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– MOVEMENT 3. NAVIGATING URBAN ARRANGEMENTS

THE RE-ARRANGEMENTS COLLECTIVE

Abstract

The third movement explores how (re)arrangements are made and re-worked as people navigate fractured, ever-shifting landscapes of urban opportunity, conflict and uncertainty. Drawing on fieldwork in Paris, Mogadishu and Abidjan, we point to the fragile, collective and anticipatory knowledges accumulated during navigations, and to how these knowledges become contained within and (re)constitute embodied archives.

Introduction

This movement stems from the shared questions that arose from our respective fieldwork on migrant camps and activism in the north of Paris (Ramakrishnan), on the urban life of administrative documents in 'post-war' Mogadishu (Mohamed), and on forms of 'post-conflict' mediation in Abidjan (Conte). Across these sites and cities we have been preoccupied, first, with how people produce, acquire and store knowledge about urban (re)arrangements: knowledge about how things work and about everyday rhythms and routines, which is nowhere spelled out. Urban bordering, property titling and local peace-building are processes that involve multiple, partially disjunctive arrangements, and as a result are riddled with organized uncertainties: unknowable outcomes that are not just incidental but also inherent; a key and ineradicable part of how these processes operate. Such organized uncertainties can have devastating consequences for those at the urban margins. How, then, do urban dwellers compose and accumulate workable knowledge of 'what is going on'? In part, this knowledge is stored in what we call embodied archives: reservoirs of tacit or unspoken urban knowledge that simultaneously marks bodies (e.g. as 'insiders' or 'outsiders') and allows them to participate in collective life.

Our second question thus relates to how the knowledge accreted in embodied archives gets shared across often fragmented communities (between differently racialized and 'documented' constituencies in Paris; between returnees and various authorities in Mogadishu; and within neighborhoods fractured by political violence in Abidjan). Third, we have also conjectured with our research participants about the relation between archives and journeys: how do certain scraps of knowledge help or hinder movement, open or foreclose particular futures? To what extent do the embodied archives we study reiterate existing urban arrangements, including those that facilitate violent interpellation? What is the scope for people to shape these arrangements, to inscribe new traces in the archive and thus re-write seemingly foretold stories of dispossession?

In this movement, then, we approach urban (re)arrangements through the lens of navigation. If it is difficult to name and account for all the various urban practices and myriad ways in which urban dwellers make sense of the city (see Movement 5), then navigation might offer one lens into how bodies and selves relate to each other beyond the sum of individual parts: it is one modality for delineating the contours of (re)arrangements. Thus, rather than being a synonym for re-arrangement, navigation functions as one of its vital constitutive elements. Through navigations, we designate

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the ways residents 'find their way' through complex, uncertain and fluctuating urban landscapes and, in the process, make, unmake and re-make arrangements.

Navigation has been theorized in anthropology (e.g. Vigh, 2009; Archambault, 2017) as a practice that combines mobility, exploration, sense-making, and the constant recalibration of futures within a radically indeterminate, unfolding present. Navigation is in many ways a liminal process, or about making liminal spaces. It involves the passage from this state to that, the charting of circuitous and non-linear routes from illegality to legality, from undocumented to documented, from 'authentic' to 'inauthentic', and perhaps back again. These maneuverings involve movement that simultaneously defies and constitutes map-able arrangements, bound up with (sometimes fleeting) relationships and anticipations of what futures hold. Navigation, in other words, puts arrangements to 'work' and gives them existence in fragmentary and recombinant archives of bodies and institutions.

We want to highlight three modalities of navigation; three processes at play in the practices of navigation that in turn are enmeshed with our understandings of how (re)arrangements can operate. These modalities do not exhaust what navigation does, nor do they stand for conscious rationalities or motivations. Rather, they are background operations. Further, they reveal what is at stake in navigating arrangements. The first modality, *choreography*, is about setting bodies and relations in motion. It designates the forms of synchronization or discordance that come to signal (however fleetingly) collectively held knowledges. The second modality we discuss, *calculation*, is about the ways knowledges are put to use in more or less spontaneous decisions. Here, assumptions, gambles or willful ignorance are brought to bear on arrangements, either giving them greater weight or seeking to loosen their grip on the social world. Third, *absence/presence* involves dilemmas of being (un)seen and making oneself (un)heard in the midst of uncharted, often perilous terrains. Absence/presence is most immediately about strategic decisions over where to place oneself, and what kinds of exposure this involves. By grappling with navigation, therefore, we capture emergent tactics, relations and knowledges that allow bodies to simultaneously disrupt and belong amidst the constant re-arrangements of urban life.

