



Temporality, informality, & translocality in Africa's urban archipelagos

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Abstract

Mobilities across time and space are reshaping African lives, communities, and imagination. As people make lives across multiple sites – connections forged through travel, media and the circulation of goals, memories and values – they generate novel forms of mobile urbanism and belonging. Cities' rapidly expanding, diversifying, and mobile urban populations now interact with each other in ways largely unstructured by state regulations or hegemonic social norms. The results are urban socialities often deviating from the models of solidarity, integration, and membership described in classic urban sociology or more recent debates around transnationalism, multiculturalism, and urbanization. While often appearing deeply anomic, fragmented, and relatively unregulated by officials or constitutional orders, these are not genetically antisocial or disconnected sites. Nor are they singular in the histories, morphologies or trajectories. Yet despite the diversity and distance between them, they are linked. These connections draw together urban estuaries where highly fluid populations move into and through cities with archipelagos of people and sites interlinked across and within spatial and temporal horizons. These changing social and urban forms raise epistemological, ethical, and practical challenges around the governance of space, rights, and representation. This paper outlines these concerns as a way of charting research directions for the study of mobile urbanisms.

Keywords: Human Mobility, Urbanisation, Belonging, Urban Archipelagos

Résumé

Les mobilités à travers le temps et l'espace sont en train de remodeler la vie, les communautés et l'imaginaire africains. Alors que les gens vivent sur de multiples sites (des relations créées par les voyages, les médias et la circulation des objectifs, des souvenirs et des valeurs), ils génèrent de nouvelles formes d'urbanisme et d'appartenance mobiles. Les populations urbaines en rapide expansion, de plus en plus diversifiée et mobiles des villes interagissent aujourd'hui les unes avec les autres d'une manière largement non structurée par des réglementations étatiques ou des normes sociales hégémoniques. Il en résulte que les socialités urbaines s'écartent souvent des modèles de solidarité, d'intégration et d'appartenance décrits dans la sociologie urbaine classique ou dans les débats plus récents sur le transnationalisme, le multiculturalisme et l'urbanisation. Bien qu'ils semblent souvent profondément anoniques, fragmentés et relativement peu réglementés par les autorités ou les ordres constitutionnels, ces sites ne sont pas génétiquement antisociaux ou déconnectés. Ils ne sont pas non plus singuliers dans les histoires, les morphologies ou les trajectoires. Pourtant, malgré la diversité et la distance qui les séparent, ils sont liés. Ces connexions associent des estuaires urbains où des populations très fluides se déplacent dans et à travers les villes avec des archipels de personnes

¹ This paper is a modified version of a keynote address to the MIASA International Fellow's Group final conference, 'Migration, Mobility and Forced Displacement' held in Accra, Ghana (24 May 2019). Although I have removed many of the asides and casual comments included in the original text, I have tried to retain its informal, conversational tone. This includes focussing on high level messages rather than empirical specifics. However, I have included extensive references to published work – my own and others – to substantiate and further illustrate the points made here.

et de sites reliés entre eux à travers et dans des horizons spatiaux et temporels. Ces formes sociales et urbaines changeantes soulèvent des défis épistémologiques, éthiques et pratiques concernant la gouvernance de l'espace, des droits et de la représentation. Le présent document décrit ces préoccupations comme un moyen de tracer les axes de recherche pour l'étude des urbanismes mobiles.

Mots-clés: Mobilité humaine, Urbanisation, Appartenance, Archipels urbains

Biographical Note

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Introduction: An Urban Anecdote

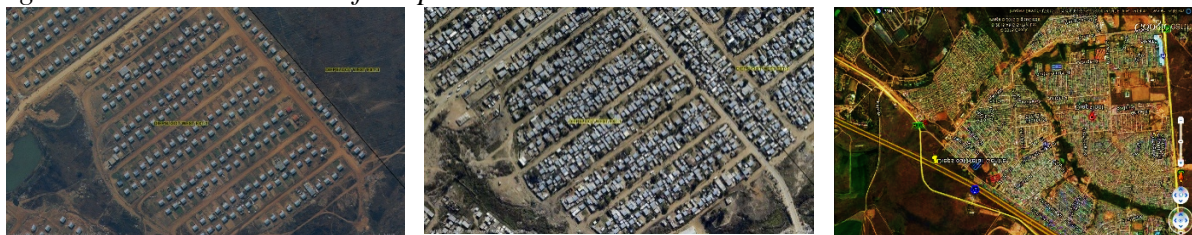
Like many works on the transformation of African politics and societies, this paper begins with a story intended to draw attention to complex social realities intended to ultimately surprise and unsettle something we have for too long taken for granted or simply overlooked. But this is not a story of a person, but rather of tens of thousands of people. Rather, I want to begin with a story of a place: Diepsloot.²

