mobility and adoption of best practice. While it might seem as if international intermediaries are the primary actors involved in BRT replication, *How Cities Learn* demonstrates the power of the local. Although strong personalities were at times persuasive in pushing BRT from the outside, their dominance was balanced by the bureaucratic structures that endow local implementers with the power and responsibility for initiating a new planning project. Notably, this approach highlights the factors motivating policy actors and the wider political relationships that facilitated the reception of BRT. This in turn expands our understanding of the varied direction, speed and influence of global and local influences shaping the contemporary city.

Third, the book unpacks the exchanges between actors in South African and other southern cities and, in so doing, exposes a politicized process that preferences certain sites over others, inculcates a particular understanding of best practice and otherwise mediates policy flows. The politics of south-south cooperation was used to support exchanges with South American cities while overlooking opportunities to learn from African and Indian cities. These glimpses into the process of BRT adoption in South Africa help us understand the process by which policy and policy actors connect and disconnect topographically through their physical travels, as well as topologically through relational comparisons made in city rankings and league tables.

Fourth, the book uncovers the temporalities of policy learning which are often overlooked in the policy mobilities literature. The experience of BRT in South Africa reveals persistent introduction and alteration before adoption finally ensued; innovations spread across the globe through a series of unremarkable events and repeated suggestions that ultimately sanction it as a best practice to local policy implementers. Accordingly, I argue that failure is central to policy promotion by creating a process whereby learning is deliberate and delayed, assembling alongside earlier encounters to prolong the employment of international agencies. The book demonstrates that there is much to be learned by thinking through the practices of ostensibly ineffective, fruitless or aborted mobility. This contribution also raises questions about success and failure in policy mobilities, a topic of increasing importance among scholars.

Using Policy Mobilities as a Methodology

The physical, social and theoretical movement of ideas, objects, people, and places can be difficult to study because they are constantly in motion, positioning and repositioning, erratically and sometimes irrationally. Policies-in-motion demand mobile methods, a methodology "better suited to mobile times" (Clarke 2012). My research methods are therefore simultaneously "on the move" (Cresswell 2006), including physical travel on buses and between research subjects and sites, and "moored" (Hannam et al. 2006) in the offices of policy actors and in the operational BRT systems (Wood 2016). More than simply uncovering the movement, however, this study unravels the intricate connections and dependencies between ideas, objects, people and places, relationships essential for the acceptance of mobile knowledge (Büscher and Urry 2009; Urry 2007). This methodology resonates well with Law and Urry (2004) who reason that existing methods rooted in places insufficiently address fleeting temporality or transplanting places; that is that we must follow the chains, paths, threads and intersections in order to address the transitory nature of mobility.

For policy mobilities, two approaches – "follow the policy" (Peck and Theodore 2010a) and "follow the project" (Peck and Theodore 2012), which combine multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995) with the extended case method approach (Burawoy 1998, 2009) – are typically employed. Peck and Theodore (2012) suggest that the researcher (and their research) travel alongside the policy, concentrating on the power and politics of translation. Such a methodology, Peck (2011b) reasons, enables researchers to contemplate the role of policy networks and epistemic communities that form connections for enabling policy movement, experimentation and mutation across different cities. This methodology can be challenging, however, because as Peck and Theodore conclude, "it is not always possible to 'be here', when in the study of global policy networks there is a constant imperative to also 'be' somewhere else" (2012: 25). They therefore

advise that researching mobile policies need not always be a multi-sited venture, but it will often necessitate "methodological travel, along the paths carved by the policies themselves" (2012: 24). Most importantly, the methods used should be sensitive to both the peripatetic nature of policy models and their affiliated policy actors as well as to the unpredictable character of espousal and emulation.