Choreography

The body—and in particular, attempts to manage it through racialized difference and to constrain it in space and time—partially affects the ways in which we navigate our surroundings (as the body can never be fully subsumed by the apparatuses that seek to differentiate). Such navigations build on the archive of bodily memory: movement and struggle to assert one's place become marked on the body, and these traces remain, reactivated as a repository of knowledge about how and when to seek opportunities, resources and community. Here, we borrow Julietta Singh's (2018) reading of her own 'bodily archive'[1] and turn our gaze outward to understand the bodily stakes involved in migrant journeys and migrants' individual and collective attachments to solidarity activists and the wider city. As Singh notes, archival scrutiny is invaluable, not just for laying bare an individual (un)becoming, but also for demonstrating the wider co-constitutions of power, relationships, violence and shared imaginaries (see Mehta, 2020). 'The body archive is an attunement, a hopeful gathering, an act of love against the foreclosures of reason ... and vitally, it is a way of thinking-feeling the body's unbounded

1 We are deeply indebted to an essay by Akanksha Mehta (2020), entitled 'Embodied archives of institutional violence and anti-racist occupation: reading Julietta Singh's *No Archive Will Restore You* in the University', for drawing attention to Singh's work and for thinking about how bodily archives can be thought of expansively, beyond auto-biographical and ethnographic accounts. Similar to Mehta, we consumed Singh's book in a couple of sittings, and are motivated to extend its bodily provocations outward. While historians have long contemplated representations of the fragmented archive (see https://syndicate.network/symposia/literature/indian-sex-life/ for a recent discussion), the intention behind 'archive' in this work is to explore 'the idea of what the archive may have to offer' (Singh, 2018: 19) for conducting life in the present.

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relation to other bodies' (Singh, 2018: 29). The body is constantly entangled in encounter and reciprocity, thus simultaneously limited and limitless in form.

The concept of choreography is critical to understanding the embodied archive, as it is intimately connected to how archives develop and are enacted between bodies. Drawing on dance practice, Patricia Noxolo (2018: 804) uses choreography as a metonym for embodied knowledge within the city, whereby 'choreographed movements … connect[s] with specific and located urban movement repertoires, even within the same city, and derive[s] from systems of signification in and about the city that are also shot through with difference'. Choreographies are thus foundational to building archives: constantly repeating, new performances determine where to stay and for how long, negotiate various social institutions that exist between restoration and incarceration, and, more broadly, prefigure emancipatory futures. Knowledge compilations on movement and provision provide a fertile ground for anticipating the ever-changing urban landscape and for leveraging networks and alliances in order to subvert detection. Choreographies guide how bodies re-arrange under pressure and in commemoration, how actions and actors converge on specific sites, and how all these things are narrated. In other words, choreographies lay the foundations—a gathering of memories, trials, errors and residues—for an embodied archive to emerge.

And yet, while the archive grows through accumulated calculations and fortuitous events, it is constantly re-configured through impermanence and the need to discard what is not being used, is unwanted or has caused trauma; it is thus never fully comprehensible. As Singh (2018: 32) reminds us: 'we also shed ourselves over time. This body is not the body it was then and is already becoming another body'. The overlap and exchange of bodily archives is inevitable.

At the same time, the archive is *intentionally* unknowable, speaking to an ethics we hold up to our interlocutors and a 'politics of refusal' (Simpson, 2016); what is revealed or concealed is a means to evade certain forms of exposure and censure, and attempts to predict and control routines, thus 'muddl[ing] the gaze of who is consuming our bodies and lives' (Mehta, 2020). A (productive and necessary) tension exists, then, between carefully attending to the fragments of the migrant struggle amidst enduring colonial legacies, and creating alternative ways of narrating the endurance of black and brown life. What choreography, and thus embodied archives, might therefore offer are the feeling and sensing of collective ways of being together (and the disavowal of processes that delegitimize) while navigating fractures and uncertainty.

Calculation

The sinews that pull different bodies together in choreography, however disjointed, are the navigation and management of knowledge. In navigating the arrangements that emerge from processes of bordering and hospitality, of peace-making or 'post-war' property titling, we are interested in considering how shared knowledges (formulated as necessary rememberings or selective forgettings) become central to the traversing of uncertain political and social terrains. Whether in a routinized or spontaneous encounter, the navigation of knowledge is central to the management of arrangements. These negotiations, which can be fractious or imprecise, are centrally preoccupied with practices of knowing and unknowing: how certain tasks can be completed, who one 'really' is, how to appear (or not appear) to institutions. We think of the management of knowledge in the navigation of arrangements with reference to three key features: redefinitions, repetitions, and reconfigurations.