Located just north of Johannesburg – possibly Africa’s wealthiest city – Diepsloot now houses somewhere near a hundred and forty thousand people. It forms just a small part of a greater ‘Gauteng city region’ of close to ten million and South Africa’s only ‘urban’ province. Although geographically the smallest of South Africa’s nine provinces, it has more residents than any of the other eight. Reflecting its position as a node of commerce and cultural generation, more than half its population was born beyond its borders; roughly two of ten outside the country (Statistics South Africa 2018). Combined this space accounts for more than 10% of sub-Saharan Africa’s GDP. Encompassing Pretoria, Johannesburg, and many of the mines and industrial towns fuelling South Africa’s economy, an independent ‘Gauteng’ would be Africa’s seventh richest country.³ Diepsloot is indicative of this diversity and dynamics.

Twenty years ago Diepsloot was a field. The initial settlement was intended as a transit camp for a few thousand people who were moved out of shacks that were regularly swept away by floods. Other spaces around the city have more or less organised origins, but have similarly sprung from a few shelters to cities or suburbs in their own right.

Below to the left I have included a picture of Diepsloot Extension I in the early 2000s. The picture in the middle reflects that same space only a decade later.⁴ The picture on the right reflects the entirety of Diepsloot close to how it now stands.

Figure one: The Evolution of Diepsloot



Those original temporary houses are still there, but so too are thousands of other structures. This has created one of the most linguistically diverse spaces in the country. South Africa has 11 national languages. All are spoken there. But so too are the languages of Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Somalia, and occasionally Pakistan and Bangladesh.. Like many sites or communities across the continent, this is a place where almost no one is from. But it has inertia, generating its own internal ecosystem. The malls and shopping centres moved in long ago. The police only built a station only two years ago.

Diepsloot’s poverty and precarity contrasts starkly with a remarkably different site only a few minutes away: Dainfern. This is one of Johannesburg’s wealthiest and most privileged suburbs. Two decades ago it was also little more than a field. Where Diepsloot is almost entirely Black (to use South African racial categories), only a quarter of Dainfern is. (This in a country where over 80% of the population is black). According to Statistics South Africa (2018), the country’s census agency, Dainfern has relatively more immigrants than Diepsloot but almost all of them are from outside of Africa. Its dominant language is English.

² For more on Diepsloot’s origins and transformation, see Harber 2011.

³ See <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=11092>.

⁴ The first two images were provided by the City of Johannesburg. The final image is from Google Maps.

Taken on their own, Dainfern and Diepsloot look like different worlds, but they are perhaps best seen as conjoined twins. Each depends on and in turn reproduces the other. Without the labour that Diepsloot provides, wealthy Dainfern residents would pay more for their domestic workers, gardeners, builders, and nannies. The material resource from Dainfern finances hundreds of families in Diepsloot. Probably more. Beyond work, the two are part of a symbolic conversation, highlighting the contrasts of wealth and poverty to residents on either side of tall electric fences. Dainfern reflects aspirations but is also a source of anger and antagonism, a stark reminder of the country's spatial and racial divided. For the privileged Porsche and pool owners, Diepsloot's proximity is a not only a source of labour, but of fear. In time this becomes justification for social segregation: for in which they distance themselves from a desperate and dangerous other. They are but two parts of an ever expanding network of sites connected and reproduced through multiple, often antagonistic ties.

Figure two: Dainfern



Emerging Archipelagos

Every city is unique, whether in Africa or elsewhere in the world. However, the story of tremendous, rapid growth and heightening, of entangled inequality is not. The story of multiple sites at once seeking to isolate themselves yet remaining connected through material and moral economies is the emerging norm. Sometimes – as in the case of El Paso Texas in the US and Ciudad Juarez in Mexico, a political border formally divides two inseparable social and economic worlds. More often it is forms of urban planning or social distinctions that maintain these conjoined divisions.

