The Kigali Model: Making a 21st Century Metropolis

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School of Duke University

2017
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the relationship between city planning and everyday life in Kigali, Rwanda. It focuses on markets, neighborhoods, and streets where Kigali residents encounter emerging technologies of architecture, finance, and expertise. These technologies are aimed at converting Kigali into a global metropolis with world-class tourist facilities, hi-tech service industries, and a “green” urban metabolism. Many city residents, however, experience these processes through mass evictions, market closures, and an ongoing utility crisis in the city. In response, they are going *kukikobyi* (literally “to cowboy”), creating rogue markets, housing settlements, and ad-hoc utility networks. While Kigali’s international team of managers and consultants disavow these spaces and practices as informal, illegal, and antithetical to the city’s “world-class” future, they are nevertheless unable to erase them from the city’s surface. My research explores these divergent practices of city-making to show that a new Kigali is being built: a 21st century metropolis that, despite being a rogue version of its planned future, is a cosmopolitan urban center that no single interest, process, or population fully controls.

Methodologically, this dissertation places the popular practices and expertise that hold a city together in conversation with global city modeling and design theory. Instead of focusing on a single neighborhood or population, *The Kigali Model* is an ethnography of an entire city that asks how differently situated social actors share the costs of producing, subverting, and negotiating their urban future. During twenty-seven months of fieldwork in Kigali, I interviewed foreign technocrats who were employed by
multinational design and consultancy firms, paid by international finance organizations, and housed in Rwandan government ministries. I spent months following illegal street traders as they produced nomadic market spaces and (often correctly) anticipated that city authorities would be unable to enforce new zoning and tax laws. I participated in community infrastructure building projects and—when the pipes we laid failed to deliver services—became myself incorporated into the city’s hydraulic system by lugging twenty-liter jerry cans of water up forty-degree slopes. I also mapped the social and economic networks that produce and continually re-make Kigali’s largest “slum,” and debated views of urban modernity with second-hand clothing vendors, their hipster clients, and planners who wish to demolish the markets that both populations depend on. I use these ethnographic encounters to theorize Kigali beyond the categories of slum, crisis, and laboratory so often applied to African cities. I show how these seemingly disparate spaces, populations, and practices produce urban ecologies, cultures, and human and material infrastructures that persistently reinvent the city and the people who live there.
Dedication

For Sachie
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1. Introduction

-Kubaka ni kukikoboyi, to build is to [go] cowboy.
-Kigali Streets

I swear it happened.

On September 29, 2014 those of us living in Nyamirambo, one of the oldest neighborhoods on Kigali’s northern edge woke up to a familiar sound coming from the densely populated neighboring community in Karabaye:

_Tuzarwubaka!
Tuzarwubaka-abana-abanyarwanda!
Tuzarwugira nka para-di-zo- kwisi-yose-we!
Tuzarwubaka!
We are going to build it [Rwanda]!!
We are going to build it for the children of Rwanda!
It is going to be like paradise on earth!
We are going to build it [Rwanda]!

“Tuzarwubaka” is a patriotic work song that is often sung during _umuganda_, compulsory community service on the last Saturday of every month. It is sung while digging ditches for pipes, filling in potholes, or fixing a needy neighbor’s roof. And it is often sung during ruling party rallies in the city. But September 29, 2014 was not a Saturday. It was Monday. And the people singing “Tuzarwubaka” were doing community service of a different sort: they were throwing rocks at day laborers, police, and district level security guards (_abadasso_) while trying to rebuild a house that had recently been torn down. The hundreds of people doing the rock throwing were in a neighborhood
called Karabaye, a well-known *akajagari* (disordered, spontaneous, slum) neighborhood. They managed to rebuild one wall of a house that was being demolished while injuring several security guards and police who were trying to stop this guerrilla housing effort. Even more troubling for the authorities, however, was that these rock-throwing home builders had called in to a popular radio talk show and were broadcasting what was happening live. As the events in Karabaye unfolded that morning on the streets and on the radio, a particular narrative about Kigali as an ordered city, governed by an effective state with a docile population momentarily broke down. A different Kigali became visible, one where the production and occupation of space is fiercely contested; where emergent political configurations respond to new urban design strategies; and where the “dull compulsion of economic relations” ([Marx 1891] 2006 [vol 3]: 899) are entangled in political battles over who gets to access the city and its resources.

The police and city authorities worked quickly to “calm” the situation. The radio show that broadcast the event went off the air and offline, and the story was scrubbed from the station’s website. Instead of responding with violence in kind, district level authorities convinced those who were singing and throwing rocks to sit down for a community meeting. They asked everyone who spoke to the media to stand up and arrested the four who did (while leaving the hundreds of rock-throwers). The woman who owned the home had been out, working as an *umuzunguzayi*, illegal street trader. She was also found and placed in jail, presumably so she could not speak with the media. Two
weeks later, habeas corpus kicked in and the five arrestees were quietly released. No trial meant no embarrassing public record of what happened.

But what did happen that day? Why did it require a cover-up? And how did these processes come to revolve around a single home?

According to Solange, a mother of three and illegal street trader in her mid-twenties who helped throw rocks at the police, residents in Karabaye were redrawing a line that had been crossed in Kigali’s moral economy of construction and bribes. The cell executive (a local level authority), she explained, asked for a payoff (akantu “a little something”) that was beyond the homeowner’s means. The homeowner was unable to pay the bribe in full. In response, local authorities—citing the city’s 2013 Master Plan—ordered the home to be demolished. The crime was not illegal building, nor was it bribery. The crime was that city authorities were using the municipality’s commitment to an aesthetics of “clean, green, and slum free” to corrupt an established system of bribery that allowed Solange and her neighbors to maintain a place in the city. They were invoking an already established base of patron-client relations against a plan to remove them from the city.

But why the cover up?, I asked Solange. Did the city want to hide the fact of rampant corruption?

“Reka da!, Not at all!” she laughed. “It (corruption) is not a secret [more laughter].” The problem, she said, was the song.
“[… ] We were singing a government song, right? [sibyo?]. It is about how the state [Leta, from the French l’etat] is going to build the new Rwanda. But how we were singing it…you know? (urumva?) the abayobozi [government authorities] hate that (baranze) [laughter]…It was like saying they can’t do anything but demolish (no gusenya gusa). But we are doing the building. That’s the reason [ni impamvu yo nyine] they wanted to shut us up [more laughter].” (recorded interview October 12, 2014)

For Solange and her neighbors what was at stake that day was not just a house, but who makes the city; what type of subject will inhabit its future; and the processes by which Kigali makes its transformation from post-conflict “wounded city” to world-class Model? These are the questions that guide this dissertation.

This dissertation is about the production of urban futures, the building of institutions, and the design of urban environments in one of the most quickly urbanizing cities in the world: Kigali, Rwanda. I focus on markets, neighborhoods, and streets where Kigali residents encounter emerging technologies of architecture, finance, and expertise. These technologies are aimed at converting Kigali into a global metropolis with world-class tourist facilities, hi-tech service industries, and a “green” urban metabolism. Many city residents like Solange and her neighbors, however, experience these processes through mass evictions, market closures, and an ongoing utility crisis in the city. In response, they are going kukikoboyi (literally “to cowboy”), creating rogue markets, housing settlements, and ad-hoc utility networks. While Kigali’s international team of managers and consultants disavow these spaces and practices as informal, illegal, and antithetical to the city’s “world-class” future, they are nevertheless unable to erase them from the city’s surface. I argue that in the process, a new Kigali is being built: a 21st
century metropolis that, despite being a rogue version of its planned future, is a cosmopolitan urban center that no single interest or population fully controls.

Why study the relationship between urban life and city planning in Kigali, and why now? Simply put, Kigali is on the forefront in a revolution of how cities are managed, lived, and imagined everywhere. What Solange and her neighbors were up against that day was The Kigali Model of urban design: a series of city master plans written by consultants in Singapore, funded by multi-national investment corporations, and scheduled to be exported from Kigali to other cities in the region. It is prototype for a “world-class” city (Ghertner 2015) that works, not by producing the built environment that it promises, but by activating global networks of capital and expertise with a compelling visual narrative about a city’s future potential. As Solange suggests above, however, these designs are more than just “fantasies” or aspirations to be global. These are new planning and governing processes that subvert previous established tactics that the less enfranchised have historically used to stake a claim in the city. Kigali’s international team of managers and consultants have “liberated” planning from local political and economic relations that paralyze planners in other cities (see Chapter 1). Their “dream” is not about social equity or a democratic city, but to access the unlimited potential of global real estate. In the process, the Model has replaced the hundred year object of modern urban planning—the reproduction of labor and production of consent (Castels 1982) with a new goal: converting collective resources into private real estate.
The objective of this dissertation is to make sense of, and theorize these new processes of city building as well as how residents respond to, resist, and share the costs of producing their urban future. This dissertation is driven by ethnography as a method, a theory generating tool, and a process of knowledge production—but it should not be read as a simple description of one corner of the world. Instead, I use my ethnographic encounters with residents like Solange to engage with an emergent interdisciplinary project led by anthropologists, geographers, planners, and architects to theorize contemporary urban life in Kigali as representative of 21st century urban life everywhere. It is an intervention into how we understand urban life in Africa and elsewhere, the production of metropolitan space in the 21st century, and speculative urbanism.

1.2 The African City, the 21st Century Metropolis, and Speculative Urbanism.

People, Solange reminds us, make their own cities, but not under the conditions of their own choosing. The question is how to simultaneously theorize micro-political situations like the one described alongside the broader conditions that they have no control over? Over the last decade, academic research in urban Africa has moved from a peripheral sideshow in development studies to the next big thing in urban theory. Despite hype generating gestures of newness like the somewhat arbitrary announcement of “Africa’s [contemporary] Urban Revolution” (see Parnell and Piertese 2014), there is a long history of scholarship that suggests Africa’s current urban landscape has been a long
time in the making (see Cooper 1982; Sirven 1982; and Hansen 1997 for more extensive
genealogies of the long but often forgotten history of work on urban Africa). For
example, urban Africa, as a space of radical social change, rural-urban labor migrations,
but also transformative political potential was a central focus for many Rhodes
Livingstone Institute scholars (i.e. Epstein 1958; Gluckman 1958; Mayer and Mayer
1961; Mitchell 1969). In the city these colonial-era anthropologists confronted the same
set of problems that their interlocutors did. Social life went beyond relationships that
could be defined by kinship and new migrants to mining towns had to deal with living
with strangers. Labor relations and “tribal” identities were radically transformed in
colonial cities into heterogeneous populations were people had to navigate a number of
various class and ethnic identities (Mayer and Mayer 1961). Anthropologists such as
Gluckman (1958, 1959) who worked in the copper belt mining towns began to theorize
urbanization as a politically charged process fraught with conflict. More significantly,
however, Gluckman saw the city as a site of radical political potential where a new and
revolutionary subject would emerge: the African proletariat, a class conscious worker
who would occupy the forefront of the struggle for liberation.

Gluckman and his colleagues were famously wrong about proletarianization, class
consciousness, and Africa’s (original) urban revolution. Their theory of the city as the
“natural” outcome of economic growth and industrialization which they shared with
modernization theory of the moment, imposed the European industrial city onto Africa as
a universal telos. It was a theory of urban life and modernization that could not account
for the subsequent years of commodity boom crashes, deindustrialization, and structural adjustment (see Ferguson 1999). But despite being wrong about the city and the subjects who would inhabit it, the researchers of the Rhodes Livingstone Institute were right about so much else.

Gluckman and his colleagues transformed the practice of doing urban ethnography from the imagined small-scale and contained village to urban life. Ethnographic subjects were no longer “tribesmen” but workers. Questions of power, and a radically transforming relationship to the world, became central to understanding the social field across Africa. In addition, these late colonial Africanist anthropologists were studying highly mobile populations. In tracing migration of labor from the country to the city they established links between the rural and the urban that early urbanist scholars in the Western “great” cities were not making at the time—and would not make for another thirty years. Anthropology, they argued, could no longer ignore history and social change: cities required them to confront dynamic cultural scenes. The problems cities posed to the discipline meant they had to move away from reconstructing “traditional” society, and towards an anthropology of the global contemporary. In her intellectual history of Africanist anthropology, Sally Falk Moore describes this shift in which a new generation of anthropologists began “to address the rural-urban link, to look straight at the new Africa…It was an opening up of ethnography to the contemporary and the nontraditional as focal topics” (1994:69). In addition, in failing to recognize the ultimately unstable relationship between labor, capital, and urbanization, the Rhodes
Livingstone Institute (accidentally) hit on the limits of one of the most salient fictions of twentieth century urban theory. There is no—or at least not always—a correlation between economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization. Cities are not the outcome of any single process, but an assemblage of various processes that do not always add up to a coherent whole.

What makes this early scholarship on the African city so significant is the scale at which they worked. Gluckman, the Wilsons, the Mayers, Epstein, and Mitchell all insisted that the micro-political and everyday events—the stuff of ethnography—were always embedded in broader processes of colonialism and global capital. It is not just that the opening of a bridge or an everyday event in a township are caught up in global processes of capital accumulation and political authority, but that we cannot possibly understand colonialism and the production of surplus value without also attending to the particular events and “local” outcomes of these processes. This is what Jean Comaroff (2003) calls “ethnography on an awkward scale,” in which the everyday and “local” is always placed in conversation and understood as part of broader global processes. Solange and her neighbors are not just illegal home dwellers throwing rocks at local authorities. They are engaged with and confronting cutting edge design theory from Singapore.