Redefinitions facilitate the constant processes of learning and unlearning that are necessary in order to fix particular aspects of the choreography of arrangements together. In this, there are necessary social fictions at work which grease the wheels of the arrangement—relations of kinship and conviviality can be emphasized, elided or conjured up as necessary to facilitate the navigation of particular kinds of arrangements.

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Here, fiction and truth cannot be divorced from one another: what is excised and what is emphasized is a function of what is necessary. This is why Nyamjoh and Brudvig (2014: 2019) characterize conviviality as emerging from 'the formation of such tactical alliances, as they are often crafted out of mutual need—a reciprocity that holds great value in the context of urban anonymity'. These performances, pulling down boundaries in some circumstances and erecting them in others, are part of the crafting of arrangements.

Repetitions make knowledge in arrangements available for uptake and expansion. This is the process by which the spectacular becomes woven into the everyday. This is what Veena Das (2007: 7) calls the 'descent' into the ordinary, whereby new forms of social being, new relations of meaning, and the 'mutual absorption of the violent and the ordinary' configure normalcy out of contexts of urban uncertainty. This absorption of the spectacular, through repetition, is one way of navigating uncertain and contested urban terrains.

Reconfigurations are the means by which knowledge becomes the subject of the arrangement itself. This is where the figure of the broker becomes central, as it is in this repository of accreted knowledge that navigations can continue to be maintained. Here, knowledge and its re-ordering is central for the traversing of contexts of uncertainty, wherein 'things are intersected not to fit together but to generate motion and volatility that propel the components of contracts and deals into still other experimental relations' (Simone, 2013: 245). As Mona Abaza (2020: 9) argues, urban communities in the global South navigate uncertainty through these kinds of relations to 'survive, circumvent state authoritarianism, and reshape' urban circuits of power and dislocation. Taken together, these reconfigurations of knowledge make possible new kinds of 'inventive political technologies' (Simone, 2013: 245), crafted through the navigation of arrangements.

In these ways, working with knowledge in the navigations appears as a kinetic flow—toward or away from particular poles, states of being, legal statuses, even identities. It is these practices of careful knowing and deliberate forgetting that re-order relationships that make the choreography of arrangements possible. Here, futures that may be 'near, extended, foreclosed, hoped for, or dreaded animate differing sorts of action in the present' (Newhouse, 2017: 505). The anticipation of uncertain futures, which Léonie Newhouse (2017) calls 'everyday hedging', makes the tender, measured and careful construction of shared knowledge—brokered, re-ordered and re-constructed—a central site of the navigation of (re)arrangements.

Absence/presence

Navigating urban arrangements requires stretching and perhaps undoing established ontologies of personhood, subjectivity, social location and physical position. As AbdouMaliq Simone (2004; 2018; 2019) has shown us, residents in most of the world often need to be in several places at once, to anticipate multiple, disjunctive timelines of what might/could/should happen, and to participate in various institutional processes without quite committing to follow the rules, or to see things through. When we evoke absence/presence in this essay, it is thus not as two distinct ways of being in the city, but as a continuum, which includes liminal states of blur and degrees of fading. This blurring of absence/presence becomes particularly tangible when we consider identification and its materialities—think burnt or rubbed-out fingerprints, washed-out ID cards or faded, half-torn property titles, queer or fugitive bodily refusals of the strictures of identity (see e.g. Muñoz, 1999; Keeling, 2019; M'Charek, 2020)—a topic that we return to in each of our empirical sections. But the continuum of absence/presence is also applicable to the embodied archives that residents compose through collective choreographies. Shared memories and traumas, 'orientations' (Ahmed, 2006) toward co-presence, the 'public secrets' dear to anthropologists (e.g. Pype, 2016; Archambault, 2017)—all exist not as incontrovertible, self-announcing presences but as shimmering shades of absence/

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presence. These are the sensible traces of arrangements that our colleagues explore in the fifth movement of this intervention.