It is these patterns that will characterise the cities which are our global future. Long ago the world entered the ‘urban age’. Over the next decade Africa too will cross the ‘tipping point’ in which the majority of its population is urban. In many countries this has already occurred. Due to its history of dispossession, South Africa long ago became primarily urbanised. In Angola, close to 66% of the population is urban according to the United Nations. In Botswana it is 69%. Yet there is considerable variance across the continent. Sticking with the ‘Bs’, Benin is 49%, Burkina Faso only 29%. (United Nations Population Division 2019). Almost universally, these percentages are rising as people move to cities in their own countries and neighbouring ones.

Even if, as Potts (2011) suggests, the relative weight of cities is overblown, their populations are growing. Scholars of human mobility often quickly assume that migration is behind this growth. However, most of this growth result of people living longer and the somewhat surprising persistence of high fertility rates. Some is an artefact of reclassification: people being labelled as urban even though they’ve never moved (Awumbila. 2017). The

International Organization of Migration (2015) argues that in some places, urbanisation is primarily due to migration. Elsewhere it is natural growth (more births than deaths) which drives urban expansion. By some estimates, only about one quarter of urban growth is due to migration. Most of this is due to movements of people within national borders.

While multiple vectors are behind cities growth, drilling down below the city level reveals particular dynamics. Here we see neighbourhoods, if that is the appropriate term, filled with significant numbers of new arrivals. It is not only the Diepsloots or other spaces on the urban periphery, but inner city or industrial neighbourhoods where old residents and businesses have moved out making space for (or sometimes fleeing) others. In most African cities, new arrivals are from elsewhere in the country. Sometimes they come from the same village or region. Often they are from multiple places. Regardless of their domestic or international origins, they typically cross significant linguistic, political, or cultural divides en route to their present location. The sites they create churn with people moving in and out; people moving through; some people staying. I have taken to call these ‘urban estuaries’ as a way of capturing these multiple movements and distinctive social ecosystems they produce (see Landau 2014a).

Some people fear these movements and the Malthusian dystopias they evoke. More than two decades ago, Kaplan (1994) spoke of the ‘coming anarchy’ with roving bands of young men terrorising civilians in cities across Africa and Asia. Others celebrate mobility and the social dynamism behind it. In Rushdie’s (1992) words, ‘Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that, is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world....’ One need neither fear nor embrace such transformations to recognise the scope of change and emerging forms of cosmopolitanism practiced at multiple socio-economic and geographic scales (see, for example, Landau and Freemantle 2016; Landau and Freemantle 2010).

Without dominating states or ‘host’ cultures, many African cities offer novel possibilities for African youth culture, artistic expression and newfound freedoms. Although moral economies have a way of travelling, cities almost inevitably offer women unprecedented opportunities to escape certain forms of place-based patriarchies (see, for example, Kihato 2013; Bashonga 2018). Three decades ago White (1990) remarked on the potential for women to control and benefit from their sexual labour in colonial Nairobi, a challenge to male control of women’s sexuality and autonomy.

Migration and urbanisation remain powerfully unsettling processes that offer moments – sometimes fleeting – to renegotiate generational and gendered hierarchies (Lubkemann 2007); ethnic or religious affiliation; and potentially escape from political patronage and domination. The possibilities for LGBTQ Africans, or for couples who love across ethnic, linguistic, racial or religious divides are real (see Camminga 2019). Such reconfigurations are unsettling to those whose status or future imaginations depends on preserving the status quo. Around Africa and around the world we have seen various reactionary responses in both sending and receiving communities (see Alami 2018 Landau 2011; Wambua-Soi 2012). The bi-products of such initiatives are many, but maintaining the status quo has ceased to be possible.

