African urban discourse: invisible and reflexive practice in African cities.

Emma O'Shaughnessy

At present, we are witnessing an exciting moment in African urban thought, one that sees writers and theorists engaging with new avenues through which the African city can be configured and read. These ideas tend to reflect and focus on the myriad, creative ways in which African urbanites capitalise on their environments, and explore both the challenges and freedoms generated by a life in African cities. Underlying these explorations is the notion that through the development of creative tactics, African urbanites can lay claim to agency amidst difficult conditions and can shape their urban environments into flexible and enabling spaces.

The following paper responds to this moment. It outlines the grounds for how a new reading of the African city space is possible. It maps out the foundations of traditional urban theory and posts a route through which one can see a different kind of urban thought emerging. By mapping out some of the ways in which African cities have been negatively typecast, in relation to certain, often out-dated, modes of reading urban spaces, the paper observes how one can use urban theory, and theories of spatiality, to substantiate newer and more relevant modes of viewing urban spaces in Africa. Employing universal ideas about space and cities aids an understanding of how African cities fit into a larger frame or context of socio-spatial thought. This also prevents a distancing African cities, or exclusion, from the way cities are understood in general and in relation to each other. This paper will refer to the work of both African urban scholars and 'Western' scholars. In doing so, it seeks to negotiate a dialogic relationship between location-specific, postcolonial urban thought and practice and a global perception and study of urbanism.

African scholars who focus on the postcolonial urban space are seeking to redefine the way in which cities are framed in order to challenge the pervasiveness of negative ideas about Africa. Negative perceptions that inform these stigmas are often remnants of the political and social dichotomies set up in the colonial period, between the colonisers and the colonised.

As Achille Mbembe writes,

> The Western imagination defines the metropolis as the general form assumed under the rationalization of relations of production (the increasing prevalence of the commodity system) and the rationalization of the social sphere (human relations) that follows it.[1]

What Mbembe indicates above is that traditionally the identification of a 'functional' city is usually a function of valorised Western ideas around urban stability, sustainability and productivity. Through this historically dominant urban theory, 'modern' cities in post-colonial Africa are portrayed as 'chaotic and disorderly.'[2] The contributors of *Under Siege: Four African Cities*, explain that:

> …with decolonization and globalization, the discourse of African urban systems has…been expressed through the paradigms of development and modernization. The   development argument pushes African urban systems to reform themselves into new vectors of political and mercantile liberalism, while the modernization argument stresses the importance of retooling outdated and neglected infrastructure and policy sectors in order to make urban economies more efficient and conducive to the generation of wealth and social dividends. *However, deeply embedded in these discourses– between   postcolonial citizenship and modernity, chaos and disorder, development and modernisation– is the clear recognition that postcolonial African cities have long been understood only in relation to a spectre of binary oppositions and spatial and temporal distortions.*[3]

What is evident is that traditional Western urban theory has ordered all the world's cities in one, totalising system, where cities are measured according to a notion that there is a definition of a 'functional' urban space. In comparison to typically western normative values, African cities are 'aberrant' because they display trends that do not fit into this discursive framework. In the public imagination, African cities are seen as unsophisticated and unmanageable. Of

course this type of thinking does not accommodate any of the nuances or ironies that were part of the colonial process. For example, Jane Jacobs reminds us that in Africa, the process of 'colonialism did not simply involve the transfer of metropolitan processes of urbanisation to the colonies; there was a reverse movement as well.' In other words:

> "urbanism and urbanisation in the metropole cannot be understood separately from the development in the colonial periphery" (King, 1990:7). This involves more than the process that brought exoticised fads to the architecture of imperial cities or saw monuments made to the triumph of empire. The use of peripheral territories for primary production and resource extraction facilitated, indeed necessitated, the growth of industrialised and commercialised urban centres in the imperial core.[4]

Nor does this type of thinking always accommodate the clear ways in which African cities challenge these stigmas or challenge the way urban systems the world over can be understood.