Today, absence/presence as a mode of navigation is caught between three increasingly intertwined poles of urban governance. The first is the long-standing apparatus of surveillance that Simone Browne (2015; see also Breckenridge, 2013) has shown is indissociable from the policing of blackness. The second is its liberal counterpart, the apparatus of recognition which produces subjects identified as worthy of protection by the state, or by the human rights texts that force governments into justifying their states of exception. The third, which ambiguously meshes with the first two, is the engine of total computation commonly referred to as 'big data'. Together, these apparatuses configure and re-configure blackness as that which must simultaneously be surveilled and kept out, investigated, biologized and mythologized (Mbembe, 2014; Amaro, 2019). Put differently, surveillance, recognition and datafication are the conditions of existence for racialized identity, and as such, the background against which urban dwellers navigate their own absence/presence in urban society.

This navigation tacks between claims on the promises or lures of dominant regimes for social and political visibility (we can think, for example, of the *gilets noirs* demonstrations demanding regularization for undocumented workers in France), and evading exposure to political or algorithmic violence and co-optation (e.g. Safransky, 2020; see also Georgiou, 2019). That is, residents have to make decisions and hedge bets about what their overt presence might mean and what it might bring. This entails practices of dissimulation, of more or less deliberate opacity (Glissant, 1997a), of the more or less conscious and collective cultivation of unknowable bodies, spaces and futurities.

Despite dispossession: navigating embodied migrant archives in Paris

I (Ramakrishnan) start by considering how migrant understandings of the 'periphery' in Paris become mapped on the body, where calculations and maneuvers are predicated on who to make oneself visible to and what different degrees of visibility can mean for encountering the police, facing eviction or securing asylum. These maneuvers are simultaneously bolstered and reinforced by local volunteer collectives that have shifted arrangements over time: from smaller outfits that have focused on distributing tea and food to more systemic forms of witnessing and housing activism. For migrants such as Younis, a Sudanese migrant, choreographies of daily routines and spontaneous movements have shifted and accumulated over time, forming a bodily way of knowing. Migrant journeys are years in the making and, it seems, always in-process these days, unfolding and evolving in unexpected (and violent) modes, though punctuated by possibility and *solidarité*.

Migrant choreographies—which necessitate bodily re-arrangements—intersect with volunteer collectives, converging on the streets, under canals, in makeshift tent camps and sometimes, during spectacular events, in central plazas. Through these accumulated choreographies an 'archive' emerges, where imaginaries of city-ness and belonging mesh with the (extra)legalities and permutations of possibility, complicating the prevailing atmospheres of solidarity—an archive that is densely interwoven, but important for documenting the struggle (e.g. Stierl and Tazzioli, 2021) to dismantle borders. From among these varied migrant encounters and navigations emerge collective ethics and affect for something otherwise: vitality and hope beyond (racialized) border violence.[2]

Migrant choreographies and their subsequent bodily re-arrangements take on many forms. These range from creating makeshift shelters on the canals or finding safety

2 See Jacobsen and Gilmartin (2021) and Collins (2021) for important discussions on the ethics of studying migration; both papers point to a problematic focus on individual becoming at the expense of wider reflections on collective affects and encounters.

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in an underpass circumscribed by nationality (Afghan migrants on one side, Sudanese migrants on the other), to making strategic friendships with other migrants (particularly when tents and sleeping bags are in short supply), and knowing how and when to queue for food and other supplies, or calculations about when to head off to Calais and beyond. There is a materiality in these choreographies whereby (the lack of) documentation—or the category of being *sans papiers*—haunts the temporalities of navigation.

Younis's journey started in Sudan, thence to Libya and across to Italy, over the Alps and finally to Paris, where I first met him on Boulevard Ney in Porte de la Chapelle, a street in the 18th *arrondissement*. This *arrondissement* became a hub for migrant gatherings and volunteer activity with the opening of a 'welcome center' in November 2016. The 'welcome' was always one of ambivalence, however, as the temporary pop-up center—the *centre humanitaire d'accueil pour migrants*, nicknamed 'the Bubble'—operated with the carceral logics of barbed wire, metal turnstiles, and restricted entry and exit. This formulation of a 'welcome' required migrant registration, fingerprinting and the ever-present threat of being 'Dublined', the common parlance for the Dublin regulation procedure which sees migrants deported back to the first EU country of entry to submit and process an asylum claim, placing many refugees in a tremendous bind: follow the Dublin procedure and face potential deportation, or take one's chances outside the asylum system and (also) risk deportation. This was (and is) a 'welcome' that some migrants rejected altogether, preferring to risk life on the streets, under the radar.

Maneuvering, and ultimately modes of living and dwelling, then, are predicated on these 'decisions', and are indeterminate, with dreams and aspirations constantly being recalibrated through the tenuousness of life on the street. Certain futures can be very quickly foreclosed, and this was evident in the often-jubilant selfies young men would take in front of the Eiffel Tower, or the eagerness with which they asked for directions to get there, which a few weeks or months later would shift to utter exhaustion from navigating the labyrinthine asylum system and fending off threats of deportation.