Politics Rescaled

One of the changes such rapid urbanisation has instigated is the partial rescaling of formal politics. Migration and immigration were once issues nested almost completely in national planning commissions and bodies. Advocacy efforts, agreements, and management of people’s movements were largely embedded in agencies well removed from local politics. While such bodies often retain formal control over immigration, cities are increasingly part of the conversation (see CNBC 2018; Blaser 2019). In some instances they protest overtly xenophobic or racist national policies. New York, Boston, Los Angeles, London, Berlin are well known for this, but some officials in Nairobi and elsewhere resist the negative effects of immigration raids and marginalisation. Sometimes municipalities call for greater restrictions, as has been the case

in Johannesburg (Mailovich 2019). Either way, they must cope with the people on their doorsteps. Policy responses to immigration are changing, but as I discuss later in this paper, so too are the social and economic processes that undergird local politics.

Through Habitat III and its Sustainable Development Goals, the UN has also come to the party. In Sustainable Development Goal 11, it calls to ‘make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.’ This specific reference to cities – and elsewhere to ‘sustainable communities’, is an important element of rescaling. It also seemingly complement’s HABITAT’s long-term call for ‘Cities without Slums.’ These and other initiatives complements a common refrain one hears from activists that everyone regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, profession, or class has, ‘A Right to the City’.

Few people object in principle to such calls. Inclusive and sustainable cities seems to bask in the glow of progressive politics. Yet taking them forward demands what some of these the terms actually mean and how they may work both for and against the people that concern us in an era of translocal, precarious, and highly mobile lives.

Revisiting the City

Let us start with what we mean by a city. This may seem like a trick question, but really what is a city? The term often calls to mind images of New York, Paris, Tokyo, London, or Chicago. These are the ‘classic cities’ as it were. These are almost ‘ideal types’: cities that are at the heart of modern urban, sociological, and political theory. These cities informed the work of Marx, Simmel, Durkheim, and Weber. These cities informed the Chicago School of sociology. They are where we learned about ghettos and migrant enclaves. They were the reference points for scholars who conducted ground breaking work on urbanisation and social transformation in Africa during the colonial and early post-colonial period (see, for example, Mayer 1971; Cohen 1969). For better or worse, they often remain reference points.

These are global, world cities with distinctive pasts. These are cities forged through processes of industrialisation. They grew together with the growth of industry and states. They turned peasants into factory workers. As Weber (1971) reminds us, they also turned peasants into Frenchmen, and Englishman, and Germans. In the case of New York and Chicago, they turned people from across the world into Americans.

The tandem of state and industry disciplined people: created class, created national identities, created a modern civic citizenship. The regular call of the factory whistle helped standardize time and created distinctive modes of living with strangers (Simmel 1976). It was from these centres states developed the social and material resources to broadcast their power, to launch navies, to control their borders and hinterlands. These are the birthplace of modern capitalism, modern states, and some would argue, modern democracy.

The old industrial cities remain, although they are being transformed by competing processes of gentrification and precaritization. But let us put those aside for now. Since they are not the only kind of cities out there. Elsewhere in the world are cities of a different kind.

These cities incorporate and exceed the visual vocabulary of their elders; skyscrapers, subways, and a proliferation of shopping malls. These are wealthy cities but not aimed at elevating or empowering the domestic population or, for the most part, the domestic economy. They are *entrepôt* and global points of exchange formed through global circulations. They are nodes of social and cultural movement.

To varying degrees, they rely on migrants from across the country and around the world. In many of the Gulf States, foreigners far outnumber citizens (see Nauful and Genc 2014). Sometimes by five to one. Radical social diversity is the norm, but managed under watchful authoritarian eyes. They are central to national economies but their leaders are often only marginally concerned with the welfare of those outside the city walls or the majority of those who live within them. The rural hinterland and peasantry matters little except as a source of raw

materials and labour. The cities are symbols of national pride but politically disconnected from the lives of the average citizen.

The types of cities described are important, but where in sub-Saharan Africa do we find either the old industrial cities or the deeply networked globalised ones? Nairobi is undoubtedly global, but less for industry and trade than as a centre of United Nations and NGO activity. Johannesburg might be a candidate, but its extraordinary population growth has been accompanied by declining industrial and entry level opportunities. Perhaps Luanda? It is a city of great oil wealth and an ever growing population. By some calculations it is the most expensive city in the world. Its geography echoes that of the fragmented, contemporary urbanism that I showed you earlier: wealthy enclaves surrounded by seas of shanties. It too remains disconnected from its hinterland and its citizenry, benefitting few.