I study policy mobilities from the perspective of the adopting locality and examine the means by which a policy from elsewhere was introduced, shaped and localized by local policy actors, their interactions with global advocates and inter-referencing across space and time. Rather than observing or shadowing people's movements, as Marcus suggests in his understanding of "following the people", this study asks people to interpret and reflect on their own decisions and learning processes. Similarly, it does not simply "follow the thing" from Bogotá to South Africa per se; instead my perspective looks at how South Africans interpreted the mobility and assembly of BRT. This study "follows the mobility" by tracing the adoption of BRT from the assembly of policy model, through to the actors who first introduced BRT to South Africa, before focusing on the adoption process. This methodology draws on the experiences of the actors involved in the circulation and adoption of BRT, learning from their experiences and interactions with the South African version of BRT. It entails incorporating the site of origination with the site of adoption and the various stops along the way, all of which influence the uptake of a particular policy approach.

Previous studies following the products (Choy et al. 2009; Cook and Harrison 2007) and policies (Goldman 2005; Roy 2010), suggest a sense of completed transfer in which the learning has concluded and the adoption accomplished. But the story of BRT in South Africa is neither concluded nor accomplished. It therefore requires a retrospective trail – beginning with the adoption process and tracing back to the initial learning – to allow for reflection by policy actors, on the false starts, and slow decision-making that lead (or not) to BRT implementation. It is possible that the research process itself may have contributed further to the multifaceted and constantly mutating nature of policy mobilities: perhaps in the course of the interview, a policy actor may decide to change the trajectory of future emulation, or they may appreciate the influence of distantiated sites thereby enticing future learning. This supports McCann and Ward's (2012) call for researchers to move with the actors to understand how people, policy and place are made mobile. Rather than simply a physical movement between sites, this study moves temporally between the adoption of BRT and its initial arrival.

"Following the mobility" from the perspective of the adopting locality begins with interviews. Interviews are especially useful for probing beneath the socio-political exterior of the decision-making process. While interviews are sometimes criticized for being staged and scripted, especially when they involve educated and articulate elites (Peck and Theodore 2012), interviews are a relational process that expose not just the achievements of the adopting locality, but also the experimentation and failure associated with policy mobilities. They are also the

best means for understanding the connections and disconnections between actors fueling the adoption process. This book developed inductively from their stories and experiences as well as their own learning process regarding BRT.

Interviews took place with senior planners and politicians from city (26 actors), provincial (2 actors) and national government (8 actors) as well as consultancies (26 actors), civil society (8 actors), academia (10 actors), donors (12 actors) and transportation operators (3 actors).[2] Of those interviewed, 68 percent were male, 32 percent were female; and 70 percent were White, 14 percent Indian, 12 percent Black, and 4 percent Coloured.[3] The meetings took place across South Africa from the Union Buildings and Parliament to the Civic Centre in Cape Town, the Metro Building in Johannesburg and the Transport Authority in eThekwini. More than two-thirds of meetings took place in either Cape Town or Johannesburg. Ten percent of respondents were located outside of South Africa – in Barcelona, Bogotá, Dar es Salaam, London, Manila, New York, Vancouver and Washington, D.C. – and these tended to be international consultants and academics. The majority of meetings were held in person at the participant's office. On average, the interviews took 1 hour and 30 minutes with the longest lasting 3 hours and 37 minutes and the shortest lasting just 20 minutes.

In selecting study participants, I was careful to avoid merely "studying up", by which Nader (1972) refers to studying the elites with power or "studying down", by asking the powerless. Instead, I "study through" (Shore and Wright 1997). This meant meeting with the actors who moved, shaped and adopted as well as those who opposed BRT. The list of interviewees included those currently involved in BRT introduction – for example each city's transportation officers, municipal politicians and engineers in the implementation agency – as well as those actors who have since moved on to other ventures – for example, from a city official to a private portfolio manager and from a minibus taxi driver to the CEO of a bus operating company.

I was also cautious against promoting agent-inflation, through which relatively unimportant actors become policy mobilizers by virtue of our discussion. I never asked a policy actor to tell me about their experiences with BRT. Rather, I asked respondents a few general questions about transportation to which they generally responded telling me about the BRT project, which included their experiences with policy mobilizers like Lloyd Wright and Enrique Penalosa, and on study tours to Bogotá. Philip van Ryneveld's role in bringing BRT to Cape Town, for instance, came up in several meetings across South Africa, none of which were prompted by me. I was careful to verify stories and experiences across interviews and with both internal and public documents.