Returning to Younis, we met in 2016 and on and off over the course of the next two years, when I was volunteering periodically with Solidarité Migrant Wilson and Solidarithé—a pun on the word *solidarité* (solidarity) and *thé* (tea)—two local collectives whose primary remit was to distribute breakfast in the morning and hot drinks in the evening, respectively. Similar to many other migrants, Younis had decided against registering (and having his mobility restricted) at the Bubble, preferring instead to wait and see what safety and possibility the streets would offer. In this way, the streets saw the *spilling over* of the Bubble—at some points in 2017 over a thousand migrants slept rough on Boulevard Ney, the street that ran along in front of the center—an extension that diverged in its ethos of improvisation and recuperation of the shards of migrant mobility and autonomy.

Volunteer collectives and migrants assembled on the street were thus intimately bound together through affect—collectivity evolving and coalescing with loose threads of forward motion, slivers of hope that migrants could and would survive on the streets, gain asylum and finally be able to call back home to family and friends with dignity. This atmosphere was even more charged during Eid of 2017, during a particularly hot start to the summer when different charities provided *iftar* meals at sunset. Younis had grown accustomed to the varying (in)visibilities that being on the street demanded—from the hypervisibility of late-night *iftar* and hot drink distributions, to the more wary queuing that took place in the mornings in the quieter and more disciplined Porte de la Chapelle, and everything in between over the course of the day.

This precarious, collective atmosphere was constantly being eroded and threatened with erasure through the evictions of tent camps and rough sleepers. The numbers themselves became hard to keep track of over the years, and while initially focused on the street spillovers from the Bubble, they quickly spread to other sites of migrant place and home-making. They make grim reading: in July 2017, 2,000 people

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were evicted from outside the Bubble;[3] in August 2017, the figure had risen to 2,400.[4] In 2020, undeterred by the harsh winters and COVID-19, the evictions continued: 427 people evicted from Porte de la Villette canal in February 2020;[5] 1,250 from Aubervillier canal in July 2020;[6] and 2,400 people from the Stade de France in St Denis in November 2020.[7]

Surviving repeated evictions, Younis was ultimately 'Dublined', but he refused to take the ticket back to Italy, the first EU port of entry in his migrant journey. Through the various loopholes in the procedure he stayed put in Porte de la Chapelle for seven months and was ultimately offered accommodation through the asylum system in a small village near Bordeaux. This urgent politics of refusal (to go quickly and quietly) is thus added to the bodily archive, where accumulations of decisions lead to a recalibration of what is tolerable: while Younis preferred Porte de la Chapelle with all of its (capacious and disruptive) energies, the small village kept him moving toward the end goal of belonging somewhere. As he said in a text in 2019: 'ohh things are getting so complicated'.

Migrant re-arrangements are closely linked to and co-produce volunteer arrangements—and these too are ever-shifting and secretive; known to those who need to know but concealed from state security and scrutiny. The volunteers themselves also contain a (different/relational/degrees of privilege) archive of the absorbing rituals and rhythms of distribution and provisioning that includes all the routes, numbers, faces, names, communities, families and witnessing that come up in conversation over cups of tea. At the more mundane level, certain logics of sharing space and consolidating repertoires and protocols emerge. For instance, the critical intersection of migrants and volunteers occurred through a recognition of food and drink preferences and fasting periods.

In 2017, shortly before the anticipated closure of the Bubble and with frustration growing over how the center operated, a migrant 'hub' was opened in an unused warehouse through the partnership of three collectives: Solidarithé, Solidarité Migrant Wilson and Utopia56. This was at times a tense alliance, and tempers could often be tested by the organization and maintenance of this tiny space—three adjacent 'rooms' that served for breakfast prep, SOS calls, planning meetings, supply storage and everything else—but a shared sense of migrant justice propelled the alliance forward. While this hub also closed in the end, there were new choreographies at work that remained crucial to the volunteer repertoires, such as volunteers embarking on night-time distributions (*les maraudes*) in order to target and record the ongoing vulnerabilities faced by migrants.