Shortly after decolonization, Africanist anthropology moved back to the rural as political interests gave way to area studies—an approach that vigorously worked to return to “the peasant” as the authentic cultural subject (see Mitchel 2002). From the late 1960s
until the 1990s, African cities were largely ignored by Africanist and urbanist scholars alike, due to what some have called a “rural bias” in African studies (Freund 2007), and a Western bias in urban studies (Myers 2011; although see Abu-Lughod 1971, 1981; and Cooper 1983). While the early 20th century saw a resurgent interest in African cities in the social sciences, much of this work was based on crisis-driven narratives that either paint an alarming picture of Dickensian “slums” proliferating across the continent (Davis 2004, 2006), or that hyperbolically celebrate African (mega-)city poverty as the future condition of Western modernity (Koolhaas 2000).

A growing cohort of scholars in anthropology, geography, and history are speaking back to this tendency to represent African cities as the products of failure, poverty and lack. This emergent literature diagnoses African cities as sites of both crisis and innovative forms of political, economic, and social practice. The very lack of cohesive planning and stable infrastructure in many African cities produces flexible spaces where novel forms of dwelling, work, and leisure are possible as residents rearrange the city to make it function beyond the limits of its original design (Bissell 2011; de Boeck and Plissart 2006, de Boeck 2011; Simone 2004, 2010). Many residents of African cities respond to everyday risk and insecurity with improvised infrastructure that withstands the persistent failure of public utilities (Hoffman 2011; Larkin 2008), while also desperately attempting to exit the city to produce futures elsewhere (Newell 2012; Piot 2010). The collapse of infrastructures, alongside the social turbulence of currencies that fluctuate on the global market, has meant that many cities in Africa have
had to produce their own economies, spaces, and bureaucracies. What this project has done well is made the case, repeatedly, that African cities matter and should be taken seriously (see Bissell 2012; Mbembe and Nuttall 2008; Myers 2011; Robinson 2002; Simone 2001, 2004). And yet now that the world’s attention is focused on urban Africa there have been surprisingly few attempts to place the 21st century African metropolis at the forefront of urban theory in general (although see Quayson 2014; and Roy 2009a as exceptions).

Anthropologists are especially guilty of this, merely engaging in the practice of demonstrating difference in ways that reproduce African exceptionalism. For example, several anthropologists writing on urban Africa have challenged the truism that “neoliberalism” and “unregulated urbanism” are inherently “bad” (Myers 2011; Mains 2012; Simone 2010). Instead of understanding the lack of state presence as “neglect” (c.f. Watts 2004), they observe that the lack of cohesive planning and efficient municipalities make it possible for people that would otherwise be excluded from the city to access urban space and resources (de Boeck 2012; Simone 2004, 2010). These observations are, to be sure, useful. They demonstrate divergent experiences of global capital in an urban world where there is no historical contract between labor and capital and where critiques of neoliberalism often do not match experiences on the ground. But what often gets missed in projects to demonstrate the difference and exceptionality in urban Africa are the uncannily similar economic and political processes that move in on collective resources after these have been built by creative bricoleurs. State services and their lack
under neoliberalism in Lagos and New York City might be experienced differently, but processes of converting previously divested spaces into global real estate nevertheless generate the same the sense of becoming past and homelessness whether it is through slum demolition or gentrification (see chapter 1). My work on the Kigali Model is a conscious effort to recuperate urban anthropology on an awkward scale, not just to explore the relationship between local and global processes but to place urban theory from the Global South in closer conversation with urban theory in general. In doing so, this dissertation seeks to expand a very small and recent conversation led by theorists such as Anne-Maria Makhulu (2015) and Ato Quayson (2014) who both—in different ways—suggest that just as Western Europe and North America can learn much from an urban theory generated in the Global South, we need the insights from earlier thinkers such as Castells (Chapter 1), Lefebvre (Chapter 3), Harvey (Chapters 1 and 4), Smith (Chapter 3), and Marx and Engels (Chapters 3 and 4).

The second key theoretical contribution of this dissertation is its intervention into a debate currently underway among urban theorists over the relationship between neoliberalism, agency, and the urban commons. A great deal of the ethnographic work in this dissertation explores how residents who work and live in “informal” areas and economies respond to the destruction of urban space by taking public markets to the streets, rebuilding illegal houses and consciously elevating an aesthetics of akajagari (urban grit/disorder), over the enclaved shopping and living environments proposed in the Kigali Model. Read through the lens of some urban theorists, these processes could be
understood as a politics of encroaching, occupying, and holding space as strategies that defy municipal attempts to remove or block the poor from accessing the city (see Appadurai 2002; Bayat 2010; Chaterjee 2004; Holston 2008; Kinyanjui 2014; Makhulu 2015). Other theorists, however, caution against celebrating the quotidian practices that city residents use to maintain a foothold in the city or make it function beyond the limits of its original design. Roy (2011) warns that the politics-by-occupation perspective, or in her words “subaltern urbanism,” overstates economic ingenuity and political agency in a way that reproduces the bootstrap logic of neoliberalism. Why argue for public services when one can show how the urban poor always find ways to fend for themselves? Roy has point. Theories that highlight the creativity and latent potentiality of urban subalterns often do so at the cost of obscuring the very conditions—historical, political, and economic—that place people in the slum or the street in the first place. Instead, she argues, we should turn our attention towards state generated informalities, exceptions, and entrepreneurism—the very processes that simultaneously criminalize the urban poor on the one hand, and validate illegal elite practices and spaces on the other (ibid:233).

My work on The Kigali Model engages with this debate, but also re-frames it as a question of the common city. I argue that when residents maintain illegal neighborhoods or refuse to abide by zoning codes, they are not celebrating neoliberal notions of resilience, but protecting collective resources—however limited these are—against the liquidating processes of world class city building. At the same time, as I show in chapters 3 and 4, these collective resources, however much organized against capital, are just as
easily converted into surplus value through seemingly depoliticized infrastructures and public-private partnerships. This is not just about state generated informalities, but global shifts in building and financing cities—or what Goldman (2011) calls “the art of speculative governance.” In intervening in this ongoing debate, this dissertation also engages with recent shifts in the global business of planning, building and managing cities.

My third intervention is to extend ethnography beyond description—“thick” or otherwise—into an interdisciplinary discussion with designers, planners, and the theory that these practitioners use. In addition to engaging with historical shifts in urban life, I am also in discussion with planners, responding to planning literature, and I am in critical dialogue with the work that they produce. Until very recently, municipal planning in most cities across Asia, Latin America and Africa was done by overworked bureaucrats, drowning in their own paperwork and beholden to local patron-client micro-politics (see Hull 2011, 2012). As public (government) projects, the implementation of basic service provision, housing, and master planning were limited to municipal finances. In many cities in the Global South, where most of economic life happens in untaxed “informal” sectors and where structural adjustment long ago drained state coffers, municipal planners haven’t been able to do anything for some time (see Davis 2006; Gandy 2006; Miraftab 2016; Myers 2011; Simone 2010a). Furthermore, if you are beholden to a tax base, you also likely work for city authorities who are beholden to a voter base. As urban geographer Ascher Ghertner (2015) observes, slum-dwellers, those who are usually
targeted by “upgrading” projects, vote—and they vote in blocks in order to keep the city from kicking them out. Even in Kigali, where the mayor is appointed by the ruling party and where national “elections” are just the punchlines to jokes, lower level authorities still depend on their neighbors’ patronage for legitimacy in ways that often paralyze city plans (see Chapter 1). The question that private design firms, the World Bank, and UN Habitat consultants have been asking as their work shifts South is: can a world-class city be designed and built outside of the limits of municipal finances and local politics? Their answer is yes, if it can be financed with outside resources.

The business of global city designs like those responsible for the Kigali Model is not just about producing “spectral” images (c.f. de Boeck 2011), but imagining new political landscapes where their designs can be implemented unhindered by the limits of local finances and patron-client politics (Murray 2014; Goldman 2011; Shatkin 2011; Watson 2013). It is an altogether new way of thinking about the relationship between capital and urban space. This shift away from planning as a tax-base issue towards planning as access to the unlimited potential of global real estate and private service provision has dovetailed with a scalar shift in global policy and financial institutions away from the national state and towards the municipality (Goldman 2011).

Accompanied with twin narratives of a coming urban crisis (see UNHabitat 2002, 2010; Davis 2004, 2006) and new financial frontiers in the South, the UN and World Bank are replacing their development economists with architects, urban planners, and GIS technicians. This new “architecture of capital relations” (Goldman 2011: 558) and
expertise produce more than just plans. They work by building legal and institutional infrastructures that convert municipal governments from a slow-churning bureaucracies to speculative enterprises that meet the needs of a global investment class (see Ghertner 2015). This is what Goldman (2011) calls “the art of speculative government,” or using municipal institutions to convert urban land into private real estate. And it is the next big thing from Bangladesh to Johannesburg. What makes Kigali different? Why focus on this city and not say, the famous designs for Eko Atlantic in Lagos or Cité du Fleuve in Kinshasa? And what precisely is the Kigali Model a prototype of? Unlike other speculative designs that either work by building small enclaves on the edge of the pre-existing city, the Kigali Model is a revanchist takeover of the entire city that promises to “upgrade” 80% (city of Kigali 2013) of the city’s current environment into an urban surface that is “clean, green, and slum-free.” And the plan is to do it all with private financing.

This dissertation also contributes to recent literature on Rwanda that focuses on post-genocide rebuilding and reconciliation (Ansoms 2009, 2010; Musahara and Huggins 2005; Pottier 2002, 2006). These studies examine Rwanda’s present in terms of its violent past, in which the 1994 genocide stands as a singular, determining event for all that follows. Often drawing on Scott’s (1998) study of state planning schemes, theorists in this vein argue that remaking post-genocide Rwanda is less about social improvement and more about state strategies to render a largely rural society governable by a predominantly urban, increasingly authoritarian, and ethnically minority elite (Strauss
and Wardoff 2011; Newbury 2011). As fruitful as this body of literature is, its exclusive focus on state–society relations and genocide has ignored other processes and actors such as speculative urbanism, global policy institutes and transnational design firms that are shaping Kigali’s future. The Kigali Model addresses the memory of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and its effects on the contemporary city without reducing today’s built form to that event alone. I attend to the ways that foreign consultants, investors, and international finance institutions use Kigali’s post-genocide status to frame the city’s present built environment as a *tabula rasa* of endless future possibilities—a strategy that legitimates other forms of violence such as neighborhood demolitions, mass evictions, and criminalizing the urban poor. But I am careful not to reduce contemporary Kigali to a product of its violent past, and argue that Kigali—and other post-conflict cities—are more than case studies of mass violence, but generators of urban theory worth learning from.

### 1.3 Methodology

Rather than focusing on a single population or neighborhood, this dissertation is an ethnography of an entire city that asks how differently situated social actors share the costs of producing their urban future. I conducted onsite research for this dissertation in Kigali over 27 consecutive months from May 2013 to August 2015 and during one follow-up visit to Kigali from December 2015-January 2016. I also made several pre-
dissertation trips to Kigali over three years from 2010-2013 and studied Kinyarwanda in the United States and in Rwanda during this time.

The “data” for this dissertation is based on over 500 interviews with Kigali residents, and people who work on their various plans. I interviewed foreign technocrats who were employed by multinational design and consultancy firms, paid by international finance organizations, and housed in Rwandan government ministries. I spent months following illegal street traders as they produced nomadic market spaces and (often correctly) anticipated that city authorities would be unable to enforce new zoning and tax laws. I participated in community infrastructure-building projects and—when the pipes we laid failed to deliver services—became myself incorporated into the city’s hydraulic system by lugging twenty-liter jerry cans of water up forty-degree slopes. I also mapped the social and economic networks that produce and continually re-make Kigali’s largest “slum.” This research is also based on hundreds of hours hanging out in markets, so-called slums, cafés, bars, streets, and casual conversations about eviction, design, and taxes with pedestrians, passengers on the city’s crammed public transport or anyone else that would speak with me. Finally, I draw extensively on popular culture—songs, jokes, and rumors. Two chapters (2 and 3) have a soundtrack of Kinyarwanda pop-music embedded in the text as hyperlinks. I encourage playing these songs as background while reading.

It makes a difference that I speak, read, and write Kinyarwanda fluently and was able to conduct interviews and hold conversations with Rwandan residents without a
translator. There are places where quality research can be carried out in a foreign language or with an interpreter. Rwanda is not one of these places. Many Rwandans are not comfortable articulating subversive opinions in the presence of translators, and for good reason. State surveillance is embedded into the fabric of everyday life in Kigali and most residents are reasonably concerned about what they say and to whom. Second, Kinyarwanda is an extremely difficult language to translate into English. Kinyarwanda is a language where you speak “around” the topic at hand, both as a matter of etiquette and safety. Capturing exactly what is being said and then translating this into direct American English often takes some effort and time and it is near impossible to translate both the spirit and the wording of what is being said on the fly. Third, Kinyarwanda is the language used on Kigali’s streets, in Rwandan popular culture, and on radio talk shows. It is not possible to fully experience “being there” without understanding what is going on—and being said—around you. Working in Kinyarwanda, however, is not without its complications.