The African urban spaces, along with many cities in developing countries[5] have been, and still are, framed as dysfunctional. As Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall observe, "ways of seeing and reading contemporary African cities are still dominated by the meta-narrative of urbanization, modernization and crisis."[6] Very often this is based on economic principles. Let us look at the example of the world-city hypothesis. Initiated by urban theorist John Friedman,[7] the hypothesis creates a frame for urban analysts to measure how individual cities operate in relation to others and how they 'measure up' on a global scale. The hypothesis, as Jennifer Robinson informs us, places the cities of the world into a ranking system that prioritises a very small portion of a city's financial sector and this sector's global functioning.[8] In essence, the hypothesis postulates that the cities that have strong participation in the global, and not just their local economies, are awarded a primary standing as a 'world-city.' A city with a less prominent role in global economics is allocated a position as a secondary-city. Implicit in this categorisation is that these cities have the potential to change their status. In other words, they could at some point 'catch up' with the primary world-class cities.

John Friedman, when confronted by the popularity of the world-city theory suggests that it is the global market that governs the system and that "we look to capitalism…for the frequently destructive strivings for increasing status among cities."[9] Yet, this response ignores the impact of such a system on the way African cities are read. Inevitably, the hypothesis reinforces the position of the existing world order by replaying the kinds of divisions seen in previous generations, such as those produced by the dualisms of colonialism and imperialism. It asserts a hierarchical system that draws from "a quintessentially neo-imperialist and global-scopic perspective…located in the centres of power and privilege that valorise and prioritize the activities of the most powerful in a few (old and new) imperial centres."[10] It comes as no surprise then that the cities that rank high up on the world-city scale are those that have historically benefited from these kinds of divisions. Moreover, Robinson again argues, the hypothesis assumes that all nations and cities have, or have had, the same ambition—to become a city that ranks in the higher echelons of the world-city hierarchy, to become a city that fits the normative model of what an ideal city might be—in this case, economically efficient. By emphasising economic output and competitiveness, it prioritises formal systems that may not be relevant in all local urban contexts. And imposes a rigid conception of how urban spaces should be organised.

As a consequence, urban centres that are large in size but are not economically competitive on a global level are dismissed to the margins of this ranking system. For instance the world-city hypothesis' primary and secondary ranking system does not accommodate for so-called 'mega-cities.' The sprawling, densely populated cities that are characteristic of most 'developing' countries are either ignored or stigmatised since they deviate too far from the criteria of norms set up by the theory. The theory overlooks the fact most of the cities that display 'urbanisation without growth' are bound to "a global political conjuncture—the worldwide debt crisis of the late 1970s and the subsequent IMF-led restructuring of Third World economies in the 1980s."[11]

Proponents of these kinds of urban ideas are blind to the fact that ideas like the world-city hypothesis provoke the divisions set up through a discourse of modernity and development, as Enwezor et al reminded us earlier. This is symptomatic, as Mbembe tells us, of the fact that "Africa [itself] so often ends up epitomizing the intractable, the mute, the abject and the other-worldly."[12] In this way, Africa cities are somewhat distanced from other 'functioning' cities. This process of 'othering' makes it difficult for those operating from the 'outside' to access how African urbanism actually performs.[13] As we see above, the world-city hypothesis, a function of a hegemonic urban view, invariably focuses on certain visible economic distinctions, overlooking alternate, often invisible patterns that make 'other' cities work, in alternative ways. Thinking in terms of the 'invisible' is how one can begin to read African cities as potentially powerful spaces. This means unsubscribing to urban thought that prioritises that which it finds visible. This is not to say that African cities must be read as marginal spaces. However, by reading what is less obviously identifiable to the Western gaze, one can begin to grasp the value of an alternative form of urban system. Jennifer Robinson asserts this when she writes:

> [a]lthough urban theory is located in western imaginations, urban managers and thinkers around the world are confronted with the diverse realities in their own contexts. A more cosmopolitan urban theory, consciously locating itself in places other than the west or the   all-knowing global observer might…enable us to think about cities differently.[14]

In fact, what many African urban scholars are suggesting is that "the postcolonial city…harbors the cultural and social apparatus that engineers the many forms of local responses from the periphery."[15] In other words, the site of the African city not only insists that a new way of theorising the urban space is developed, but also provides the site that makes the development of these new approaches possible.