In November 2020, a confluence of events connected by threads of racial and migrant justice—Black Lives Matter protests, the passing of Article 24 (the new 'security' bill),[8] and the continuing forced clearings of migrants from north Paris—led to an occupation of Place de la Republique. Bodies went from minimizing space to taking up space in new and powerful ways in concert with volunteer organizations. This protest migrant camp in the heart of the city was violently dismantled by the police, but not without generating popular outrage and a widening solidarity movement—the *hébergement solidaire migrants*—through which many Parisians offered their spare

3 See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/french-police-evict-2000-refugees-and-migrants-sleeping-rough-in-paris.

4 See: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/4702/evicted-paris-migrants-transferred-to-temporary-shelters.

5 See: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/22581/french-police-clear-migrant-camp-in-the-north-of-paris.

6 See: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/26315/paris-migrant-camp-evacuated.

7 See: https://www.france24.com/en/france/20201117-french-police-clear-more-than-2-000-people-from-makeshift-migrant-camp-near-paris.

8 See: https://www.publicinternationallawandpolicygroup.org/lawyering-justice-blog/2020/12/13/frances-global-security-law-article-24-and-the-right-to-information.

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rooms for migrant accommodation. These alliances between volunteers and migrants are not without friction. Nonetheless, arising as they do at specific moments in time, they point to the possibilities of shared archives, and their ripples extend beyond the immediate spaces, connecting with small villages like the one near Bordeaux where migrants like Younis live.

Robber or Robin Hood? Navigating document verification in Mogadishu

Speaking with diaspora returnees to Mogadishu, I (Mohamed) was told that one's reaction to the existence of the 'Verification of Lands Office' reveals whether one has truly assimilated or not. It is said that new arrivals are astonished and outraged that this office exists, while those who have truly 'acclimatized' know that its service is not only necessary, but tantamount to a civic benevolence.

Despite its name, the 'Local Government Mogadishu Office Verification of Lands Documents Years 1956–1990' (hereafter, the Verification of Lands Office) is not a state agency. It does not, in fact, report to the municipal government, even though 'local government' is part of its name. Instead, it is a site for verification *brokerage* that came into being at the moment of state collapse in Somalia, thanks to one enterprising individual. In what has become an apocryphal tale, this individual had the foresight to commandeer a major part of the original Mogadishu Land Registry and its collection of neighborhood planning maps into his personal custody. Through this action, he was able to prevent the office from being destroyed during the widespread sacking of public buildings that occurred in the early 1990s. He remains in possession of the most comprehensive urban land registry of Mogadishu to this day, and contracts out his verification services to private individuals for use before the Land Disputes Committee of the Benadir Regional Administration (the Mogadishu municipality), as well as the courts.

While his name is public knowledge, he operates outside of the Somali territories and is very discreet about his services. This shroud of mystery applies even to those who have contracted services with him, and he emerges as a deeply ambivalent figure—somehow neither thief nor savior—upon whom deeply divided motivations and understandings are projected. Some call him a thief of public documents, profiteering from the collective right of the Somali people. Others (including many in government) call him Robin Hood, because without him those records would have surely been destroyed. Regardless, it is an accepted fact that the work of this individual is necessary. His words, enshrined in the documents he produces, are interchangeable with the real thing. Put another way, he *is* the archive.

– 'Without documents you are doomed': the vital work of documents

Before the collapse of the state in 1991, and particularly during Somalia's period of military rule under 'scientific socialism', access to property documents was tightly constrained through expensive and nepotistic elite networks. The coming of urban warfare and massive population movements into and out of Mogadishu meant that many left the city without their documents, while others sold their properties to facilitate their exile, and still others made homes out of abandoned shelters. As Mogadishu experienced decades of continual violence, many in the diaspora opted not to return until 'stability' was restored.

In 2012, with the ouster of *Al Shabaab* by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia, a sizable number of Mogadishu's former denizens started iterative and non-linear processes of 'return', and their furious 'reconstructions' caused the price of real estate to skyrocket. These returnees often found that the homes they had left behind decades ago were now sold, demolished or simply occupied by someone else. Through these movements, something else had also been dispersed across the globe: the sinews of community

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which could attest to the fact that *this* aunt lived across the way from *that* cousin. Many of those who could assist in these communal-cognitive mappings had either left, died in the diaspora, or simply forgotten. And so, in response to the upending of the long-established 'physics' of *locality*, something else arose to fill that space.

In the context of property disputes in Mogadishu today, documents now do this witness-work. More than the simple certification of land or property ownership, documents are relied upon to provide testimony of one's presence in the city before the state collapsed and one's participation in the life of the city before its destruction. These documents attest to the relationships between former urban communities; they create lineages of urban presence and so anchor one's concrete claim to (at least one corner of) the city. Yet now there is a surfeit of testimony. Because 'without documents you are doomed', those who seek to reconstruct old lineages of ownership and those who wish to create new ones, so as to legitimize continued use, all need documents. This is why a section of the Bakaara Market creates these documents for anyone who needs them. With such a surfeit, whose testimony do you believe? And why?