For the most part, African cities reflect urbanism of a different kind. They are growing rapidly. Rates akin to industrial European cities 150 years ago or those in globalising, industrialising Asia. But they are cities with only limited industry. Limited trade. Limited possibilities for a secure life. In Kihato and Mueyba's (2015) words, they are not productive, but consumptive. Some find fortune there, but most do not. Yet these are not simply Malthusian, chaotic sites. On average, people in cities live longer lives than those elsewhere (Menashe-Oren and Stecklov 2018). For most, cities reflect possibility amidst precarity: Health; Wealth; and Security. Profit; protection; or passage elsewhere.

What African cities offer is few promises. They are physically, economically, and existentially risky. They may lure with liberation and transformation, but they demand people radically alter their life scripts. They must surrender predictability. Life stages and rites of passage remain important markers of success and normative guides. But the path through them is rife with meanders, roundabouts, and dead ends. These are cities of uncertainty where the majority of Africans will spend at least part of their lives (see de Boek 2012; Simone 2009).

The last urban space I wish to discuss is 'the village'. These are places with names few people know, but which are like many we have seen. How are these cities? There are no big buildings. No Shacks. No factories. No Port. Not even any shopping malls. That much is true. Yet these spaces are far from disconnected. School uniforms and fees are being paid by relatives in cities or overseas. Land may be owned by those who spend most of their time in a city. Whereas the peasants who became Frenchman in Paris were pushed off their land, many Africans retain strong connections to the soil (Geschiere 2009; Potts 2011). This has become a common trope, but one worth considering. Urban dwellers may rarely see the trees and bushes, but their families are there. Their money may go there. And ultimately they may seek respect and status in these sites. It remains central to moral and material economies. With insecure earnings on both farm and cities, individual and families spread their risk, creating household economies that rely on spatial and professional diversification. Sons and daughters are sent to be educated or earn. They may never permanently return, but the connections typically remain strong. Does this make them cities? Probably not, but just as Diepsloot and Dainfern are conjoined twins, so too are villages and the capital city. Or perhaps better we think of these as triplets? Quintuplets? Given the multiple scales of connections forged through the mobility of people and products, the connections are hard to quantify but central to the future shape of cities and the continent's social lives.

Inclusion in Shifting Sands

The multiplicity of connections between cities and others spaces has led Brenner and Schmid (2012) to argue that the rural has ceased to exist. They speak of a 'planetary urbanism' in which every rural area had effectively become a space of production and investment for city-based people and processes. While I struggle with their universalising, materialist vision, I agree with the need to rethink the boundaries of a city. What is our unit of analysis? Where do the boundaries lie?

Understanding contemporary and historical mobility and urbanism means rescaling in two directions: On one hand we need to ‘scale up’ to the translocal and global. On the other, we need to dive down into the hyper-local. Not just to take cities seriously, but to understand the neighbourhood, an enclave as small as a building or the street corner. It is by doing this that Quayson (2014) offers such a powerful account of Oxford Street, Accra’s highly globalised but remarkably local shopping mecca. Looking at Oxford Street, Diepsloot, or any number of other urban estuaries, we begin to see that what is emerging across Africa is more than the simple translocalism fostered by long-standing patterns of oscillating movement or what Potts (2011) calls ‘partial urbanisation’ (see also Bank 2011). These patterns continue, but current African migrations and mobility are more intense and diversified. More importantly, past patterns formed around (and helped ensure) predictability. They remained primarily dyadic. Much of the literature on transnationalism and translocalism refers to these relatively stable connections across space. These more archipelagic forms of membership reflect economies and institutions both fragile and fragmented and connections more dispersed.

Even those who never move far from their birthplace, root themselves in urban space, or find themselves entrapped in refugee camps become ‘inscribed’ in multiple sites and emerging translocal imaginaries (See Turner 2016; 2004). Such inscriptions offer a global imagination filled with possibilities both real and elusive. These produce longings and frustrations: an awareness of processes and possibilities elsewhere and the barriers to accessing them. Geographic movements are shaped by these varied imaginations, visions of home, diasporas and what Mbembe and Nuttal (2004) term ‘multiple elsewheres’.