Or, as Antoine Bouillon observes,

> By more than a few accounts, the African city is the site for the challenge to the political and at the same time the location for the negotiations and agreements where new organizations and services, freedoms and autonomous spaces are emerging. [16]

When 'the contemporary African city' is dismissed as a place of crisis, what is overlooked is the alternative kinds of socio-economic order found there, the creative ways in which African urbanites respond to these complex and challenging spaces, and how this has the potential to change the way the space functions and is read. Emerging calls to conceptualise African cities differently seek to emphasise this by utilising a dynamic view of the urban space. Many urban scholars are focusing on the avenues through which the city dweller in Africa is able to create significant and meaningful lives in this environment, despite or by harnessing difficult conditions. In order to re-read the African city space, one must assess how 'difficult' urban conditions may be reconfigured as 'different' rather than problematic. The focus falls less onto the city as a whole entity, nor on formal structures, but rather onto to myriad manifestations of agency amongst African actors in the urban space. This focus prioritises a reading of the individual and his or her capacity to respond to the urban environment in a productive and creative way, despite economic or social limitations. Individual performance is emphasised, seen as having the capacity to re-shape the urban space, making it dynamic, flexible and enabling. This in turn can inform the larger urban system. And, emphasis on the ways in which the individual in the African city exercises flexibility, autonomy and resilience in response to the overarching power structure of the urban environment enables a challenge to the 'sign' of the city in Africa—from the 'bottom up'.

Exploring the foundations of a reflexive, 'postmodern' approach to space and human geography can provide us with the conceptual tools to engage with these ideas. Nigerian writer, Onookome Okome's work is helpful here. In *Writing the Anxious City: Images of Lagos in Nigerian Home Video Films*, he describes the reciprocal dynamic between agent and environment in Lagos, Nigeria:

> The city is everything to us– it consumes us, and for that reason we glorify it. We like it or hate it, but we must live in it. Sometimes we defeat the city and reshape it to suit our whims and caprices. We invent the city and it reinvents us.[17]

Okome suggests that the city is something organic, alive. On the one hand, Okome's city can be a menace to the individuals living within it, in that it has the

power to 'consume' its inhabitants. Overwhelming poverty, for instance is incapacitating. And yet, on the other hand, Okome observes the individual person's capacity to imprint him or herself onto the greater space, to 'shape' it with his or her "whims and caprices." This notion of 'invention' therefore implies an urbanity that is more of a *dynamic*. Urban space can be read as a reflexive performance between the city's inhabitants and itself. This view of African cities, or any city, permits the actors living within its bounds to possess agency, despite the kinds of restrictions the social and institutional structure of the city may pose. In other words, the reflexive production of space is a view that sees the actors within an environment having the capacity to act, choose, and fashion that space according to their choices. Configuring space as the production of multiple different actions foregrounds heterogeneity, an attribute that is produced through and reproduces urban systems. What we associate with the heterogeneity of the city is difference, multiplicity. Thus, in order to develop new and lasting ways of reading the African city, new approaches to urban human geography emphasises difference.

This is not a new approach. Michel Foucault suggested that modern ways of reading *all* spaces—political, social, and geographical—have been facilitated by a world characterised increasingly by its 'diversity and difference.'[18]
He writes in this regard:

> [t]he present epoch will perhaps be above all an epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of near and far of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and interstices with its own skein. One could perhaps say that ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space.[19]

Physical spaces are deconstructed, understood often as contingent rather than fixed. Or, as Maurice Merleau Ponty, asserted [20]'[s]pace is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible.' French theorist, Michel De Certeau explains it succinctly when he writes,

> …a space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections between mobile elements, It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvent of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.[21]

For the postcolonial environment this idea has proved extremely useful. The general emphasis on difference and alterity provides a way of 'answering back' to the legacies of hegemonic regimes of power, racism, and other forms of control that were prioritised around certain dualisms. Homi K. Babha and his notion of third space is one such example.[22] One can perceive how through this lens, postcolonial African cities can be read as symbolic of the exploration of 'third-space' in the postcolonial context. If any given environment is comprised of differences and fluctuations, contingencies and mobilities, then cities become dynamic hyper-spaces of movement and difference. Not divorced from the effects of a colonial history, African cities are spaces that are both contingent on the past and a movement towards the new. If space can be conceived as something *performed* as practice, then these cities, which are typically a heterogeneous and contingent, take on a remarkable potential for new possibilities.