When Kinyarwanda is translated word for word into English, it makes no sense. In order to capture the spirit of what is being said, as well as other difficult to translate modes of communication such as figures of speech, proverbs, and humor, I have taken liberties with my translations, some of which end up very far from a literal word-for-word report, but (I hope) capture the ethnographic moment. I also attempt to capture the personality of the speaker by translating how they speak into similar modes of expression in American English. I am acutely aware of the violence that translation does to the
speaker and have spent more time working on translations than any other aspect of this
dissertation. My way of dealing with my own anxiety over translating “correctly” and
also to accommodate Kinyarwanda speakers who may read this text, is to include key
phrases and vocabulary that could be translated differently alongside English. When
necessary, I have included footnotes to explain my particular choice of phrasing over
other potential translations of a phrase or quote along with alternative ways of reading
what is being said.

I also employ Kinyarwanda concepts and phrases as crucial interventions into
urban and social theory. These phrases are more than just emic concepts that capture a
different way of seeing the world, but essential tools for theorizing the 21st century
metropolis—concepts that make up the foundation for the rest of the dissertation. Readers
will have to learn certain vocabulary for which there is no English equivalent: akajagari,
caguwa, ubushobozí, kuzunguza, gukatakata. I do not use these terms to demonstrate that
I was there, documenting what was really being said. These are the concepts that help
capture the imponderabilia of contemporary life in the city and they are necessary as I
attempt to decode Kigali in the pages that follow. Finally it is worth saying a word or
two about the particularities of conducting research in Rwanda.

Rwanda is a tricky place to conduct academic research and stay long enough to do
it well. Most book length manuscripts devote an entire chapter to the difficulties of doing
research in the country (see Burnett 2012; Sommers 2012; Thomson 2013). My own
experiences were less extreme than most. Still my research was certainly influenced by
the political climate that I worked in. In Kigali, most foreign academics, researchers, and journalists assume they are under government surveillance at all times. Many people I worked with also assumed I was under surveillance and that being near me, they would be too. Foreign consultants often refused to participate in my research, citing the risks associated with speaking to a foreign researcher. It could cost them their visa and their job. Researchers and journalists are frequently expelled from the country for expressing views that do not align with ruling party discourse or conducting controversial research on topics that might present the government in a negative light. In just over two years that I conducted research for this dissertation, two French graduate students were expelled after it was discovered they were researching police corruption. All of Human Rights Watch’s staff were expelled after they wrote a damming report on extralegal detention centers for street traders (see chapter 3). An American Journalist was expelled for being critical of RPF’s habit of trolling their critics online (NPR 2013), and the popular BBC Kinyarwanda service was taken offline and permanently banned from Rwanda after its English counterpart aired a version of “Rwanda: the Untold Story,” a critical account of the RPF’s narrative of the genocide in Europe. And these are just high-profile examples. The constant threat of being “exposed” or expelled can have a paralyzing effect on researchers and I often met other graduate students who internalized government surveillance as a form of self-censorship. For example, when a graduate student in political science who was doing research on policing found out I was writing about illegal street traders, he was astounded. How, he asked, did I get government approval to speak
with illegal street traders? The question shocked me. I needed government approval to speak with specific individuals? Of course not. At least not street traders. I had a thoroughly vetted research permit to interview people affected by the Kigali City Master Plan, and street traders fell under that category. So long as the people I interviewed were adults and I followed the rules for conducting research with human subjects, they could decide for themselves whether they wanted to speak with me. Still, this example illustrates a common issue with research in Rwanda. Many academics avoid working with controversial topics, populations, or writing in critical perspectives, in order to complete their research and avoid falling out with the ruling party. And many people avoid researchers who do.

In the end, I dealt with surveillance and the constant threat of expulsion with a “come what may” attitude. Beyond the standards for protecting the identities of informants and “do-no-harm” principles in anthropology, I carried out my research without self-censoring and was open and transparent about my research and my perspectives on the Kigali Model. This approach opened me up to certain populations that I otherwise would not have been able to work with—illegal street traders, evictees, and others who had a critical view of municipal governance. But in being honest and transparent about my own position on the Kigali Model—my commitment to social justice and my concern with how global capital was ruining the lives of many of my interlocutors and friends in the city, I also limited my own access to ruling party officials
and municipal employees. This dissertation is my best shot at making sense of these encounters.

1.4 Organization and Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter One opens with a discussion of urban politics, speculative urbanism and the production and destruction of urban space—processes that are crucial to understanding the rest of the dissertation. In this chapter, I focus on the production, demolition, and afterlives of two of Kigali’s most famous akajagari (disordered, illegal, auto-constructed), or “slums,” Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga. In the process, I examine the shifting political terrain of contemporary Kigali. In just a few years, the municipal government—once an inefficient, understaffed, underfinanced bureaucracy is transformed into a transnational network of managers and consultants with enough political and financial resources to steamroll any attempt to block Kigali’s rush into the global future. The municipality demonstrates its force on a July morning in 2008 when thousands of homes are demolished near the central business district. This destructive energy is maintained over the next few years, as tens of thousands of lower class homes, shops and other structures are erased from the city center. What is the source of this destructive energy? And who controls it?

In exploring these questions, I introduce a concept that becomes politically charged in contemporary Kigali: akajagari and examine how residents respond to shifting political landscapes and social spaces. I argue that in their drive to eliminate
slums from Kigali’s surface in order to generate a compelling narrative of progress, Kigali’s managers have set in motion a series of financial, spatial, and political processes that they no longer control. The city’s international team of designers and consultants have been successful in rebranding the external image of Kigali as the Singapore of Africa—an enticing narrative of an African miracle and an investment frontier, but they have lost control over the speculative and high-risk destructive processes that they have set in motion.

Chapter One also engages in an emergent but growing corpus of urban theory aimed at making sense of Africa’s contemporary planning fever (see de Boeck 2011; Murray 2015; Myers 2015) and reads this through an earlier urban theory (i.e. Harvey [1982]2006). Thinking with, and sometimes against these theorists, I argue that the current proliferation of world-class speculative designs across the continent are more than just “urban fantasies”—they represent a new way of managing urbanization that depends on converting collective resources into surplus value. As this chapter unfolds ethnographically, I examine a number of political responses to dispossession in Kigali. I conclude that what is at stake for urban residents in the 21st century metropolis is not the question of whether or not these designs succeed or fail, but how to defend collective resources against the liquidating processes of speculative urbanism?

After introducing speculative urbanism, I examine demolition and eviction in more concrete terms while introducing markets, the body and the city. In Chapter Two, I explore the productions of, and interventions in, a particular built environment: public
(government owned) secondhand clothing markets and the commodities, styles, and desires that circulate through these spaces. Focusing on the long history and recent transformations in the global second hand clothing trade, I argue that the financial, commercial, and cultural practices of caguwa (secondhand clothing) produce spaces and identities that extend well beyond their built environments calling into question urban informality, center-periphery relations, and global city-ness are conventionally understood. Despite their success as centers of global trade and cutting-edge fashion, Kigali’s caguwa markets are considered antithetical to the city’s development by its international team of managers, consultants, and planners. Defined in the Kigali City Master Plan as informal, these markets are targeted for demolition in order to make room for legible, iconic, built terrains such as shopping malls and high rises that announce the city’s arrival on the world stage. These spaces are often demolished at the height of their productivity, not when they are in ruins, and replaced by costly structures at great loss to the municipality and the residents who depend on them. But despite the resources that Kigali’s managers spend on demolishing public markets, they have been unsuccessful in clearing these spaces from the city’s surface. In following the production, demolition and rebirth of Kigali’s largest secondhand clothing market, my aim is to pursue these themes beyond their built environments. Instead of passively accepting Kigali’s image of what a “global city” should look like, city residents are responding with a very public debate around authenticity and fakes. The secondhand style that is generated in caguwa markets, they reason, keeps the city “real,” unique, and authentic, while municipal plans to convert
the city into “the Singapore of Africa” conjure caguwa’s other: the fake, hopelessly unhip, counterfeits that reduce the wearer to a bad copy of somewhere else. I show that caguwa stretches Kigali’s urban fabric beyond its official boundaries, folding the city into global networks of commodities, desires, and identities. When city authorities and foreign consultants move to rip through this fabric by tearing down markets, they often overestimate their own authority over the city and the bodies of those who live there. Even when market space disappears entirely, residents take exchange to the streets.

Chapter Three follows these themes into the streets in order to explore the conflict between speculative dreamworlds and economic necessity. This chapter examines illegal street economies, what I call “the production of nomadic space,” and the subjects that are expected to inhabit or exit Kigali’s future. I attend to the markets that exist without built environments and abazunguzayi, or illegal nomadic street traders who put nomadic space together. I argue that abazunguzayi run the city by exploiting a contradiction internal to the logic of world-class city building: municipal aspirations to produce Kigali’s future as the “center of urban excellence in Africa” depend on the very subjects and practices that are considered antithetical to that future. This chapter also addresses issues of gender, new kinship arrangements and political agency by zeroing in on the largest and most important sector of Kigali’s street economy: the produce trade which is run by women. I demonstrate how women abazunguzayi—however antithetical to municipal ideas of “clean streets,” and the idea of the liberal, tax paying, urban citizen—are nevertheless indispensable to the city’s economic interests. Organizing as collective entrepreneurs
who control the city’s vital discount economy, abazunguzayi leverage the reproductive needs of capital against municipal visions in order to stake a claim to the city’s present and its future.

These questions are further developed in Chapter Four, the final chapter of the body that explores municipal services and the politics of infrastructure and also explores the limits of micropolitics. In Kigali, Rwanda subterranean water technologies structure peoples’ daily lives and are a source of productive energy, political commentary, and competing visions of future space-times. In this paper, I examine the complex triad of mechanical, physical, and social infrastructures that make up Kigali’s hydraulic present and plans for its future. I argue that most Kigali residents access their water in spite of, not because of the city’s hydraulic system, investing their own physical and imaginative energy to complete the municipal water grid. My purpose in exploring the “embedded strangeness” (Star 1999) of Kigali’s municipal water system is not to simply track the unequal distribution of this resource throughout the city. I suggest that practices designed by Kigali residents to circumvent the city’s water shortage in the present are being anticipated as future resources of capital accumulation by municipal and international institutions. In examining these issues, my aim is to contribute to a small but emergent body of literature in urban anthropology on hydraulic systems while linking science and technology studies with Marxian perspectives on bodily labor and time. But this chapter also cautions against celebrating the do-it-yourself urban forms that are so often celebrated by urban anthropologists as the last holdout of the alienating
processes of neoliberalism. I show how the very processes and associations that residents design to make the city livable are converted into liquefiable resources by private utility firms.

In addition to the macro-themes that organize the body of this dissertation, there is another thread that weaves in and out of the text as a whole: history. Instead of writing a conventional history chapter that lays out the development of Kigali along a chronological cause and effect trajectory, I have chosen to write the city’s history piecemeal, chapter by chapter. This is because the analytical objects and ethnographic subjects of each chapter are sunk into their own histories which certainly overlap, but also have their moments of disconnection and incommensurability with the histories of other chapters. For example, the demolitions in Chapter One are embedded in Rwanda’s national history of early independence and capital city building. The caguwa markets of Chapter Two on the other hand, belong to an entirely different history of global credit crises, development, and the IMF’s structural adjustment programs. Chapter Three’s history lies in the events of Chapter One. Chapter Four belongs to an altogether divergent history of: a global revolution in private service provision. At the same time, it cannot be thought outside of the histories in the previous chapters. I maintaining the gaps and overlaps as well as the incommensurability of these histories, because I want to sustain what many Rwandans expressed to me during my field work: just because something happens in the same place does not mean it always has the same cause. A clothing market
might be demolished two years and within feet of a housing settlement, but we cannot assume that the processes that lead up to these events are the same.

But these processes also converge in surprising moments. When Solange and her neighbors repurposed a ruling party song as the soundtrack to their rock-throwing, guerrilla housing building effort they found themselves up against new processes of global finance, a national state that is invested in a particular brand, and local authorities who (apparently) cannot take a joke. But in Solange’s explanation of why they sang the song (and why it offended city authorities) she underscores the questions that drive this dissertation: Who are the future producing classes? What material and imaginative processes are at work in making the 21st century metropolis? And what is the source of this emergent city building and ruining energy in contemporary Kigali?
2. Ruining the City: Demolition and Eviction in an Age of Speculative Urbanism

The delegate from Kampala City Council stood up. “My question,” she announced, “is about slums. On the ride here from the airport I did not see any slums—

“Yes!” A representative from the Rwanda Ministry of Local Governance (MINILOC) enthusiastically interrupted. “We had one [a slum] just over there. It was called cy’abakene which means ‘for the poor.’” He paused, planted both hands on the table and looked around for emphasis. “And we picked those people up, we gave them low cost housing, and they are happy.”

This exchange took place on March 20, 2014 at Kigali’s five-star Serena Hotel and Conference Center during a World Bank International Growth Center (IGC) forum titled “Sustainable Urbanism in Support of EDPRS 2.” The Ugandan delegate’s observations of a “slum-free” city echoes those made by other visitors to Kigali from professional development consultants, to academics, and travel writers.

Most of these visitors come to Kigali to attend similar conferences in the city’s well-serviced MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Convention, and Exhibition) industry. In the last ten years, Kigali—with its zero-tolerance for corruption, crime, and litter—has

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become a hub for major events including the 2016 World Economic Forum and African Union Summit, as well as smaller conferences like the IGC event above.

The Kampala delegate is correct. Walk off the plane, cross the tarmac, and enter customs at Kigali International Airport and you will be greeted by a large plasma screen welcoming you to “the land of a thousand opportunities.”