Even the most seemingly materially untouched sites – the remote village we spoke of earlier – are rapidly becoming parts of continental and global archipelagos: islands of space and time interconnected through material exchange, social recognition, moral disciplines and future imaginations (cf. Soja 1996). However distorted, images, news, moneys, goods and gadgets continually arrive. Those on the receiving end embed them in spatialized practices and perceptions. These shape imaginations of what is possible and generate metrics of success and measures of failure. This leaves few people across Africa self-contained, free of dependence on money, information or status from other spaces and times (see Dzingirai, et al, 2014; Potts 2011). These movements and orientations give rise to life courses that are at once rooted in the everyday materiality of specific sites, but are decidedly translocal. People may not travel far, but the circulation of materials and moralities keeps them connected.

This presents scholars with multiple empirical challenges. How, for one, do we make sense of or speak of economies or systems of belonging that span multiple temporalities and spaces? What does ethnography become when people’s lives are so embedded in spaces that you cannot visit. Or where people’s lives may be implicitly shaped by sites they have never seen and may never reach. And what does political participation or representation – all things we generally value – come to mean for transient or translocal people?

These trends also raise conceptual questions about the meaning of inclusion and normative questions about its desirability for the people we study. The understanding of inclusion that informs most policy approaches –from Urban Vision plans to the Sustainable Development Goals – draw inspiration from industrial cities in North America and, to some extent, Latin America. Underlying these are the desirability of urban solidarity and membership that are often remarkably place bound; visions that seem remarkably anachronistic for those living in estuaries or archipelagos.

Lefebvre’s famous demand that workers have rights to the city is premised on their contributions to building its infrastructure and wealth (see Purcell 2016). Moreover, it is premised on an ideal of urban ownership. For him, for the drafters of the SDGs, or the forces behind Habitat III’s demand for urban inclusion are ideals of localised belonging. Of representation and visibility. Of recognition and status where you are. They work from an ethics of inclusion that presumes people wish to remain. That their futures, whatever shape those

takes, are where you find them. Yet models of place bound incorporation, assimilation, or integration, are no longer adequate as either an empirical or ethical guide (see Bakewell and Landau 2018). We increasingly see various forms of fragmented yet connected systems of moral authority centred on individuals who are nodes in networks spanning space and time. Vivet (2013: 78) and her colleagues describe the position of a local authority figure, Alhaji Abdullahi Salihu Olowo, ‘whose title is Oba Yoruba Kano. In order to maintain traditional loyalties in his home town, Ilesha – where he has never lived – Olowo holds chieftaincy titles but accepted the Hausa Muslim turban as a symbol of authority to rule of the Yorubas in Kano.’ Those under his leadership remain villagers of a certain kind with urban futures: urbanites who must simultaneously maintain status in multiple sites – some urban, some rural – where they may have never been or only occasionally visit.

Elsewhere, people attend churches, go to community meetings or help repatriate corpses to maintain their status in villages they otherwise visit only now and then. Disconnection from distant relatives and projects not only separates them from ancestral sites, but can also alienate them from those embedded in such translocal systems of economic and social generation. Offending people at ‘home’ can close urban opportunities just as easily as shame shared in an urban area blocks the possibility of eventual ‘return’ (see Kankonde 2010). In spaces where people straddle multiple, distinct yet connected social worlds, status and stigma travel, shaping what is possible and what is required.

What we see is something I call archipelagos of belonging and inclusion. Rather than seeing inclusion as something negotiated at the scale of the city alone, people seek varied forms of recognition and membership in multiple places. This may create conduits among a street corner in Nairobi with a village in Somalia and a mosque in Minnesota. It may connect a small shop in Johannesburg to a relative’s house in Kinshasa and a wealthy uncle in Belgium. It may link a crowded shack in Old Fadama with a village on Ghana’s northern border and a global trade in scrap metal. These are small islands of membership in which people negotiate recognition and inclusion. Sometimes these negotiations are simultaneous as with the urban worker who constantly monitors the status of her cowpeas or building project back home while building a life in the city. They may also work on multiple temporal scales where life in the city is simply about waiting, about passing time in order to reclaim status elsewhere.