– Necessary navigations: trusting the way-marker

The role of the broker—such as the man who set up the Verification of Lands Office—is to facilitate passage from one state to the next. Thanks to these ambivalent figures, individuals and communities make their way over uncertain and circuitous terrain—from being documented to undocumented, from illegal to legal, from this place to that and maybe back again. The Verification of Lands Office deals in the business of authenticity—it testifies that your testimony is true. The broker can do this because he has access to knowledge that no one else has. In this, there is an important question: can we trust him? As it turns out, trusting him is not simply useful, it's necessary. State actors have to trust him—what other option do they have? Individuals must trust him—where else could they go? I have been told that trust emerges from the fact that his reputation would be hampered if he was found to be untruthful; that he (unlike so many others) has an incentive to be honest. But because he has the papers (and everyone else does not), there is no way to authenticate the authenticator. There are no verifiers who can verify his reports. Which may, in a roundabout way, be the point.

In truth, a central part of this arrangement is likely the fact that this ambiguous figure offers a way through ambiguity. He's trusted because he's useful. There's a necessary aversion at play here—a looking only through peripheral vision—that's necessary for the arrangement to work. Who knows what will happen if he dies? Or if he lies? *Allahu a'lam*, it's all fine for now.

Weaving through the fractured city: technologies of encounter in Abidjan

In late 2014, when I (Conte) started asking Abidjani residents I met about their neighborhood, I encountered seemingly contradictory accounts. The first type of account involved detailed popular cartographies linking space, ethnicity, labor and partisanship. This was a story in which residents knew exactly what was going on: who was doing what, where, and as part of what arrangements. At the time of my fieldwork, such stories and cartographies also tragically doubled as mappings of political violence. Neighborhoods were described as 'hotspots' or 'victims' in the post-electoral war of 2011; these histories of violence associated neighborhoods and even entire municipal districts with a dominant ethnic and political 'tendency'. Together, these accounts constituted an anxious map of a city fractured into antagonistic groups, neatly bounded both spatially and socially (Dembélé, 2003).

At the same time, most people characterized their neighborhood in terms that emphasized diversity. *Il y a tout le monde ici* ('everyone lives here'), went this second account, which from French could also translate as 'the whole world lives here', echoing Édouard Glissant's (1997b) poetics of the *Tout-Monde*. If not quite the whole

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world, then a super-diverse mix of ethnic groups from all over Côte d'Ivoire and West Africa—more or less extended lineages meshed into complex urban entanglements and often compared, in popular discourse, to *n'zassa* tapestry. This 'whole-world' narrative was one of pride, the pride and vernacular cosmopolitanism associated with the historical 'hospitality' of the government, itself tied, once upon a time, to economic success.

The approximation in the second type of account was, in part, structural. Diversity in Abidjan is, in fact, extremely difficult to map. Historically, demographic statistics—like the colonial ethnographies and categories they draw upon—have been imprecise. Ethno-linguistic boundaries themselves have been insecure and contested; the publicly accepted, ambiguous line is that Côte d'Ivoire has 'more than sixty' ethnic groups. Furthermore, state identification policies have, for a very long time, left significant gaps in the official record. Together, these uncertainties have fueled sometimes violent but ultimately unsuccessful efforts to figure out 'who is who' (Marshall-Fratani, 2006) and who lives where.

At the same time, approximations such as 'the whole world lives here' were also deliberate. They were part not just of Abidjanis' self-presentations, but also of the way residents navigated a collective urban archive loaded with traumatic memories, violent histories and lingering resentments. Popular narratives of diversity and their associated practices of conviviality were active contributions to struggles over (de)territorialization and (dis)identification. Many residents rejected the claims of the conflict's cartographies to be exhaustive, illuminating and durable. 'The whole world lives here' was thus a kind of 'unmapping' (Goffe, 2020), in addition to eschewing precise calculations. This does not mean residents somehow forgot or chose to ignore the past, or that they simply brushed aside the effects of ethnicized political domination and dispossession. As Simone (2012) writes, African urban dwellers are adept at *un*knowing or distancing social realities so that indeterminacy can be magnified and re-signified from being an outcome of 'crisis' to a source of possibility. This process of re-signification could be heard daily in the Abidjani maxim: 'you never know'. In this assertion, reality (precarity, predation, division, containment) was very much there, very much pressing, but its effects were kept perpetually in question.