From the international airport, it is twelve kilometers to the Serena Hotel and Conference Center via a fixed price, government regulated airport taxi along an impeccably maintained, freshly painted, palm tree-lined tarmac road. The trip from the airport to the Serena winds through Kigali’s leafy outskirts of Kanombe and then into the city’s Gasabo district where the new convention center, a giant steel and glass structure inspired by the Mwami’s (King’s) Palace is positioned next to Kigali’s recently completed Radisson Blu Hotel. The journey then passes through two open fields in the heart of downtown that the Ministry of Tourism calls urban “green” spaces (just don’t walk on the grass), and the Rwandan Development Board lists for sale at just $100/m²—a steal for any developer looking to get in on Kigali’s emerging real estate market. The road enters Nyarugenge, the old colonial town and cuts through “rich” Kiyovu cy’abakire, not to be confused with its former “poor” neighbors who once lived across the road. This is followed by a trip through the Central Business District (CBD) where new high-rise retail centers such as

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2 A reworking of Rwanda’s colonial era brand Des Milles Collines
3 Palm trees are not native to Rwanda and have been imported at great expense to the city. Consequently, the fine for hitting one with a car is 1 million francs (about $1,500) which, according to many jokes about these rights-bearing nonhumans, is more than most fines levied for hitting a pedestrian.
the iconic Kigali City Tower and Nyarugenge City Mall have been built over former public transport and trading centers. The twelve kilometer journey then ends when your cab pulls into the Serena curbside drop-off/pick-up zone in front of the hotel’s fountain that, despite the city’s water crisis (see chapter 5), never (ever) misses a beat. There will be plenty of police and soldiers stationed along this road. And if you entered any of the malls or shopping complexes you would find them to be eerily under-occupied. But so long as the trip is choreographed correctly, there will be no sign of a “slum.” The only “slum-dwellers” you might encounter will be unthreatening dressed in uniforms, kept busy sweeping the road and scanning it for any rogue litter.

Inside the Serena Hotel and Conference Center, the MINILOC representative’s answer anticipated the question of what happened to the tens of thousands of people who, until very recently, lived along this corridor. This is not just about the city’s image, he stresses, it is about poverty reduction and public service provision (we [the government] gave them [evictees] housing). But this is not what the delegate from the Kampala City Council wanted to know. How, she clarified in follow up, did Kigali achieve this? And how might Kampala get rid of its slums?

Over a year later, I was hanging out with Noella—one of the evictees that the MINILOC representative identified as “happy.” She and her neighbors were not given their homes. They were “given” a Rwf 3.5 million ($6,000) debt to the Rwandan Social Security Board (RSSB, formerly CSR), which had been sold to the soon to be privatized
Rwandan Development Bank. Like many of her neighbors she had fallen behind on her payments and was looking for a buyer who could take over her mortgage.

“This place,” she said as she looked around, “is fake” (using the English “fake” hari hantu ha fake”). She did not just mean the house, but the rural area she had been moved to.

“[There was] no electricity, no water, no roads! You know we had to fetch water down in the swamp? I mean, wow, it was country! (mbega ni mucaro we!)… no streetlights so everything just stopped at 6pm…And also…wait, let me tell you…also my mother…she sold vegetables in the market in Kiyovu…But when we came here, there was nothing…I mean nothing happens here (nta ibikora, bihari literally “no activities here”) […]there was no transport so we couldn’t go to the city [laughing]! It was seriously some bad country (ni mucaro cyibi pe?)[more laughter]…I mean we had no idea how to live here. In Kiyovu at least we could cowboy (hustle), but here, it was just nothing, like empty [ntacyo] (recorded interview 7/24/2015 [801-0547]).

Later on in our interview Noella said something I would hear many other evictees say—a phrase that city authorities often dismiss as a “mindset” issue (see Goodfellow and Smith 2013): “Akajagari, (grit, disorder, illegality),” she said, “is beautiful, (karimo keza.)”

This chapter is about ruination, eviction, and speculative urbanism in a city that is undergoing rapid transformation from a “post-conflict” zone to the “model city” (Goodfellow and Smith 2013; City of Kigali 2010). I focus on the production, demolition, and afterlives of two of Kigali’s most famous akajagari (disordered, illegal, auto-constructed) neighborhoods, Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga. I argue that in their drive to eliminate “slums” from the city’s surface in order to generate a compelling
narrative of progress, Kigali’s managers have set in motion a series of financial, spatial, and political processes that they no longer control.

Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga are by no means the only victims of the Kigali Model. Over the last ten years, Kigali’s municipal government has used the city’s expropriation laws to raze thousands of homes, shops, and market stalls in order to convert land into real estate for global markets. Mass demolitions are so frequent in the city that it is rare to meet a Kigali resident who has not been evicted at some point to make way for planned roads, shopping malls, or upscale housing enclaves, many of which never come to fruition. Not surprisingly, many evictees such as Noella are quick to point out that these demolitions often produce nothing but “mere ruins” (ni amatongo gusa): vacant lots and empty buildings. What is surprising, however, is that in spite of the high political and financial costs of demolition, Kigali’s managers have increased the pace of ruining the city—running full speed towards a speculation-induced financial crisis.

What is the source of this destructive energy in Kigali? And how is the city’s external brand as the Singapore of Africa—an enticing narrative of an African miracle and global investment frontier—being sustained and reproduced in spite of urban ruination? I explore these questions by taking the Kampala delegate’s desire to import the Kigali Model to Uganda seriously. What impressed her that day was not the obvious fact that no structure had been built over the ruins of Kigali’s “slums.” Nor did it matter what happened to the people who once occupied the city center. It was that Kigali’s managers
had somehow mustered enough political will to clear the city center of thousands of residents without being paralyzed by popular politics—a feat that would be unthinkable in Kampala or many other cities in the world. ⁴

First, after outlining recent debates around planning in Kigali, speculative urbanism, and the new politics of eviction in the 21st century metropolis, I explore the concept that is at the center of contemporary struggles over urban space in Rwanda: *akajagari*, urban grit, disorder, messiness. I then turn to the history of Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga. Drawing on over 200 life histories and half a dozen guided tours through the ruins of these neighborhoods, I trace the historical conditions that produced these *akajagari* spaces. I then examine Kigali’s particular brand of speculative urbanism. Reading these developments into Ghertner’s (2015) concept “rule by aesthetics” and Goldman’s (2011) writings on “the art of speculative governance,” I explore the new relations of global city building in contemporary Kigali. I then turn to the moment when Kigali’s managers put on display a new way of dealing with occupancy politics: a model of urban development with zero tolerance for the tactics or “weapons” that residents use to stop eviction in other cities. I conclude by arguing these demolitions did not “settle” (c.f. Goodfellow 2014) the struggle over space in Kigali, but displaced it into a new political aesthetics: an ideological commitment to urban grit that ebbs and flows through the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

⁴ She was told that “best practices” in city design make all the difference.
I am not the first to write about the demolitions of Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga. Most writing on these evictions tend to be policy-oriented and limit these events to a relationship between the state and slum-dwellers (see Huggins et al 2010) in which the Rwandan ruling party is responsible for the destruction of space (Manirakiza 2014) and relocating city residents. These studies focus on the events of eviction itself: the law, compensation, the extent to which relocations were carried out with the participation of city residents. These texts begin with the premise that living in a “slum” is bad for the “slum-dwellers” and it is the state’s responsibility to upgrade or relocate people who do. From this perspective, the research question becomes one of evaluation: did the state carry out and complete the demolition effectively (Goodfellow 2014)? And are the “slum-dwellers” better off now than they were before the eviction (Manirakiza 2014)? It turns out that there are quantifiable answers to these questions (“yes” to the former and “no” to the latter). And yet this policy-evaluation perspective seems unable to grapple with the most pertinent question about Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga. Why

5 Many other researchers use the official name for these neighborhoods: Ubumwe Cell (see Huggins et al 2010; Goodfellow 2014; although Manirakiza 2014 is an exception). I use the popular moniker Kiyovu cy’abakene (meaning Kiyovu-for-the-poor) for two reasons. First, “ubumwe,” is Kinyarwanda for unity, a name that erases the important class history of Kiyovu cy’abakene. Kiyovu-for-the-poor was built by laborers on the peripheries of the city’s colonial era European settlement, also called Kiyovu, but cy’abakire/cy’abazungu (for the rich/white). As I show below, this class history is significant to the role that the neighborhood would play in making Kigali. Second, no one in Kigali actually uses the official names for these neighborhoods or any other place in the city. Kigali authorities have tried in vain to rebrand places known popularly as Kosovo, Bannyahe (where do they piss?), Karabaye ([bad] things happen there), Sodoma (a biblical reference to Sodom but also a cosmopolitan nod to Accra’s famous “slum” Sodom and Gomorrah). Beyond the revealing poetics of this nomenclature, it is significant that residents refuse the city’s rebranding as the Singapore of Africa with their own gestures towards war zones and other famous slums.
these neighborhoods and why did it begin in 2008? Exploring these questions requires expanding the frame beyond ruling party-society relations in order to understand global economic shifts and the impact of these processes on neighborhoods in Kigali. After all, Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga were already sunk into the city’s infrastructural base, located within walking distance to the central business district, and on the well-serviced, twelve-kilometer corridor between the airport and the city center. I suggest that the demolitions themselves are less to do with upgrading or even the ruling party, but were the products of the more difficult to analyze but significant processes of global financing, institution building, and the rise of private city design firms: what Michael Goldman (2011) calls “speculative urbanism.”

For Goldman, speculative urbanism is the product of new configurations of expertise and geographies of global capital relations that have emerged in the wake of the 2008 financial meltdown. This crisis with urban roots in North America and Western Europe (Harvey 2012) produced a surplus of expert labor and financial capacity—architects, GIS technicians, and urban planners—who were absorbed by global policy and financial institutions such as UN Habitat and the World Bank. As markets crashed in the North, new financial frontiers have been generated in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. This shift in the geographies of finance and expert labor has been coupled with emergent aspirations in cities as different as Delhi (Ghertner 2015); Kinshasa (de Boeck 2011; Simone 2011) Johannesburg (Murray 2014); Mexico City (Crossa 2014), and Kigali (Shearer 2015) to become “world-class.” In order to achieve these goals, municipal
governments are leveraging both the demand for new financial frontiers and emergent global networks of capital and expertise to build their world-class environments unhindered by the limits of local economies and institutions. This situation is radically transforming the processes of municipal governance in cities across the global South. The “art” of speculative government is that it converts municipal bureaucracies and laws designed to serve the “public good” into projects that make private real estate available to an imagined class of future investors. As local bureaucracies (and bureaucrats) are sidelined to make way for new projects and foreign technocrats, “a new fleet of powerful parastatal agencies [are] carving out new terrains…of power through legislative fiats under the rubric of ‘eminent domain’ for the public good” (ibid: 556). The political implications of these global shifts in city management and financing are tied up with new legal and property relations.

Whether it is in Bangalore or Kigali, these new networks of municipal managers linked to global institutions achieve what Goldman calls the “legal fiats” through expropriation laws. Expropriation is the product of an earlier era of planning in which eminent domain gives the state authority to purchase private property below market value (or in some cases seize property) for public (government) works: roads, parks, hydraulic systems. In speculative urbanism, managers and consultants do their work by redefining both “expropriation” and “the public.” Expropriation becomes about converting collective resources into private real estate (see Goodfellow 2014: 317). In the process, government actors and the city’s adjacent parastatal institutions become real estate
brokers, or in the words of Goldman “real estate becomes the real state and vice versa” (2011: 577). What is significant about these processes is not just that they constitute a new era of accumulation by dispossession. But when the state becomes real estate, and accountable to a future global class of investors instead of an actual “public,” city residents have limited options to respond politically in order to block evictions.

Drawing on Agamben, Goldman worries that speculative urbanism constitutes a permanent “state of exception” in which Bangalore’s citizens can no longer leverage the state against capital in order to hold their land. But this idea, of liberal citizenship in which individuals engage with the state through formal institutions, has long been abandoned in most of the world. Speculative urbanism suspends a different type of politics. And this is what impressed the delegate from Kampala. Kigali authorities had “liberated” themselves, not from a formal obligation to protect property rights, but from the much messier and more difficult business of “informal” or occupancy politics that block municipal actions in other cities—politics that in Kigali are embedded in an aesthetic sense of the city: what proponents and opponents alike call akajagari.