Pentecostalism, one of Africa’s most muscular social forces, is perhaps the greatest driver of archipelagic belonging (see Kankonde 2016; Landau 2014b). Large numbers of the churches build on their strong connections to institutions in Nigeria, Ghana, Congo and the United States. For many of the churches’ founders – themselves often migrants – their current pulpit is merely a place where they can enter a global social universe. In the words of the Nigerian pastor at the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in Johannesburg: ‘Africa is shaped like a pistol, Nigeria is the trigger and South Africa is the mouth from where you can shoot out the word of God.’ Their preaching is often extraterritorial, overtly denying the legitimacy of state laws while speaking of the dangers of local connections. Both the state and the sullied are enemies of salvation.

As they pray, parishioners draw on variegated liturgical language to make demands on cities while locating themselves in an ephemeral, superior and unrooted condition in which they can escape localised social and political obligations. This is a kind of particularistic, parochial cosmopolitanism that is not necessarily grounded in normative ideas of ‘openness.’ Nor is it intended to promote universal values of any form. Rather, they co-opt the language and imagery of the global cosmopolitan elite – planes, cars, mansions, endless travel – to position themselves as global players through discourses melding the individual with distinct and indistinct spaces in this world and the next (see Cazarin 2018; Pogge 1992). Their churches in Nairobi, Lagos or Johannesburg connects those cities with others in Alabama or the Parisian *banlieues*. Such an approach often leaves them – as intended – participating in many worlds without becoming part of them (See Vertovec 2006; Landau and Freemantle 2016).

As noted, archipelagic imaginations include trajectories and markers of progress often closely associated with geographic mobility: a move to the city, a move across borders, a journey to Europe or America. Yet due to economic circumstances – most notably the precarity and absence of employment and restrictive immigration policies – people experience what Ramakrishnan (2013: 755) terms ‘spatiotemporal disruption.’ Under such circumstances, people may move with expectations of improvement but feel unable to reach the next milestone of success. Without such achievements, they cannot return ‘home’, but nor can they move forward. Others simply wait for the state or others to provide (see Oldfield and Greyling 2015). Katz (2004) characterises Sudanese Youth as being ‘marooned by modernity.’ Jeffrey (2010) talks of ‘timepass.’ People can remain stuck in time: experiencing endless, empty days peppered with temporal panic for having not reached their geographic or material aims. Yet they resist rooting amidst the shifting sands. They fear doing so will end their journeys; Surrender the possibility of success.

In summary, we are seeing cities with ill-defined boundaries with people both struggling for and actively resisting inclusion. Some seek status where they are but are stymied by economic structures that work against them. Others actively resist incorporation, seeking a kind of distanced deferral in which they seek recognition and futures elsewhere in the archipelago. For them, visibility, group membership, political participation, cross-cutting social ties – the forms of inclusion scholars and activists almost universally celebrate – become forms of entrapment. Rather than rights to the city, which is effectively a right of ownership, many want what I’ve termed ‘usufruct rights’. They are helping turn parts of cities into ‘nowherevilles’ – a place where almost no one is from and almost no one wants to belong.

It is possible, of course, that the churning we now see is simply a phase. They may, in Rast’s (2011: 6) words, ‘work themselves out’ and settle in to the forms of solidarity and political communities we see elsewhere. But there are few reasons to believe that will be the case and I expect that translocal or oscillating lives, diasporic imaginaries and deterritorialised politics may become the new normal. Without muscular states or industries, what will be the force for bonding and binding populations? Where are the police in Diepsloot? As the Comaroffs (2012) remind us, even the cities where modern sociology began – Frankfurt, Paris, New York, London – are increasingly looking like the kind of fragmented precarious spaces we see across sub-Saharan Africa.

Sustainability and Urban Inclusion

Now on to our last term. As with the other terms, sustainability has almost as many meanings as there are people who use it. Whether it is ultimately about environmental protection, social cohesion, planning and service provision, it often evokes a kind of stability, a sedentariness. When we think about urban sustainability, we tend to think of strong, locally oriented communities seeking to ensure the futures of next generations *in situ*.