The ethos of 'you never know' animated complex choreographies of mediated encounters. On the local airwaves, for example, residents called repeatedly to greet strangers from other neighborhoods, in the hope that they might later obtain their number and meet 'in real life'. A friend in his mid-20s also recalled that, when he and his classmates first got mobile phones, they dialed random numbers linked to their operators in the hope of striking up conversations. And as more and more research participants opened a Facebook account in 2015, they befriended hundreds of 'People You May Know' that they did not, in fact, know at all, many of them on other continents. This connective activity was deliberately aimless; it was also significantly gendered, though young women were active participants as well. The search for mediated encounters made no distinction between local and global, so long as connections provided a more expansive, extensive sense of place, and with it a sense of possibility.

In addition to extension, mediated encounters involved more or less subtle games of dis-identification and dissimulation. On local radio, a young Togolese man struggling as a carpenter's apprentice in one of Abidjan's poorest neighborhoods could re-invent himself as a savvy, coupé-décalé hustler, cracking jokes in Nouchi (Abidjan's street slang) and speaking back to elders in ways that he never would 'at home'. On Facebook, many participants multiplied their accounts (I still get regular invitations from people I am already connected with on the network, but who have created a new avatar, sometimes with exactly the same name) and pseudonyms to

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maintain ambiguity about who they were, where they lived, and how much they earned. Romance and hustle, itself ranging from finding informal side-gigs to *broutage* (online scamming), were closely intertwined and both involved their share of 'bluff' (Newell, 2012); a mix of suspended disbelief and 'manufactured plausibility' (Scott Lewis, 2020: 11).

The point is not to romanticize these encounters as emancipatory or as instances of reconciliation in a fractured polity. Nonetheless, they signaled the constant production of a counter-archive, one in which things known were somehow not (completely) what they seemed, making room for new knowledge and discovery—and indeed, new re-arrangements. These mediated encounters were also the audible/visible traces of otherwise dissimulated movements through the city, as inhabitants cast nets and wove networks *in spite of* the borders and boundaries they knew might stand in their way.

Conclusion

Modalities of choreography, calculation and absence/presence guide the flow of movements across an urban terrain that is simultaneously inventive, ephemeral and concrete. Corners of neighborhoods are claimed, reclaimed and abandoned, depending on when presence is deemed necessary or when the cost of surveillance becomes too much. In hedging one's bets, knowledges are accreted—both experiential and experimental—and connected to an embodied archive where repetition, reconfiguration and redefinition mark the body. In navigating urban anonymity, uncertainty and post-conflict mappings, individual navigations must often build upon tactical alliances, where sharing knowledge is key to ascertaining where and how to re-arrange. Cumulatively, it is about the creation of archives of mutual witnessing, as urban dwellers see and sense each other over time and extend care across the known and the unknowable.

In our discussions about how to read our case studies in conjunction, we kept returning to the words *despite/in spite of*. At one level, this is a recognition that urban (re)arrangements—and the navigations that render their contours and lines to some degree tangible—are themselves nestled in (or entangled with) violent (infra)structures that severely constrain the life chances of migrants in Paris as well as the popular majorities of Abidjan and Mogadishu. As such, the navigations we witnessed—like the arrangements of solidarity, conviviality and trust they conjured—sometimes seemed improbable, if not impossible. Embodied archives, after all, are under constant threat of erasure. They are too often torn up or burned out by racist bordering, by political predation, or by the impersonal systems of computation and social ordering that factor racialized, premature death at the heart of their anticipatory models (Gilmore, 2007; McKittrick, 2020).

By staying with the navigations, following them along in the middle of their incomputable logics, we want neither to render them legible as part of beginning-to-end trajectories, nor to glorify them under the rubrics of resistance or endurance. But we do want to point to that middle, that hold, as a space of possibility; we want to give navigations *importance*, in Isabelle Stengers' (2017) sense, in order to 'intensify the possibles they harbor'. In doing so we are guided by those we study with, in each of our locations. For them, navigations are not just about keeping mobile despite multiple enclosures, about making do out of necessity. They are, fundamentally, about living with and through indeterminacy, sometimes by force, sometimes by refusal, always with an eye on a way out, a path to some kind of otherwise. A fugitive politics lies ever at the surface, where fragmented knowledges are held close in order to find one's way to an (un)anticipated future—despite continual attempts to script that future or write it off entirely (Harney and Moten, 2013; Sojoyner, 2017).

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