Akajagari is a difficult word to translate, but it appears in nearly every work on contemporary Kigali. Despite this word’s rich and varied uses, it is usually translated simply as “disorder” (c.f. Goodfellow and Smith 2013; Goodfellow 2014; Honeyman 2016; Manirakiza 2014; Sirven 1982). This parsimonious translation conceals more than it reveals. First, mere “disorder” misses the distinctly classed aesthetics of akajagari. One could easily point out that shopping malls and elite housing enclaves in Kigali violate the
same building codes, orders, and housing laws that squatter settlements and “slums” do (i.e. Roy 2009a; Ghertner 2011, 2015). These could also be classified as “illegal and disorderly” (see Goodfellow 2014), so are they akajagari? Ask this, and any Kinyarwanda speaker will correct you: No. for a space to be akajagari it must be ahantu haciriretse (common or lower class). Second, akajagari is a spatial concept that cannot be disarticulated from the practices and processes that produce it. It is what Lefebvre ([1972]1991) would call a “social space,” both fixed and fluid, simultaneously a product and producer of specific economic, political, and social conditions. What makes akajagari? Not bricks and mortar but “ubushobozi,” capacity, ability, and possibility. Kinyarwanda speakers conceive of akajagari as the crowded space that is produced by, and conductive of, specific conditions of possibility where people must insert themselves into “in multiple complex, often overlapping networks which include friends, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, members of one’s church congregation, professional relations, and so on” (de Boeck 2012:319). Whether it is called “deboullier” (Newell 2013), Zig-Zagging (Jones 2008; Chapter 2), the dollar a day, or hustling economy, akajagari is the space that is produced and generative of situations where people work—because they need to—in dense social and physical proximity to each other (see chapters 2 and 3). Third, “disorder” passes over the etymology of the word. Akajagari is put together with the diminutive pre-fix “aka,” (tiny) followed by “jya” the stem from the verb “to move”

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6 For example umwana is child. The diminutive is formed by changing the prefix umu- to aka, or akana,
and “gari” the adjective suffix for wide. The word’s construction indicates a dialectic of density and sprawl that is always in motion, simultaneously pushing outward and inward. It is a compound concept that indexes a process (movement, jya) an aesthetic (wide, gari) and a diminutive thing (the prefix aka). And finally, but perhaps most importantly, akajagari spaces facilitate specific urban politics and urban livelihoods that are antithetical to the Kigali Model.

Akajagari is by definition a violation of building and zoning codes. And yet, akajagari has been produced, maintained, and extended in Kigali for three generations in which city residents exploit relationships with local authorities in order to maintain a foothold in urban space (see chapter 4) in spite of official planning doctrines. These tactics are not specific to Kigali. Whether one calls it “political society” (Chatterjee 2004 and not Gramsci), “insurgent citizenship” (Holston 2008), “the politics of presence” (Makhulu 2015), “subaltern urbanism” (Kinyanjui 2012), or “medieval modernity” (AlSayyad and Roy 2006) urban dwellers in the 21st century city get what they want, not by threatening to walk off the factory floor, or making formal claims to citizenship, but by exploiting relations with local authorities (in official capacities or otherwise) in order to make claims in the absence of—and sometimes against—national states. Decisions in cities as different as Mumbai, Sao Paulo, and Accra are made through politics-as-a-
numbers-game in which large urban collectives repurpose liberal democratic ideals of the individual citizen into vote banks that are then sold to whoever can keep the water running (Anand 2011, 2016), convert illegal squats into protected property (Holston 2008, 2011), or distribute state surpluses (Ferguson 2015). Critics of politics “from below” argue that because these tactics are about services instead of ideology, they tend to empower violent right wing organizations that would otherwise remain on the fringes. Shiv Sena in India, drug gangs in Brazil, and water cartels in Nairobi have all entered mainstream politics via “political society” (see Blom Hansen 2001; Castells 1983; Roy and Alsayyad 2006; Roy 2011). What these theorists often miss in their critiques of third-world perversions of liberal democracy, however, is that no street trader or shack dweller cares how their politics smell to bourgeois academics. The point is that these tactics work. And they work precisely because—until very recently—most municipalities lacked the capacity to effectively respond to their swelling numbers of “informal proletariats” (Davis 2004; Chapter 2; Simone 2010b; Pierterse 2008). In Kigali, this was the case until the Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga evictions. What makes these evictions so significant is not so much their place in debates over slum demolition. But, as the Kampala delegate reminds us, the city of Kigali actually achieved what few other municipalities in the region would be able to follow through with: subvert popular politics and demolish two of the city’s most entrenched and centrally located neighborhoods. As I show in this chapter however, the result was not a “political
settlement” (Goodfellow 2014). The Model has displaced popular politics into a new aesthetic commitments to akajagari space that are retaking the city.

It all began and ended with a road—the same road that brought the Kampala delegate from the airport to the Serena Hotel.

2.1 Making Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga

“I am telling you, it [Kiyovu cy’abakene] was akajagari and it was hot! (karashyushe cyane) and it was beautiful (hari ahantu heza, ni quartier nziza)! Everyone was there, you know? Like all society (muri society bose). We had drunks, crazies (abasazi), prostitutes, traders, musicians, cowboys (abakoboyi, hustlers), people that did….you know?…like regular work too (nka akazi gazanzwe)…there were Congolese, Abashi (people from the Western province) Ugandans, Burundians, everyone!”

-Merci, 30-year-old umuzunguzayi and former Kiyovu cy’abakene tenant (recorded interview 5/8/2014) [801-0122]

Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga residents made their own history but not, as Marx would say, under circumstances of their own choosing. When Kigali was named the capital of independent Rwanda in July 1962, the former colonial outpost had a population of about 6,000 (Sirven 1982; Olson 1990; KEDS 2002; Manirakiza 2014, 2015), one kilometer of tarmac road, no postal service, few telephones, and a tiny landing strip that could barely accommodate a DC 3 (Mairieu 1983:244). Kigali the colonial town was just two square kilometers of tightly segregated and controlled space. The northern kilometer occupied Nyarugenge Hill where the European Camp was buttressed by the commercial district and the military barracks. South of the barracks was the other kilometer: Nyamirambo where Omani and Tanzanian traders lived in Camp Swahili,
(present day Biryogo). At the very southern edge of Nyamirambo, was where Kigali’s handful of Rwandan residents lived: mission educated “évolués” who worked as colonial civil servants and inhabited the Native Camp.

Kigali was small. But the town also achieved capital city status in the 1960s: the era of national self-determination, state building, and planning across the African continent. Modernization theory was all the rage and the World Bank, anxious to offset Soviet influence in the region, made large loans to new states with sound development plans. Gregoire Kayibanda, the first elected president of the new Republic of Rwanda had his ten year development plan to transform the country into a future regional powerhouse of tea, coffee, and hydro-electricity. First, however, he needed some basics: an international airport, a network of tarmac roads that could connect his new landlocked capital to neighboring countries and ports, and built structures to house government ministries.

There was just one problem: Independence-era Kigali lacked a reserve army of labor to build the new city. During the colonial era, the Catholic Church used its influence with administration to protect the morale of rural converts from the temptations of town life, and to keep their hard won souls away from the largely Muslim Tanzanian and Omani traders in town. The administration used vagabond and pass laws to keep most Rwandans out of the town, and customary property rights to keep Islam away from the country. In 1970, when the Italian consulting firm and former colonial contractor Astaldi Estero won a $9.3 million World Bank contract to lay tarmac from the town
center to the new airport (see World Bank 1972), they had to truck in their workforce from all sides of the famine and war stricken Rwanda-Burundi-Congolese border.

Asltaldi-Estero were not the only European construction firm in the region that made an easy transition from colonial privateer to World Bank contractor in the early years of independence. The Belgian firm Safricas-Impressa, the Italians Murri-Freres, and the French Entreprise Construction were picking up World-Bank, USAID, French, and Belgian contracts to build Kigali’s roads, ministry buildings, and the national bank, and they all transported workers to the city from elsewhere.

In less than a decade, tens of thousands of Congolese, Burundians, Ugandans, and Rwandans arrived in Kigali to work on Alstaldi-Estero’s road. They settled just north of the city limits, beginning at the toll gate on a block that is still known as paége, and across from the former Camp European in Kiyovu. The families whose homes and fields went under Astaldi Estero’s bulldozers also relocated to the other side of the tarmac while their homes, as a popular Kinyarwanda folk song about this era goes, “were left to the termites.” Instead of reproducing colonial-era labor practices where workers maintain a rural “home” and work in the city as guests, Alstadi’s, Entreprise’s, and Murri Freres’ workers chose to stay in Kigali. They sent for their friends and families back home, and—in the absence of any clear municipal policy towards urban growth—built their own

7 A famous line from Masabo Nyagenzi’s “Kavukire” (circa 1980) about demolition and road building during this period “Harabanje haza imihanda caterepirari iratogota isambu irayishishimura, iratatamura, amabarabara atandatu ubwo inzu yanyu isigara inegete ku mugina, uhhmm, ubwo inzu yanyu isigara inegete ku mugina.” (The caterpillars came to rip up your land. But they are not finished, they are going to make six more roads and leave your house to the termites...mmm... and now your house is left to the termites...)
city and called it “for the poor.” It was the beginning of 1970s Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga.

Alstadi Estero’s workers extended the road out towards Gikondo and then back, crossing the wetlands and doubling the city’s spatial logics as they worked. As the road traveled north, it secreted more housing, microbars, shops, and markets, on the “poor” side and elite enclaves on the other. Across the wetlands Kimicanga housed the spill over from the “poor” Kiyovu cy’abakene while on the other side of the road an elite enclave, Kimihurura grew as an extension of “rich” Kiyovu cy’abakire to house the growing population of expatriate technocrats. The road to the airport served as the physical barrier between the elite and working classes on both sides of the wetlands while divergent property regimes worked to enforce these divides. Contrary to what Olson (1990) and Goodfellow’s (2014) observe, Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga were not squatter settlements nor slums. Recognized by Kigali’s cadastral, land in Kiyovu-cy’abakire (the “rich” side) and Kimihurura was delineated and titled. In Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga, however, the situation was more fluid, making it possible for new arrivals to acquire their own property. This land was not recognized as “officially” titled, but property tied up in social rights and obligations.

To understand what happened next, it is worth briefly touching on umunani as a form of property management. In umunani, single plot of land is never fixed within a measured area, the way a title might represent private property, but always in motion to match the needs of social reproduction. Umunani is expected to send a plot of land into a
kind of mitosis through ascending partition that, unlike inheritance, divides land during the owner’s lifetime as future generations are given their shares. While the institution is about much more than its economic function, it is in theory supposed to work as insurance against the risks of subsistence farming, assuring that every male heir is entitled to a plot, making it possible for each to get married, build his compound, and farm regardless of what other good or bad fortune might be in store for him. When umunani was brought to the city as a way of acquiring urban land by the children of Astaldi workers, its economic function also shifted as well its social purpose. No longer about insuring against the risks of subsistence farming, umunani worked to mitigate the risks of town life.

Working classes in Kigali, then and now, have to anticipate long periods of free-time in between jobs (see also Quayson 2014). The worse-case scenario is to get stuck in a rent cycle that does not match the choppy temporality of intermittent and low-paid work (see chapter 4). By the 1970s, umunani in Kigali was no longer about farming, but about a rent-free roof over one’s head. First generation road workers in Kiyovu cy’abakene acquired small plots through cash purchases from bakavukiye. Kigali’s working classes then further divided their areas into gifts for relatives and friends back home—strategic enticements to move their existing social and economic networks to Kigali. Second generation Kiyovu and Kimicanga residents were given a section of a plot to build a

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8 I once had a conversation with a Rwandan homicide detective during the break at a conference on the nation’s new land laws. He told me that inner-family disputes over umunani “easily” accounted for 90% of all his murder cases.
home and/or shop by their guardians. These plots were then subdivided for the next generations as the neighborhood grew and became more compact.

Kigali’s early independence era urban planners, who were then mostly French consultants on loan from SMUH, did not stand a chance against umunani and the city’s demographic boom. During Rwanda’s First Republic (1962-1973), the population of Kigali increased ten-fold to 60,000. This only sped up during Habryarimana’s Second Republic. By 1978, the city had a population of over 115,000, and then to 181,000 inhabitants in 1986; before jumping again to more than 235,000 in 1991—the final census before the 1994 genocide.¹ This “urban explosion” confounded the widely held development theory that urbanization in Africa would be a secondary effect of increased agricultural out-put and technological innovation (see Olson 1990), rendering the city’s 1968 Masterplan obsolete before it could be implemented.

Instead of sprawl, Kigali’s second generation of working classes made the city through a dialectical process of expansion and compression, taking the ground that was gained in the first generation and then densifying it through umunani in the second. Kigali’s built environment had spilled over from Astaldi-Estero’s boulevard down to the wetlands and then up the other side through Kimicanga. At the same time umunani worked to create density within by carving out subplots within subplots as Kigali’s new working classes planned for their future, had children, became shop and bar owners and brought in friends and family from elsewhere. And a single word made the leap from plain adjective, to both a product and a condition of urban life: akajagari. While many
city residents play with the poetics of *akajagari* and often acknowledge both the limits and possibilities of living in these spaces, the concept was early on identified as antithetical to the straight-line and open-air aesthetics of 20th century urban planning.

In the late 1970s, the French geographer Pierre Sirven observed with both horror and fascination that the colonial “*beaux villes*” of Nyarugenge hill were being taken over by *bidonvilles* (1982: 517). Kigali’s booming working class neighborhoods were no longer contained in Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga, but had turned inward and heading towards the center full steam, choking out the only planned space on every side. There was *cy a hafi* (literally “it’s close” [to Kigali]) on the western edge which bled into Kimisagara, an *akajagari* neighborhood that ran up the western slopes of Nyarugenge hill. *Akajagari* then turned south where the city’s expansion met the former Swahili Camp of Biryogo, the only colonial era *akajagari* neighborhood and completed the circuit that surrounded the former colonial town with Gikondo (now *Sodoma*). For his part, Sirven warns that the city’s uncontrolled growth was unsustainable and potentially catastrophic. There was no planned affordable housing, service connections were limited, and plots outside of the former colonial town remained to be titled, leaving property up to the whims of “traditional” institutions like *umunani*. Sirven famously dubbed Kigali’s growth *sous-urbanisation*, or under-urbanization, the title of his thesis, by which he explained, he meant a deficient, weak, and unstable (in his words *faible*) urban growth (1982: ix).
Rugenge, [then the official name of Kiyovu cy’abakene]…. has a density of 200
inhabitants per hectare and the quality of life is so rough that anyone can see it is just a
bidonville….But Rwandans have another name for this neighborhood, “akajagari.”…
overcrowding and miserable living conditions. Indeed, this word is used for all of the
poor squatter settlements surrounding the city (1982: 517, my translation from the
French).