The amount of individuals performing and interacting on an everyday basis makes the city a dynamic skein. African cities are seen to be the sites of a mass of human movement, but instead of reading them as the sum of the 'stress' that is the product of this, one can observe alternative effects of such mass urbanisation. Michael Dear and Steven Flusty suggest that in such an urban situation:

> [at] the same time as multiple worlds, and the world itself in general, is presencing itself in the city, the city is linking itself ever more tightly to other... Disparate and distant places are presencing themselves within one another as cities continually swap pieces of themselves… [23]

Since so many diverse individuals are enacting their lives in any given space at any one time, the city is imbued with millions of intersecting strands of meaning and action, each of which are viable components. And, by extension, by sheer size and heterogeneity, such urban spaces offer the individual more choices than

any other context. These cities can then be seen as radically open sites in which the individual has the potential to shape, utilise, and create meaningful narratives within them—in theory to empower him or her self through choice and action. In this sense, the urban individual has the potential to achieve a sense of personal power and identity through his or her interaction with, and influence on, the urban landscape. Mass urbanisation could then be read as a means of advancing such developments, rather than hindering or preventing them.

Of course, African cities are often seen to be growing in size without an adequate economic growth pattern. A prolific amount of migration occurring between rural and urban enclaves, as well as the movement of immigrants from poorer or war-torn regions into more stable ones on the continent contribute greatly to this. The city of Johannesburg in South Africa provides a good example of this. Its inner city areas like Hillbrow are housing an increasingly large number of local migrant workers, as well as legal and illegal immigrants from all over Africa. A single room has been known to house as many as three or four families, sometimes more. Work is often scarce. The township regions of the city are also expanding in number. A city like Johannesburg does not necessarily have the infrastructure, economic stability, or service delivery record to accommodate these newcomers, let alone its long-term urban citizens. The situation can be desperate and in many cases, it is. The struggle for space and opportunity in Johannesburg leads very often to conflict: both physical and socio-psychological.

However, if one were to take a closer look at the centre of Johannesburg must one only see what is visibly lacking or problematic? Scholars like Abdoumaliq Simone, Susan Parnell, Achille Mbembe, Meg Samuelson, and Jennifer Robinson explore ways of approaching the inner city that identify the strength of the invisible practices and creative choices of individuals in the city—who, through necessary responses to an often unyielding environment, sustain the viability of alternate urban methods and modes of being. Like Okome, these scholars prioritise a reflexive reading of space and see the city as comprised of exciting and challenging performances, ones that enable inhabitants to develop a

sense of power in the face of systemic and social issues. Let us return to Johannesburg as an example. The post-apartheid city of Johannesburg embodies certain freedoms and opportunities—not least of which is the freedom from a past, oppressive regime. The city has served as a vehicle for the formation of a black urban identity as well as serving as a symbolic and valid avenue for the reclamation of a geo-political position denied to black South Africans throughout most of the 20th century. The inner city, 'Africanised' since the early 1990s is particularly interesting. In comparison to the rest of Johannesburg, the inner city is a space that caters to the immediate needs of the still-marginalised working class or poor. The creative tactics explored by its residents and workers make the inner city a site that demonstrates the possibilities and existence of an alternative urban system. It can be seen to embody an experience and performance of the urban space that is decidedly non-Western, in the sense that its urbanity defies Western models of urban functionality. [24] And rather than this being seen as problematic, it suggests something more and other than normative urban values. As in many African cities, residents exploit the informal market to sustain a livelihood. Formal structures are not readily available or reliable, whether this is public transport or job security, and so other means develop. Of course, it remains an ambiguous space for it cannot be dislocated from the traces of the socio-spatial brutality of apartheid, nor can it be dislocated from the reality of current socio-economic and cultural and political conflicts that test and challenge its residents on an everyday level. But, it offers the potential for reinvention and opportunity to an ever-growing body of diverse African people to make something of themselves, even if not through obvious or identifiable routes. As an urban space, it can offer certain freedoms: independence, a mobile identity and agency for the individual through other or alternative means.

Needless to say, the basis of this approach to a space like the inner city is not without criticism. Many would argue that even if heterogeneous, 'third spaces' like African cities offer opportunities for self-realisation and agency, these opportunities are not necessarily determined or mapped out by the agents within it. Appiah asserts this when he writes "we do make choices, but we do not

determine the options from which we choose."[25] This side of the debate—tending towards the traditionally Marxist position—argues that despite the possibilities generated by a reflexive relationship between an external environment and agents, people are always constrained by the institutions and structures that the environment is comprised of. As in all human landscapes, the city is an intricate interplay between the human agents, the social structures that give this enactment a context of meaning and the institutions that provide the arena in which these things can happen. Critics such as Appiah emphasise that human agents cannot simply remain unaffected by aspects of the city that are shaped by systems and patterns out of his or her control. Despite the idea that the city, by its nature, can be read as dynamic or enabling, or that space can be perceived as performative or subjective, the real issues at play—like the unequal distribution of wealth, power and tangible opportunity—are pervasive and daunting. For cities in Africa, these issues are particularly pressing.