The goal of secure futures may be universal, but what does it mean to think about people negotiating futures at multiple geographic and temporal scales simultaneously? What does it mean to ask a person whose goal is living elsewhere to invest locally when her primary concern is a future elsewhere? What does it mean urban sustainability even mean when a city is so internally divided, fluid, and its borders so ill-defined? Who sets the standards? In whose interest will sustainability serve?

Clearly, local governments are facing multiple challenges in responding effectively to mobility. There are questions of jurisdictions and budgeting. The processes that shape the social and economic life of cities are ever more beyond urban authorities’ jurisdiction. These include national policies and global supply and labour chains. And what systems of state resource distribution make sense when people forge lives in multiple locations but actively evade contributing to the sites where they spend most of their time?

Where people live such lives, intervening in particular space with the intention of reaching specific places or peoples can be like hunting in the dark. It is possible that policy interventions hit the target, but often they miss entirely. By doing so they may have little impact or potentially deleterious consequences for those it is intended to assist. Perhaps more importantly, these spaces are rarely functionally governed by law or policy. Even in South Africa, arguably Africa's 'strongest' state, rights and livelihoods are negotiated on the ground through a panoply of rationalities and calculations, sometimes involving laws and state actors but not always in predictable ways (Hansen and Stepputat 2010).

For those concerned with fostering social cohesion or integration. When people live with multiple temporal and geographic trajectories share space, what does forging community or social cohesion mean? Who, moreover, in a place like Diepsloot, even qualifies as the 'host population'? Who are the migrants? Without this distinction, most of the philosophical and ethical tools we have for discussing integration, hospitality, or welcome make little sense.

It is time to identify and reconsider many of the concepts, questions, and principles that inform both urban and migration policies and scholarship. Indeed, apart from what this means for policy analysis, it raises at least three questions about what rights to the city might mean for people in Africa's urban areas.

First, it asks us to rethink the geographic scales of justice. Harvey and Lefebvre's reading of the city is rooted in Marxist understandings of labour and capital, and the belief that rights to the city belong to those who labour in it. But what if cities were built on the back of workers elsewhere? Or what if there is no labour? What if cities are effectively 'do it yourself urbanism?' The question then is can we envision a right to the city that moves beyond its geographic boundary to incorporate the places outside of it that have made it possible? For an African city to be just, it cannot only be for those who live in the city, but for all those who need to come to it from elsewhere. It must be open for all those who built and continue to build its wealth.

Second, we need to shift the metrics of urban development: how we measure success. For a city to be accessible and inclusive, we must first understand how people seek to use the city to realize their aspirations. This is not to say that slums and informal settlements are perfect: they are not. But it is to recognize, as Huchzermeyer (2011) and others do, that these spaces work for the poor because of their low entry costs and enable people to access the opportunities they seek to fulfil their objectives which may often be elsewhere. Pushing for the provision of urban amenities, and land titles, can inadvertently make the city inaccessible to the poor. What kind of inclusion is that?

Third, we need to rethink the ethics and practices of urban participation and representation. As noted in the paragraphs above, participatory planning has become an almost universal mechanism for realizing democratic local government. Despite its inclusive and just ethos, participation can create incentives for excluding the interests of migrants coming to the city. Those participating in planning processes rarely ask municipalities to dedicate resources to future residents when they themselves face acute immediate needs. That new arrivals are often unpopular outsiders facing formal and informal obstacles to public planning mechanisms, only heightens the probability of their exclusion. Such conditions demand we rethink the ethical and practical basis of political representation, membership and inclusion. For many residents, inclusion is not about ownership and belonging but about usufruct rights – the ability to live in and extract from the city without being bound by it.

In an era of informalised work and regulation, a focus on law and formal migration policy – even at multiple scales – is inadequate to explain social, economic, or developmental outcomes. Instead we must understand the migration experience simultaneously across multiple geographic and temporal scales both formal and social. At the very least, it requires a more substantive understanding of the multiple trajectories under which urban residents are living their lives and the spatial and temporal horizons that inform them. This means new forms of

research. It means new forms of engagement. Perhaps most importantly, it requires constant self-reflection on the societies we want versus the societies we are likely to get. Until we reconsider what we mean by justice, by inclusion, by sustainability, we risk building cities that only exacerbate the inequality and exclusion we seek to address.

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