Interviews were the primary methodology I adopted, but because that meant asking the individuals to describe their involvement, transcripts were triangulated with internal documents recording council meetings and study tours, as well as with public reports and presentations detailing implementation procedures. I reviewed more than a hundred important planning and policy documents found in

the archives at both municipal and private planning offices, as well as frameworks (e.g. City of Johannesburg 2011), guides (e.g. ITDP 2017) and legislation (e.g. National Department of Transport 2009). I also evaluated advertising notices, architectural models, blueprints, brochures, films and websites. The urban successes "come alive" in clever policy documents and stunning showrooms (Pow 2014: 296). And seemingly mundane artifacts become "diverse technologies of seduction" that render policy models palatable for global consumption, thus revealing the socio-materiality of policy exchange (Bunnell and Das 2010).

Since BRT construction was ongoing and plans constantly emerging and changing, I also had opportunities to attend public meetings through which city officials publicized BRT, seminars wherein practical details were revealed to practitioners, and strategic meetings usually reserved for those directly involved with BRT. A public lecture by Gil Penalosa, Commissioner of Parks in Bogotá from 1999 to 2002, provided me with the opportunity to witness a policy mobilizer in-action as he introduced his perspective to a South African audience. Events such as this were often referenced in interviews – for example when Enrique Penalosa, former Mayor of Bogotá, or when Lloyd Wright, a global BRT advocate, presented the attributes of BRT to South Africans – as quasi-religious events full of animation and energy supported by high-resolution images of success. It was particularly informative to personally witness this style of knowledge exchange and have the opportunity to think about why it is so compelling.

All these methods require a willingness to move, but none are as mobile as the "go-along", which tends be either a walking interview (Carpiano 2009; Evans and Jones 2011) or a driving interview (Laurier 2004, 2008). The go-along accounts for the relationship between what people say and where they say it, and overall the process promises sounder results than sedentary interviews by prompting interviewees to connect with the surrounding landscape rather than the interviewer. Such methods reflect Simmel's (1950) perspective on social space, which he sees as the context for the creation of particular personalities and interactions (e.g. the stranger), and provides great insight into the learning process by allowing the researcher to examine participant's knowledge and experiences, as well as the way in which they engage with their social and spatial surroundings. The go-along is also particularly useful in reducing the typical power dynamics between the researcher and the subject.

My mobile methods included trips on the operational systems, tours of the bus depot and control center and driving tours across the city. Ordinary journeys on Cape Town's MyCiTi and Johannesburg's Rea Vaya usually included conversations with drivers and passengers. One driver told me how much he misses driving a taxi because he has to work many more hours as a Rea Vaya bus operator, while another prefers the regular employment and guaranteed salary. One of the more extraordinary mobile interviews was a driving tour with Ron Haiden, then-Manager of Infrastructure and Development in Cape Town. We drove for

hours visiting and discussing transportation systems and services across Cape Town. I learned a great deal from seeing the projects first-hand and I enjoyed hearing anecdotes about "The Wright and (w)Ron(g) Show" (when Haiden worked with Lloyd Wright). Haiden's insights into both the details of station design as well as the big picture needed to conceptualize Cape Town's entire MyCiTi system, were extremely valuable in situating BRT within the broader efforts at transportation transformation.

My professional experiences working with South African cities also provided me with the foundations from which to launch this research. Between 2008 and 2010, I worked as Programs Manager for the South African Cities Network (SACN). In this capacity, I was responsible for a variety of projects, programs and publications, including managing exchanges between cities implementing BRT systems. One interesting project was a learning event hosted jointly with Johannesburg in October 2009, in which the City invited other South African cities to ride the new BRT system and learn from Johannesburg. My experience with the distribution of BRT makes me a policy actor and thereby has enabled me to draw on my own experiences, while simultaneously having access to empirical knowledge of the policymaking process. These experiences empower me to "reconstruct a landscape in the eyes of its occupants" and to imagine the experiences of policy actors (Samuels 1981: 129). Although I did not occupy a formal position after 2010, I acknowledge my role as a formerly active policy actor entering into circulation processes with local actors.