Postmodern human geographers like Michael Dear and Steven Flusty acknowledge that "the structure–agency relationship, is conceived as being mediated by a series of institutional arrangements, which both enable and *constrain* human action."[26] Like any other space, then, the city has the potential to constrain or determine how the individual develops or lives. Indeed, African scholars writing in *Under Siege: Four African Cities* assert that,

> [t]he relationship of the state and the city has come to define the range of experiences often attributed to modern life. The consequence of this has meant that for quite some time agglomerations of people, histories, languages, identities, religions, commodities, cultures in cities have generated increasing tensions and demands for more appropriate definitions of citizenship, for example, the attempts to define migrants and residents, or the distinction between settler and native, permanence and impermanence.[27]

One can comprehend that for most, despite what it may become as it is invested with meaning and practice, any urban setting can be a hostile place. The Marxian allegory for the city is that of a "machine,"[28] where the "enslavement of the ordinary citizen in the metropolis…is the essence."[29] Rather than a dynamic performance space, all cities are seen as monolithic structures mapped out by the forces of control and power, naturally undermining the needs and rights of most

individuals. In one of the most recent works in the Marxian urban tradition,[30] Harvey Molotch, describes the city as "a machine controlled by business, political and professional elites."[31] Similarly, Paolo Ceccarelli in his essay, *Ex Unio Plures: A Walk through Marxist Urban Studies*[32] emphasises the mechanistic approach when he explains that the traditional Marxian theorist focuses on the city as a whole territory, where, like a machine, the components of that territory are "never regarded as individual and isolated elements."[33] The city is something devised and "controlled by its creators…designed to produce products that provide wealth for some people and not for others."[34] In fact, the concern of the Marxist urban approach is that,

> [t]here has been a continuing tendency to conceive of a place quite apart from a crucial dimension of social structure: power and social class hierarchy. Consequently, sociological research based on the traditional definitions of what an urban place is has had very little relevance to the actual day to day activities of those at the top of local power structure whose priorities set the limits within which decisions affecting land use, the public budget, and urban social life come to be made.[35]

This approach argues that the city must be read as a space defined and moulded by those in power that, as an entire territory, can only function as a space that serves the urban elite and not the rest of the people of the city."[36] This view leaves very little available to most urban individuals as they are limited by the structure around themselves.

For cities in Africa, which are usually poor, overcrowded, and the object of extremely negative perceptions, this view makes them seem very limited places. Through this lens, one would reason that no matter the number of choices the individual thinks they are making within the African city, they cannot compete against its challenging physical conditions or the fact that, like all of society, it is run according to strategies that ensure power and prosperity to an elite few. Nor would they stand a chance against the overwhelming stigmas attached to these spaces. With this approach one can refute the possibility of the majority of the city dwellers ever being able to 'defeat' the city. In the African context, the legacy of history as well as corruption, lack of infrastructure, and extremes like

poverty reinforce the idea that its cities and their inhabitants are completely powerless.

However, even the most traditional of Marxist critics admit that the nature of the urban space "also results from the resistance of individuals– minority groups and lower classes to the strategies of the classes in power."[37] The city's inhabitants, in other words, have the capacity to develop ways in which the 'machine' can be broken down or disarmed. Within the urban space there exists the potential for individuals to find or employ systems and methods of resistance that counter and inform the dominant system. For example, although a critic like Ceccarelli states that any city is determined by the day-to-day activities and priorities of those in power, he concedes that the day-to-day actions of the ordinary man hold the potential to challenge the way the city is run and figured. What is suggested then is that the everyday actions amongst minority groups or individuals can act as vehicles for claiming and establishing agency within the space of the city, even if designed by others. Michel De Certeau emphasises this when he writes the following:

> It is in any case impossible to reduce the functioning of a society to a dominant type of procedures…a society is composed of certain foregrounded practices organizing its normative institutions and of innumerable other practices that remains "minor," always there but not organizing discourses and preserving the beginnings or remains of different (institutional, scientific) hypotheses for that society or for others. It is in this multifarious and silent "reserve" of procedures that we should look for "consumer" practices having   the double characteristic, pointed out by Foucault, of being able to organize both spaces and language whether on a minute or a vast scale. [38]