But many life histories reveal a slightly different picture of Kigali’s akajgagari
spaces.

In hindsight, the 1980s coffee boom years were what many call “good years.” The
city’s markets were thriving, the franc was trading higher than the dollar and akajagari
spaces were opening the city and the experience of urban life up to new arrivals from
rural areas and other countries in the region. While Sirven did not approve, many
residents, like Merci above, thought breaking up the colonial spatial arrangements in
Kigali was a good thing (“everyone was there!”) During the last decade before civil war
and genocide, Kimicanga and Kiyovu cy’abakene had inverted the city’s spatial logics.
The periphery was now the center of economic activity, transportation, and, cultural
production (see chapter 2). Akajagari had given birth to more than just a built
environment, but an unruly musical genre that could only come from the mixed, stacking,
and unregulated space: Igisope, or the Kinyarwanda fusion of funk, rumba and Rwandan
folk music that took the city by storm during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Club owners
from the “rich” side of the road, paid musicians from the other side to play for
dancefloors on the edges of these neighborhoods and packed with patrons from both. The
city was, as many residents remark about this time, “hot” with music, cash, clothes, and
people. And then it all crashed.
Structural adjustment, the 1989 currency and coffee price crash, followed by the 1990-1994 civil war and genocide, literally evacuated the world from Kigali. Those who stayed in Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga found themselves in between the advancing Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and the heavily fortified parliament building just above Kimicanga. Kiyovu cy’abakene was a known opposition stronghold for the RPF (the political wing of the RPA). Radio Télévision Libre des Milles Collines (RTLM) frequently broadcast the names and suspected whereabouts of known RPF supporters sending waves of interhamwe, drunken machete wielding youth militias, into Kiyovu cy’abakene to (often indiscriminately) murder, loot, and tear down homes (CITE recordings from International Monitor Institute Archives). Across the wetlands, Kimicanga was just below Republican Guard headquarters, and residents there found themselves first blocked in by government roadblocks and then on the wrong side of the frontlines when the RPF began to take hold of the city. When the RPF marched on

9 The mechanisms of slaughter in Kigali worked differently than in the rest of the country. Few people knew the ethnic identity of their neighbors, many of whom were only second or third generation Rwandans, had relatives who were both Hutu, Tutsi, and neither, and were uncertain of their own ethnicity. Instead of a “popular” genocide carried out by the civilians, most of the killing in Kigali was done by republican guard soldiers at roadblocks, who, (through bureaucratically standardized processes), checked national IDs to verify ethnicity, although these processes of verification were carried out unevenly and led to some high-profile “mistakes.” In one instance, the wife of one of the Republican Guard high command who was later charged with taking part in planning the genocide was killed at a roadblock for “looking like” a Tutsi. Interahamwe militias were much less inclined to verify the ethnicity of their victims and killed large numbers of Hutu, including staunch supporters and participants in the genocide from high ranking republican guard and their families (cite from archives) to local MDR officials.

10 Not only did these neighborhoods bleed from the genocide, but there were plenty of civilian causalities from RPA-Republican Guard crossfire. The RPA was not seen as a liberation army by all residents and on July 4th 1994, when they took control of Kigali, many residents fled the “rebels” with the Republican Guard and interhamwe militias only to find themselves the violent and deadly Congolese refugee camps run by former genocidaires two weeks later (cite from Mama Denise interview).
Kigali on July 4, 1994, there were just an estimated 50,000 people left in Kigali (Manirakiza 2014; KEDS 2002).

But not for long: over the next five years, refugees from earlier periods of violence in 1959 began to return to Kigali during the same time that others who fled the city came back from camps in the Congo (see chapters 2 and 3). With intermittent war on the Rwanda-Congolese border, a crashed rural economy, people from the Western and Northern provinces began to flood into the city. The population went from an estimated 50,000 in 1994 to an estimated 600,000 by the year 2000 (KEDS 2002), and then jumped to 800,000 reaching close to 1.3 million in 2013 (City of Kigali 2013). In much of the literature on this period, there is a sense that Kigali was growing “spontaneously,” (de Montclose 1995; Goodfellow and Smith 2013). Observers looked out, saw the sprawl, and declared a “crisis” created by the genocide (city of Kigali 2007).

Spontaneous is not the right word. The municipality might have been overwhelmed by and unable to control or regulate urban growth (see chapter 3). But every new brick had to be sunk into the city’s pre-existing base of material and social infrastructures. This is why it is so difficult to get rid of akajagari space. Post-1994

Most recorded interviews from residents who lived through the civil war and genocide either skipped over it in their life histories or asked me not to record or recount their experiences during the genocide or as a refugee. Telling any story, or speaking about any event that does not match the official government narratives of the genocide carries a long prison sentence under Rwanda’s genocide ideology laws. Navigating this terrain is very difficult because the ruling party frequently changes its position on how these events unfolded, (in a way very similar to how newspeak operates in Orwell’s novel Nineteen Eighty-four), meaning that what an okay version of events one day will be genocide ideology the next. Given the potential risks involved, and my own inability as an outsider to assess these, I never asked anyone directly about the genocide, nor did I pursue genocide related topics in conversations and interviews.

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settlements depended largely on pre-existing social networks established across regions and over the three generations of akajagari building. The hundreds of thousands who fled the camps and renewed violence on the border in Cyangugu did what three generations of rural-urban migrants from the region had done before: they moved to Kimicanga, or what people were now calling “the Embassy of Cyangugu.” (recorded interview 2/27/2015). Returnees from Uganda and elsewhere extended Kyovu cy’abakene through Muhima down to the wetlands of Nyabugogo (see chapters 2 and 3). It wasn’t necessarily “world-class,” but the city continued to grow along a logic of akajagari building in which pre-existing social networks, economic needs, and umunani determined when and where the next house would go up and who it would belong to. By the early 2000’s Sirven’s nightmare had come true. Akajagari had taken over the city and become the dominating logic of urban life. So what was it like? 12

Before it was suddenly bulldozed, one of the many ways to end up in Kiyovu cy’abakene from the city center was to head down the tarmac road that separates the “poor” side of the neighborhood from the “rich” until you reached Sopetrade, a gas station and a landmark, where the road from town met Avenue des Poids Lourdes to Nyabugogo (see map fig x). From there you could choose one of three dirt roads and fall in with pedestrians vying for space with automobiles along dusty thoroughfares where

12 This “tour” is based on over 200 life histories, half a dozen walking tours, and 2 and a half years research in other akajagari neighborhoods
you would mix with crowds coming to and from Nyarugenge market to the north east or
the central bus station directly above you. On either side of the pedestrian-automobile-
commodity traffic in Kiyovu cy’abakene, merchants would be selling clothes and
produce from tables. Behind them, men and women would be frying fish, *sambaza*,
potatoes, and chapatti, and grilled corn over single coal and gas burners feeding hungry
commuters with a mix Western Rwandan, Congolese, and Burundian fare. This street
economy blended into the built environment where production, leisure, and domestic
spaces are literally stacked on top, in front, and behind each other. Women and men
would sit outside curtains covering the entrances to single room “cinemas,” collecting
admission from youngsters who would check the wall for show times. Depending on the
year, you could choose between bootlegged Westerns, Kung-Fu, Bollywood,
Kinyarwanda, and Hollywood films played from (also depending on the year) either a
VCR, or later a CD in a lap top. Small bars (*utubari*) sold *urwarwa*, banana beer in
sparsely furnished rooms that are attached to homes and corner stores. These converted
living rooms that operated next door to more popular and upscale places like Kwa
Anastasia, named after its wealthy Congolese owner, and popular because he regularly
had premier league viewings. Not enough money for a beer? You could pay Anastasia a
hundred francs for the right to stand and watch Chelsea beat Arsenal. Other families have
converted rooms into small cafés that serve tea, milk, and cake, while still others had
turned their living rooms into mini textile works and shops. Not all of the business was g-
rated: sex workers, dope dealers, and pick-pockets, mostly working the crowds of
weekend voyeurs who poured in from the other side of the road for weekend music and entertainment are also crucial to this street economy. \(^{13}\) *Akajagar* spaces like Kiyovu cy’abakene lacked what real estate agents call “shadow space,” or empty wasted areas that are often the by-product of organizing logics like cubicles. In *akajagari*, every inch of ground is involved in the production, circulation, and exchange of value.

If you continued down into the wetlands and cross Avenue des Poids Lourdes you would enter Kimicanga: a larger, louder, and more crowded version of Kiyovu cy’abakene (see fig x). Kimicanga’s main strip was a Kilometer long dirt road that cut across top of the neighborhood. This drag served simultaneously as an open market, shopping, and entertainment district, with several small foot paths that would break away into pedestrian only commercial and residential areas. Like its smaller neighbor, Kimicanga also had its share of popular institutions: the famous sports bar, Kwa Monika and—depending on the year—Cadillac (opened in the late 1990s) and Kigali Nights (1978-1994). So what role did the municipality play in the production of the *akajagari* city?

Kigali’s municipality was in crisis management until 2004 (see chapter 3). They were clearing corpses, trying to get the water and electricity back on, and restore security to Kigali (KEDS 2001). The city government certainly did not have the capacity to carry out the daily business of enforcing building and zoning codes. While this meant

\(^{13}\) There is no shortage of neighborhood lore about famous hustlers and *abagome* (villains).
interrupted services, it also made it possible for many people to enter the city and claim space. At the same time, the state was not absent. Lower level cell and commune authorities were involved in formalizing property acquisition and building rights, while becoming themselves incorporated into Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga’s networks through patron-client relations. An insurance mechanism that is attached to umunani, “inzoga z’abagabo,” (literally “beer for the men”) in which neighbors are paid to witness a land transaction had become—in the absence of any other mechanism—a semi-formalized way of securing property in the area. In the post-genocide iteration of inzoga z’abagabo, low-level authorities were paid by residents to witness, sign, and stamp the plot measurements and locations of land and umunani transactions. As I discuss further in chapter 4, the documents that inzoga z’abagabo produced, operated as semi-official titles and created their own “rule of records” (Hull 2011). It is important here, however, to note that practices like inzoga z’abagabo were the only sources of lower level officials’ authority in the absence of a fully functioning municipality. In other words, local state officials derived their authority not by enforcing regulations, but in facilitating “informal” urban growth.

Living in akajagari spaces like Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kmicanga certainly has its problems, there are issues of sewage, security, and health. But when people talk about what they “lost” in the eviction, they are not speaking about disease, limited built environments, or the lack of services. What they lost were the collective resources and survival mechanisms—the akajagari—that made it possible for people with limited
ubushobozi to inhabit and make the city work. Networks that were destroyed in the name of “rebuilding.” As Noella said later in our interview “You understand? (umva?). You come here, [to the Batsinda relocation site] you lose everything! You don’t know anyone, you have no livelihood {imibereho} (recorded interview op.cit).

The previous sections are about the historical production of akajagari spaces in Kigali. In the following section, I turn to akajagari’s other—the Kigali Model, and the processes that ultimately politicized the aesthetics of disorder: speculative urbanism, and a new municipal commitment to erasing akajagari in the name of producing a city that is “clean, green, and slum-free.”

2.2 World-Classism

In 2008, the same year that Kiyovu cy’abakene was demolished Carl Worthington, then a partner at the Colorado architecture firm, Oz gave an interview to the local newspaper, The Daily Camera. According to this feature piece, titled “Rebuilding Rwanda” Worthington first met Rwandan president Paul Kagame in Denver in 2004. The two men were introduced by the real estate and IT mogul, John Dick and met in one of Worthington’s offices that overlooks the Denver Technology Center, a private corporate park that the architect designed in the late 1970s. According to the feature piece, Worthington remembers showing Kagame a slideshow of his tech center’s history. Then he recalls:
“At the end of the slideshow I said [to Kagame] ‘we are now looking down on 20 million square feet of development that has been all privately done. It started with a vision, then the money came, then the corporations came.’ That is what sold the president. He [Kagame] turned to me and said ‘Carl, would you like to come to my country and help me rebuild it?’ (Marshall 2008:26).

In Worthington’s account, what sold the president was the Denver Technology Center’s financing strategy. Kagame went looking for a planning firm just when the 1990s fascination with global cities as a theory of geopolitics (see Sasson 1991) was shifting into a millennial design question: could a global city be built anywhere (see Goldman 2011; Murray forthcoming)? The question was not just what a city like Kigali would need in order to achieve world-class status, but also how to finance a built environment that would put it on the map as the financial hub of Africa?