Structure of the Book

How Cities Learn is organized into seven chapters including this introduction. Chapter 2, "Geographies of knowledge", provides the analytical scaffolding for this book. It introduces the policy mobilities framework which will be used to explain the multiple and complex relations between actors, which elevate the achievements of particular policies and bring certain cities into conversation with one another, while pushing other ideas, policymakers and places further apart.

Chapter 3, "Translating BRT to South Africa", traces the global geography of BRT to understand what features attracted South African policymakers and, in so doing, reflects on the theoretical notion of best practice policy models and their process of mobilization, mutation and translation. Moving away from the assumption that BRT is merely a technological template for stations and busways, this chapter reveals that the Bogotá model was not replicated in South African cities but rather that a variation, which focused on the transformation of the informal transit system, emerged. This suggests that policy models are polysemic, and rather than being duplicated they are modified and mutated to suit the needs of each importing jurisdiction. The adoption of best practice therefore

takes place only when aspects of the circulating notion combine with underlying conditions, thereby normalizing the particular technical arrangements and social rationalities for adoption.

Chapter 4, "Actors and associations circulating BRT", focuses on the urban planning professionals, practitioners and politicians introducing, circulating and managing the adoption of BRT. While some are instrumental in planting ideas that may lie dormant for some time, others engage in their prospective evaluation and actively stimulate their application. International policy actors cannot simultaneously create, impart, mobilize, and approve global policy models. Instead, it is the local (South African) policy actors that localize international best practice. Their interactions with internationals legitimize global policy by giving it both local and transnational salience. This examination of the policy actors expands our understanding of the varied direction, speed and influence of global and local influences shaping the contemporary city.

Chapter 5, "The local politics of BRT", analyzes the international, national and local connections and disconnections between localities that influenced its adoption. At the international scale, this chapter reveals a deliberate preference to learn from Bogotá rather than a multiplicity of South American cities who also implemented BRT. This same enthusiasm for south–south exchanges was also used to disregard the experiences of African and Indian cities. Within South Africa, this chapter explores the competitive political and technical relationships between cities that influenced the adoption of BRT. This multi-scalar analysis of the politics of BRT explains the process by which policy and policy actors connect and disconnect topographically and topologically.

Chapter 6, "Repetitive processes of BRT", situates BRT adoption within a longer history of South African transportation planning. It exposes previous involvements with BRT-like interventions that did not progress. This chapter contests the fast policy literature, which identifies the introduction of prefabricated best practice policies as part of the shortening of the policymaking cycles. Rather it suggests that there are multiple temporalities through which circulated policies emerge and remerge before adoption, and that often without these multiple attempts, policy circulation would not be effective. BRT learning is therefore gradual, repetitive and at times delayed.

Chapter 7, "Conclusion", outlines the book's main theoretical arguments, in particular answering how and why cities adopt circulated forms of knowledge. Here, I argue that policy mobilities is a process of learning and understanding, adoption and adaption, competition and collaboration, facilitated by local South African policy actors and their relations with urban elsewheres. In concluding, *How Cities Learn* explores the impact of BRT on the socio-spatial landscape of the South African city, and situates this study within the wider process of post-apartheid transformation.

Notes

1 Interviews 69 and 62.
2 Appendix A includes a list of interview respondents including their title, organizational affiliation, place and date of the interview. Appendix A is used throughout the book to link interview material with interviewees through a numerical system that lists the interviews chronologically. A number in brackets (e.g., [15]) refers to a particular interview and the reader should turn to Appendix A for supplemental information on that source.
3 Racial categories are a legacy of apartheid in which all South Africans were defined according to these four classifications. These terminologies continue today. I have included the racial categories of my interview respondents to inform the reader of the extreme disproportionality between those planning for transport and those using the transport.