Although one can focus on a city space as a composite entity, the city is, as de Certeau informs us, a multifarious space. Therefore, the various 'soft' or "minor" social practices and structures existing within it, available to the individual, become what De Certeau refers to as "silent reserves." These innumerable strands do not necessarily create a composite, organising procedure that defines the urban space, but rather become the sites in which the organising discourse is challenged or avoided in many different ways. Furthermore, these silent reserves may not visible or discernable or even comprehensible to those who do not know

where or how to look. The density of the city and the diversity of its inhabitants mean that various systems are put into place that do not necessarily depend on the institutional parameters of the urban space in order to exist. Thus, it becomes possible that the choices in the urban terrain are not always confined to visible structures or institutional strategies. The capacity for invisible systems and alternative modes of urban living are granted by the very nature of the urban space itself, by the fact that it is a dynamic, variable, multifarious space. This is particularly important for a rereading of African cities since, as we have discussed, one of the key ways is ways through which agency in the African city space is enacted is through "invisible practice."[39]

Since these small "tactics"[40] can impact on the 'vast' 'strategies' of the city, turning to the everyday, lived experience of the actors in the city allows us to explore the city as "the space of all inclusive simultaneities, perils as well as possibilities: the space of radical openness, the space of social struggle."[41] The practices and choices of the individuals who reside and live in the city, by the sheer number of them being enacted on a daily basis, make the city one of the more potent sites that enable this kind of resistance, a site in which the positing of many more 'things' becomes possible.

 African cities stand to benefit from this kind of thinking, in the same way that Bhaba's 'third space' foregrounds difference as a way of breaking through the remnants of colonial power structures and hegemonic ideologies. By emphasising creativity and movement within the African city space, the site of the African city becomes a space of potential rather than mere limitation for its inhabitants. Henri Lefebvre's notion of 'lived space' implies that despite whatever restrictions are placed through institution and structure, it is how the individual interacts with these that actually defines a geo-social landscape. Indeed, in the African city, factors like migration, displacement, poverty, lack of infrastructure and so on, make it a tenuous place. But, in response to the unpredictable nature of these spaces, inhabitants discover equally mobile and creative methods to make the city work for them. This then feeds into the form

and fabric of the city, making it too a versatile and creative urban space. The multiplicity of choice, action, and performance being enacted by African urban individuals at every moment means that that these spaces, more so perhaps than any other, have the capacity to be (re) produced in an incredibly dynamic way by its inhabitants.

African cities are of course nuanced and fluctuating spaces and one cannot homogenise them into a unitary mass, nor can one ignore the polemical nature of these debates outlined in this paper. However, the value of such urban discourse is that it represents a space in which new ideas will be argued and for the established discourse to be questioned. New approaches to African cities yoke together the social, political, and discursive implications of how Africa is configured in a global plane of thought. African urban discourse, by turning a lens onto the multiple ways in which ordinary man and woman survive and even thrive in the African urban space, offers a reading of African cities that empowers them and their residents. Consequently, African cities, far from being merely dysfunctional, can be read as sites that project different modes of urban functionality and order, ones that are especially relevant in today's global climate of mass-urbanisation and postmodernity/postcolonialism.

Notes

[1] A. Mbembe, 'Aesthetics of Superfluity' in *Journal of Public Culture*: 2004, Vol 16, 3. 373-405: p. 37

[2] O. Enwezor *et al*, "Introduction," in *Under Siege: Four African Cities.* Okwui Enwezor *et al* (eds) Documenta 11_Platform 4. (Ostfildern-RuitHatje Cantz Publishers, 2002), p. 13

[3] *Ibid,* p. 13, (emphasis added)

[4] J. Jacobs, in *Spaces of Postmodernity: Readings in Human Geography.* M. Dear and S. Flusty (eds) (Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 195

[5] See M. Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London, New York: Verso, 2006), p. 3

[6] A. Mbembe and S.Nuttall, "Writing the World from an African Metropolis," in *Public Culture* 16 (3), 2004, p. 347-371; p. 353

[7] See J. Robinson, "Johannesburg's Futures: between developmentalism and global success," in *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid city.* R. Tomlinson, A. Beauregard, L. Bremner, X Mangcu (eds) (London, New York: Routledge, 2003)

[8] Robinson, p. 260.