Until very recently, municipal planning in most cities across Asia, Latin America and Africa was done by overworked bureaucrats, drowning in their own paperwork and beholden to local patron-client micro-politics (see Hull 2011, 2012). As public (government) projects, the implementation of basic service provision, housing, and master planning were limited to municipal finances. In other words you can plan all you want but, as the South African planner Edgar Pieterse likes to say, “without a tax base, you can’t do shit.” 14 In many cities in the Global South, where most of economic life happens in untaxed “informal” sectors and where structural adjustment long ago drained state coffers, municipal planners haven’t been able to do (jack) shit for some time (see

14 Presentation given at the WISER JWTC on June 23rd 2013
Davis 2006; Gandy 2006; Miraftab 2016; Myers 2011; Simone 2010a). Furthermore, as urban geographer Ascher Ghertner (2015) observes, slum-dwellers, those who are usually targeted by “upgrading” projects, vote—and they vote in blocks in order to keep the city from kicking them out. Even in Kigali, where the mayor is appointed by the ruling party and where national “elections” are just the punchlines to jokes, lower level authorities still depend on their neighbors’ patronage for legitimacy in ways that often paralyze city plans (see chapter 4). The question that private design firms, the World Bank, and UN Habitat consultants have been asking as their work shifts South is: can a world-class city be designed and built outside of the limits of municipal finances and local politics? The answer, according to one Surbana consultant is “yes, with the right political will” (Non-recorded interview February 10, 2014).

The business of global architecture firms like Oz and Surbana LLC is about imagining new political landscapes where their designs can be implemented unhindered by the limits of local finances and patron-client politics (Murray 2014; Goldman 2011; Shatkin 2011; Watson 2013). These global firms allow municipal governments to escape from the version of planning that Pieterse describes, planning tied to a tax-base, and to embrace the unlimited potential of global real estate and private service provision. This shift dovetails with a scalar shift in global policy and financial institutions from the national state and towards the municipality (Goldman 2011). Accompanied with twin narratives of a coming urban crisis (see UNHabitat 2002, 2010; Davis 2004, 2006) and
new financial frontiers in the South, the UN and World Bank are replacing their
development economists with architects, urban planners, and GIS technicians.

This new “architecture of capital relations” (Goldman 2011: 558) and expertise produce more than just plans. They work by building legal and institutional infrastructures that convert municipal governments from a slow-churning bureaucracies to speculative enterprises that meet the needs of a global investment class (see Ghertner 2015). This is what Goldman (2011) calls “the art of speculative government,” or using municipal institutions to convert urban land into private real estate. And it is the next big thing from Bangladesh to Johannesburg. In order for planning to be effective, Kigali needed more than just a plan, but a series of new institutions and projects that could convert akajagari into global real estate for private investors. They needed a land law, titling and permit centers, and a compelling narrative about the city’s future potential.

If the demolitions in Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga were, as Goodfellow argues, the result of the ruling party’s capacity to act, then city residents would have been able to block these evictions through local political channels and the ruling party would have more control over the processes.

The same year that Oz began their work on the Kigali Conceptual Master Plan (KCMP), the British consulting firm HTSPE (now DAI), won a contract funded by the British Department of International Development (DfID) to design, direct, and implement Land Tenure Regularization (LTR) in Rwanda. Land tenure was about titling, but also about creating the institutions and laws that would make it possible for the city to
expropriate land for the Master Plan. For the next ten years HTSPE would work with the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MINIRA, formerly REMA) to install the institutions, technologies, and legislative updates necessary to enforce the 2005 organic land law and convert Rwanda’s “customary” lands into titled financial instruments. On paper, there is nothing unique about the LTRP. HTSPE runs similar programs in several countries in order to access lucrative DfID grants [footnote]. Their work is built on theories of private property and finance developed by the influential policy guru Hernando de Soto, or the idea that untitled land is “dead capital,” (de Soto 2000)—a source of untapped economic potential. A generous reading of the de Soto thesis is that regularization (titling) unlocks the economic potential of informal occupancy by converting illegally produced urban space into an abstract and a commensurable representation of value. In de Soto’s (2000) ideal scenario, the urban poor get recognized property rights to their land that can be used to access capital, the financial sector grows with a new population of debtors, and the government’s tax base increases thanks to land registration. Of course, many things can and do go wrong with this type of titling scheme (See Verdery 2005; Shipton 2009; chapter 4), but these interventions also create the governing networks possible to expropriate land.

With DfID money and HTSPE expertise, MINIRA established land offices in every sector, beginning with Nyarugenge. Not only would these one stop centers issue building permits and titles, while ensuring that all future building would be done according to the Master Plan, but they had access to aerial photos and field surveys as
well as satellite images that were later streamlined into a single digital GIS database with a record of every single plot in Kigali (see website). For the first time in Kigali’s history, the municipal government had the information and the capacity not only to register and track every single plot in the city, but to also to expropriate and sell that property. But this was not enough for an eviction. As the MINILOC representative carefully caveats above, there needs to be a plan to relocate people from the city center to the periphery if expropriation is going to be palatable to outside investors, as well as a parastatal organization that can transfer expropriated land from state property to global real estate markets. That would be the Batsinda Housing “village,” and the parastatal would be Rwanda’s National pension fund, Caisse Sociale (CSR, now RSSB).

Batsinda began as a project designed to stop eviction. In 2005, the same year that Oz and HTSPE began their work, German architect and planner Antji Illberg and American engineer Chris Rollins began work in Kigali on “The Low Cost House Construction Manual.” This project, funded by the German Parastatal GIZ and Engineers Without Borders, aimed to demonstrate to city authorities that vernacular building practices could be used in an affordable way to generate what they call a “modernized” look: a geometrically distributed home, built with affordable materials and meeting the straight lined aesthetics of planning. Working with Kigali earth, using Rwandan construction techniques and hand tools, Illberg and Rollins built a model two bedroom home with a salon, kitchen and bathroom. For added flare, their model home had a rainwater catcher, and was run on biofuel addressing the city’s energy, water, and waste
treatment shortages. The entire home with labor and materials cost $3000 to build—one fifth of the price of building the same home with approved, imported materials (Ilberg and Rollins 2007).

In a later article about the project’s unintended consequences Illberg (2008) writes that the purpose of the low cost construction manual was to legalize earth as a building material in order to prevent neighborhood demolitions and eviction. It was also meant to be distributed to city residents as a way of demonstrating how vernacular building practices could be used in order to meet the new aesthetic requirements of building homes in the city (see ibid).

Significantly, however, Illberg’s and Rollins’ housing prototype was finished the same year that Oz architecture presented the Kigali City Conceptual Master Plan (KCMP) to city authorities. The KCMP, more than just a visual narrative of the city’s future potential, also introduced another key set of ideas and discourses that would lead to the Kiyovu and Kimicanga evictions: ecological risk and sustainability (see chapter 2).

In 2007, Ilberg’s housing prototype was used by CSR to build a model “village” (umudugudu) of 250 identical two-bedroom homes on land that they had acquired in Kinyinya Sector on the northern edge of Kigali. The idea, if successful, was to construct several “villages” on Kigali’s outskirts to move residents out of areas like Kiyovu cy’abakene, Kimicanga, and cya Hafi away from high-risk areas in the wetlands, and towards, “ordered” and serviced villages. Residents would not be given their houses. The Rwanda Housing Bank (now dissolved) agreed to administer twenty-year mortgages to
evictees so that the pension fund could recover their costs plus profit. Instead of charging interest rates, the Rwandan Housing Bank agreed to issue flat 3.5 million Rwandan franc principle balance in their mortgages ($6,000) or double the construction costs for each home. In less than three years, the City of Kigali had been converted from a post-conflict inefficient local organization beholden to local micropolitics and its own limitations into a transnational network of capital and expertize with a legal and institutional framework designed to meet the needs of global investors. With a new land and expropriation law, institutions like CSR and the city’s one stop centers that could facilitate the acquisition and sell of real estate.

But Kigali also had something else: a story. As Worthington observes, here was a nation that was “rebuilding.” By 2007, the RPF had generated much global buzz around the idea of Kigali as a miracle city recovering from its genocide. The ruling party had demonstrated an openness to being a laboratory for new and experimental ideas of economic development and financing strategies, winning early support from policy gurus like Jeffry Sachs, his celebrity sidekick Bono, (Ruxin 2007), Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, and Tony Blair—all who would do important lobbying work for the city. However cynical, this branding strategy used Kigali’s post-genocide status to reframe the city’s current built environment as a *tabula rasa* of endless future investment possibilities (Shearer 2015). And it would legitimate an entirely new form of mass violence.

Kiyovu cy’abakene went first. On July 20th, 2008 Kiyovu cy’abakene residents woke up to what many described as a terrifying experience:
“They just descended on us! The caterpillars (bulldozers) started over at SOPETRAD and ripped through our homes! Then the hired workers followed. They ran behind the caterpillars and tore through posts...[they] took what they wanted with them. People were screaming “the war is back!” (intambara yagurutse!) because the war was like that (intambara yari yaramaze), you know? Young men with pick axes and machetes and soldiers everywhere! That day...wow (mbege we)!...it was traumatizing (kuduhahamura)” (recorded interview 3/6/2015).

Aimée, who is now in her forties remembered that day from her home near Batsinda. On the other side of town in Sodoma, her former neighbor Thérése agreed:

“You see they got tired of us (dubananiwe, we exhausted them) [laughter]. And then that morning....my god [imana yanjye]! I don’t know how many...the Mayor, the prime minister...the police everyone (bose barahari) was there...When they charged down the hill...we started banging pots and pans together so people could get out of their houses. The caterpillars were coming...some people threw rocks, but they were in handcuffs fast! Poo! People were shouting ‘This is genocide!’ because that is how the genocide was (ngjenoside yarabaye)” (recorded interview 11/23/2014). ^15

Thérése was right. The state was tired of them. But the events in 2008 were not supposed to happen the way she described.

The Kiyovu evictions were supposed to be a clean land grab and flip. It would be a showcase of “best practices” of urban design: upgrading the urban environment through public-private partnerships and democratic market principals of willing buyer and willing seller. The conversion of Kiyovu cy’abakene into global real estate should have demonstrated what local political will could achieve when the state and capital worked

15 Comparisons between the 1994 genocide and contemporary housing demolitions in Kigali are becoming more frequent, presenting an acute political problem for municipal authorities (see chapter 5). Residents now call local authorities iterahamwe (youth militias that carried out most of the killing during the 1994 genocide) when they come to rip down an illegal house. This is technically a serious crime, defacement, and carries a 5 year prison sentence, but in order to prosecute the offenders, authorities would have to admit that residents are calling them iterahamwe suggesting that they are carrying out acts of violence.
together. It would signal the end of municipal politics weighed down with local patron-client relationships, a glacially slow bureaucracy, and the beginning of the “new” Rwanda—a place where stuff gets done. So how did these best practices and political will lead to a spectacle of state violence, genocide flashbacks, and a wasteland in the middle of the city?

Several months before the mayor sent bulldozers charging into Kiyovu cy’abakene, the national pension fund Caisse Sociale du Rwanda (CSR) distributed compensation notices to everyone they had identified as landholders from the bottom of Paége to Avenue des Poids Lourdes. CSR offered to pay for the rights to demolish the property that stood on somewhere between 360-420 plots. The state would then transfer the land below to the pension fund so that it could be sold on the market.

This was not the first tract of land that the government had transferred to CSR and the parastatal was already on its way to acquiring the largest real estate portfolio in Rwanda. In exchange for facilitating the transaction, the municipality would get high-rise apartment buildings and commercial centers from the private sector—a built environment appropriate to the Central Business District. But it was also supposed to be in the best interests of Kiyovu residents. The idea was that in addition to receiving cash for property that Kiyovu residents had no formal right to occupy in the first place, they would also be the beneficiaries of a flagship low income housing program and moved away from the high-risk zones in the wetlands. But willing buyer, willing seller principals of urban development rarely work in places like Kiyovu cy’abakene. Multiple layers of property
ownership are stitched together with collective and individual rights and obligations. Regardless of what is written as formal law, all of these rights and obligations are tied in some way to land and involve local authorities (see Chapter 4).

Kiyovu cy’abakene residents hit back with popular politics. As far as CSR was concerned, any claims that Kiyovu residents had to land in the area was custom and not formal law. CSR was only obligated to compensate residents for their property on the land (built structures), and not the land itself. The landholders saw it differently. Kigali’s municipal authorities had recognized customary land holdings for several generations. In refusing to acknowledge Kiyovu residents’ customary land rights, and in relying entirely on positive law, CSR had generated a gap between formal and substantive land rights and handed Kiyovu cy’abakene residents the grounds to challenge their removal. A group of residents hired an independent surveyor who included estimated land values in his work and reported back that the Kiyovu cy’abakene landholders were being offered less than a quarter of the market value of their property (see Huggins 2014; interviews).

Working through cell level authorities whose own political capital was threatened by the eviction which would reduce their number of supporters, these residents filed an appeal with the Office of the Ombudsman who halted the demolition, placing an injunction on CSR’s plans (see Gakire 2008; Manirakiza 2014a, 2015). The point of the challenge, many former residents told me in interviews, was not to negotiate a higher payout, but to use the office of the Ombudsman to stop the demolition by leveraging the interests of local authorities against the national state. As one of the Kiyovu cy’abakene landholders
involved in the claim explained to me, the endgame in 2008 was the same as ever: delay evictions indefinitely with litigation and negotiations. This would wear out CSR while raising the financial and political costs of evicting them (recorded interview 4/22/2014).

What made the Kiyovu evictions special enough to warrant the Kampala delegate’s wow is that the city managed to effectively respond to tactics meant to block their advance into a world-class future. City residents were also alarmed. Nearly every interview about the eviction begins with a single word: “badutunguje,” (they surprised us).