[9] *Ibid*, p. 258

[10] *Ibid*, p. 263

[11] Davis, p.14

[12] Mbembe, 2004, p. 348

[13] It also makes it difficult for Africa to emerge from the place to which it has been always been relegated: the periphery.

[14] Robinson, 2002, p. 268.

[15] O. Enwezor *et al*, 2002, p. 320

[16] A. Bouillon, "Between Euphemism and Informalism: Inventing the City" in *Under Siege: Four African Cities,* p 19

[17] O. Okome, "Writing the Anxious City; Images of Lagos in Nigerian Home Video Films" in *Under Siege: Four African Cities,* p. 316

[18] M. Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces' in *Visual Culture Reader*. N. Mirzoeff. (ed) (London, Routledge, 2002), p. 238.
He also sees this shift motivated by the anxiety of not knowing whether 'there will be enough space for men in the world.'

[19] Foucault, p. 238

[20] M. Merleau Ponty in N. C. Gibson, 'Mapping Africa's Presences: Merleau-Ponty, Mannoni, and the Malagasy Massacre of 1947," in Franz Fanon's *Black Skin: White Masks*' in *Contested Terrains and Constructed Categories*. G. Clement & N.C. Gibson (eds) (United States of America: Westview Press, 2002), p. 243.

[21] M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley (Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 1984), p. 117

[22] See H.K. Bhabha. "The Third Space: in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*. J Rutherford (ed) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-21.

[23] M. Dear and S. Flusty, *Spaces of Postmodernity: Readings in Human Geography*. M. Dear and Steven Flusty (eds) (Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 364

[24] For further reading on this matter, please see Chapter One in my MA thesis: *Reassessing the Inner City of Johannesburg: An Exploration into emerging African urbanism and the discovery of black agency in Phaswane Mpe's* Welcome to our Hillbrow *and Kgebetli Moele's* Room 207.

[25] Dear and Flusty, 2002, p.305

[26] Michael and Flusty write, "we take structures to mean 'the long term, deep-seated social practices that govern daily life, such as law, state, and family,' institutions to imply' the phenomenal forms of structures, including (for example) the apparatus of government' and agency to refer to 'the voluntaristic actions of individuals and groups in determining the observable outcomes of social process." p.2

[27] Enwezor *et al,* 2002, p. 16

[28] P. Langer, "Sociology– Four Images of Organized Diversity. Bazaar, Jungle, Organism, Machine," in *Cities of the Mind: Images and Themes of the City in the Social Sciences*. L. Rodwin and R. M. Hollister (eds) (New York: Plenum Press, 1984), p.101

[29] *Ibid*, p. 112

[30] Asserted by Langer in his essay. He refers to Molotch's "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place," in *American Journal of Sociology*, 82, Sept. 1976, pp. 309–332

[31] Langer, p. 112

[32] P. Ceccarelli , "Ex Unio Plures: A Walk through Marxist Urban Studies" in *Cities of the mind: Images and Themes of the City in the Social Sciences,* p. 315.

[33] *Ibid*, p.315

[34] *Ibid,* p. 315

[35] Molotch, Harvey in Langer, 1984: p.112

[36] *Ibid,* p.101.

[37] P. Ceccarelli, p. 315. By Ceccarelli's account this loophole demonstrates how thinkers like Henri Lefebvre, for instance, are able to relate to and use aspects of Marxist urbanism while still forging new ways in which we understand the ways in which the city operates.

[38] De Certeau, 1984, p. 49.

[39] See for instance, A.M. Simone's "The Visible and Invisible: Remaking Cities in Africa' in *Under Siege: Four African Cities*. See also, F. Boeck and M.F. Plissart's *Kinshasa: Tales of an Invisible City* (Ghent, Belgium: Ludion, 2004) and James. C. Scott, *Resistance and the Arts of Domination. Hidden Transcript*s (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.)

[40] See De Certeau, "Foucault and Bourdieu" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. The notion of tactics, as opposed to strategy is foregrounded by Bourdieu. Tactics are the small, everyday

responses and resistances that can challenge or counter the force of the institutional structures in a space. Strategies on the other hand are the methods used by the state or by these institutional structures to implement control within a particular environment. I will refer to both tactics and strategies throughout the rest of the thesis, using them in the same way that Bourdieu defines them.

41 E.Soja, *Thirdspace*: *Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1996), p. 68