The City of Kigali, once an overwhelmed, disorganized, and understaffed operation that—precisely because it was dysfunctional—tolerated violations of tax, zoning, and building codes had undergone a five-year transformation. In its stead was a syndicate of transnational actors with enough political will and financial capacity to steamroll any attempt to delay its march onto the world stage. Kiyovu cy’abakene, because of its location and potential value as a rent peak location had become entangled in an alphabet soup of global capital and expertise: Oz, GIZ, the World Bank, Engineers without Borders, DfID, HTSPE, CSR, UN Habitat. Each of these organizations needed the eviction to happen if their projects were going to move beyond the planning phase. There were different opinions about housing and demolition; arguments over process, and certainly some consultants who were outright opposed to forced eviction (cite interviews). But by July 2008, three issues were clear: the Master Plan needed downtown real estate if it was going to be financed; “customary” land practices needed to be cleaned
up if the LTRP was going to go forward; and the City of Kigali needed people to inhabit Batsinda if they were going to change the building practices in the city. The ruling party and its international partners would be goddamned if a few slum-dwellers and a surveyor would get in their way.

The RPF appointed mayor of Kigali responded to the Ombudsman’s injunction by sending in bulldozers, day-laborers with machetes, and police to take the neighborhood by force. The demolitions were not, however, just about evicting residents from the center. The city needed at least some Kiyovu cy’abakene residents to move to and stay in Batsinda if their housing experiment was going to work. City authorities were greeted with a storm of rocks and insults, but in the end they took the neighborhood and loaded over a hundred families into trucks to be transported to Batsinda. This was the housing that the MINOLOC represented said they were given. But according to the 127 families residents that moved to Batsinda, they were “cowboyed” (kukikoboyi, hustled), through creative accounting mechanisms that left them without a home and owing money to CSR.

“Listen to this,” Alphonse grinned when I asked him how he ended up in Batsinda:

“[…] we [Kiyovu cy’abakene residents] had a lot of meetings [with the government]… we had to sign a lot of papers…but then they decided to demolish. Kid, they ripped me off (sha baduhenze)!… so my house for example, they offered me Rwf 300,030 (about $500 in 2008) in compensation, you can’t buy anything with that! Then caisse sociale told me, they said ‘you can go to Batsinda and we will loan you the 3.5 million francs to pay us back for your home there’!”

Alphonse was now struggling to speak through his laughter: “you get it? (wamvise neza?)” He drove the punchline home: “They demolished my home, took my property and
instead of compensating me, I now owe them 3 million francs for what? This place
[ahantu habi, this awful place]! [more laughter]” (recorded interview 5/8/2015).

Nor is Alphonse’s case exceptional. Louise moved to Kiyovu cy’abakene from
her home in Uganda with her Rwandan husband in the 1970s. She narrated how she
ended up in Batsinda this way (in Kinyarwanda):

“We had…what… five, six houses? We started building in the 1970s and if we had
money we would build another house to rent, and another like that. Then my husband
died…So anyway [none rero] after the war they said they were going to move all of
Kiyovu…they wrote my compensation down. My file was naked (ni ubusa)! They left all
my property out. They said ‘there is another house, in Batsinda’ just this one! But now
listen: the compensation they offered me was 1 million francs, for all my property, and
this house? They wanted 3.5 million francs [laughter], so now [ubu rero] well you get it!”
(recorded interview 8/2/2015).

The hustle, as Noella, Louise, Alphonse and many of their neighbors described it,
was a scheme in which CSR played both sides of the dispossession and relocation
processes while unloading “fake” homes on people who did not want them. CSR took a
cut every step of the way, getting their hands on prime real estate and a new debt
portfolio without, in many instances, paying any actual costs.

Many researchers have pointed out that the Kiyovu cy’abakene demolitions were
land grabs that violated both international and national habitat laws robbing thousands of
families’ rights to shelter (see Huggins 2014; Manirakiza 2014a, 2016). But consider the
mayor’s alternative: she follows the law, lets the injunction run its course, and Kiyovu
residents are successful in their challenge to the ombudsman. Any resident would be able
to employ similar tactics of delay whenever they were threatened with eviction. Political
scientist Thomas Goodfellow (2014, 2016) offers an alternative reading of these events. For him, the resolute bulldozing of the city center is an example of the ruling party’s capacity to act effectively without being paralyzed by the micro and insurgent politics that residents in other cities use to block state threats of violence. Goodfellow calls this capacity to get things done “Rwanda’s political settlement.”

Goodfellow points out that Kigali’s municipality does operate differently from other cities in the region. In Kampala or Nairobi, for example, a building can be knocked down here and there, but demolishing an entire neighborhood or market would be career suicide for any municipal level politician. Goodfellow is agnostic about the actual impacts of demolition. The point, is that it actually happened. As he limits his analysis to Rwandan ruling party officials, and identifies RPF as the source of this transformation, however, Goodfellow misses the most significant implication of his observations.

Rwanda’s “political settlement,” in which the state can demolish entire neighborhoods, force residents into homes they do not want, and parastatals can make a profit without political consequences, is not limited to the internal structures of the ruling party and an iron-willed determination to achieve its goals. It is the result of exogenous transformations in global policy and finance. What the RPF has done is position Kigali at the vanguard of experiments in city management and environmental design that respond effectively to insurgent politics. There is nothing specifically “Rwandan” about these

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16 To be sure Goodfellow’s research is limited to interviews with a handful of ruling party officials. His inability to communicate in Kinyarwanda and his apparent willingness to accept official accounts of events without fact checking has led to some awkward empirical errors in his published work.
processes. The mayor followed a scripted response for land acquisition that is also being tested in Delhi (Ghertner 2015), Singapore (Ong 2011), and Bangalore (Goldman 2011): invoke the state’s eminent domain, suspend the law and take what you can to sell on the international real estate market. This leads to the final institution that the Kiyovu evictions activated: expropriation law.

The mayor justified an otherwise illegal eviction by invoking expropriation and leveraging the state’s eminent domain in order seize property for the “public interest.” Except “the public” as Kigali’s managers saw it, was a far cry from anything Michael Warner or Jürgen Habermas writes about. In a (2014) USAID report, Rwandan academics Ikirkezi et al show through detailed interviews with CSR (now RSSB) and city officials that the 2008 evictions were for the “public” interests of future foreign investors that the city hoped would come and build new downtown structures over the old neighborhood (see Ikirezi et al 2014). The mayor, in partnership with CSR had repurposed the very law meant to build infrastructure and leisure spaces for workers, converting collective property into real estate that could be sold off to foreign investors by the pension fund. This process of leveraging laws previously designed to protect the state against capital in the service of finance, resolves the municipality’s financial shortfalls by using the state as a real estate holding corporation. All of this raises the question that is being asked—repeatedly—in contemporary urban theory. If insurgent politics are no longer effective in cities like Kigali, what, if any, are the political
possibilities for claims-making in a new era of demolition and eviction (see also Ammad 2011; de Boeck forthcoming; Ghertner 2015; Harms 2014, 2015)?

One thing is certain. The “shout and demand for the right to the city” that rose from voices of workers and students in 1968 Paris (Lefebvre [1972] year, now falls on deaf ears. Speculative urbanism generates surplus value by converting land into real estate, not labor-time into commodities. The workers can scream in the streets all they want, capital no longer needs to keep them in the factory. Furthermore, expropriation, the key governing tool for speculative urbanism, suspends the law and any democratic institutions that insurgent politics can creatively exploit. Drawing on Agamben (2005), Goldman argues that expropriation in its contemporary iteration reduces city residents to “‘bare life’, no longer covered by legal or civil rights that once guaranteed them some access to the city and its resources” (2011: 577). This is certainly true from a policy perspective. Still, it has been some time since urban politics depended on formal claims to rights within the law (see chapter 3; Appadurai and Holston 1999). And how can we be sure that there are no other forms of political subjectivity in the city without the voices of Bangalore residents confirming that they really are living a bare life? While he writes from a very different, sometimes celebratory perspective, Goodfellow’s conclusion is akin to Swingedouw’s (2009) “post-political, post-democratic condition.” For Goodfellow, the absence of visible opposition to the Master Plan is evidence of widespread consensus for expropriation in Kigali. He calls this “Rwanda’s Political Settlement,” a depoliticized contract between the city and the state to get things done (see
also Goodfellow 2016). But if this is the case than why has the city’s speculative
government only produced empty lots and high-risk real estate ventures? Residents like
Thérése and Aimée (see above) might feel terrorized by the plan, but they are far from
compliant, and reverse the city’s marketing narrative by insisting what was done to them
was “war” and “genocide.” Consider the words of a more diplomatic evictee. Habimana
is a former Kiyovu cy’abakene resident, a genocide survivor and ardent supporter of the
RPF: “Okay (using the French bon). I agree that our houses were old and not what the
government wanted to see in the city. But at least they could have built something there.
Now it is just a wasteland” (ni amatongo gusa) (recorded interview 2/13/2015)

In the Kiyovu cy’abakene evictions, the mayor demonstrated a newfound zero
tolerance approach to popular politics, solving the problems that threaten to stop the
conversion of “slums” into valuable real estate. And the city received the global attention
that was supposed to bring in outside investment. At the end of 2008, the City of Kigali
received the UN Habitat Scroll of honor award for its “slum reduction” program. UN
Habitat recognized the Kiyovu demolitions as an example “beautifying the city” and
“eviction with a human face” (UN Habitat 2008:2-3) and the organization rewarded the
Rwandan mayor with a top post: deputy director (a post she holds at the time of writing).
But in the process of “solving” the political and financial limits created by three
generations of unregulated urban growth, the Kigali Model displaced the politics of
unregulated urbanism into a field of urban aesthetics.
Figure 1 Satellite photos of Kiyovu cy'abakene 2000 (above) and 2014 (below) Source: Google Earth
Figure 2 Kimicanga 2010 (above) and 2014 (below) source Google Earth
2.3 Conclusion

Three years after the successful Kiyovu cy’abakene evictions, Kimicanga was erased from Kigali’s surface. The massive eviction of thousands of families (see figure 2 above) took two phases over twelve months between 2011 and 2012. Kimicanga residents went more quietly than their neighbors. This time, there was no relocation experiment. Kimicanga residents were compensated with cash and sent packing to wherever they could afford to relocate. They were paid at the lowest possible rates for their property listed in Rwanda’s new (2014) expropriation law—a law written ex-post-facto to justify the Kiyovu cy’abakene evictions. No injunctions were filed, no rocks were thrown, and nobody tried to negotiate a higher payout. Most residents even took down their own houses so that they could keep their bricks, roofs, poles, and gates. Was this then an example of what Harms (2014) calls state control? A surprising lack of opposition to urban dispossession and a final uptake of the city’s plan?

“No! Of course we didn’t want to go!” Didier laughed when I asked. “Why would anyone want to leave?” he asked rhetorically “it was a loss (ni igihombo, economic loss).” Still, when Didier received his demolition notice in 2012 he quietly accepted what he believed to be inadequate compensation and moved across the road with many of his neighbors to Kosovo. One year later, the illegal house he built there was destroyed in a mudslide. Now he was living in an akajagari neighborhood directly above his former

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home. I had to ask: “If you were not happy with what you got paid, why not use the law and challenge your compensation?”

Didier winced and waved my naivety away: “Ni amagambo gusa” (“That [The law] is just words.”). “But,” he continued, “let me tell you (ariko reka ndakubwire). In Kiyovu they rejected (baranga) their compensation, they refused to leave. The state (Leta) just came at them, you know (urumva)? At least we got to keep our furniture” (2/18/2015).

Didier and most of his neighbors took their illegal building materials and built more akajagari in Kigali while the pension fund waited for international investors. Many echoed Didier and said that being moved away from the city center was certainly a loss: they were further from the city, its jobs, and resources. Kimicanga residents and evictees from other areas, however, did something that Kigali’s managers have yet to achieve: they re-mapped the city, stamping its space with well-known global place-brands. Instead of Singapore, they made akajagari in the wetlands across the road and called it Kosovo. They went to Sodoma in the former industrial neighborhood of Gikondo and made it a cosmopolitan nod to Accra’s famous “slum” Sodom and Gomorrah. They built up Bannyhe or “where do they piss?”—a name that forces the speaker to acknowledge municipal neglect of public infrastructure every time it is uttered. They crowded into older akajagari neighborhoods such as Dobandi (Gangsterville, from the French des bandits), N’Djamena, named after the war-torn capital of Chad, and Karabayé (It’s happening there). Hundreds of Kimicanga families joined their former neighbors from
Kiyovu cy’abakene in Batsinda, converting the former rural edge of the city and its first model housing project into a “hot” *akajagari* space that today violates nearly every building and trade code in Kigali.

Neighbors stuck with neighbors, tenants with landlords, *abanyakiyovu* with *abanyakimicanga*. Many argue that because they received so little in compensation, evictees had to relocate in a way that maintained the social equity of their previous neighborhood through physical proximity in the absence of a decent buyout. It would be tempting to conclude that the demolition of Kiyovu cy’abakene and Kimicanga were just a classic example of planners “solving” problems by only moving them around. After all, these processes echo what Engels wrote nearly a hundred and fifty years ago: “[n]o matter how different the reasons may be, the result is everywhere the same: the scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise…but they appear again immediately somewhere else” ([1887] 2000: 45). But in the process, this attempted take-over of the city center *did* achieve a radical reconfiguration of Kigali’s physical space—turning the city inside out while sending the center to the periphery. It also converted *akajagari* from a mere descriptor of urban space to a politically charged concept that now drives the multi-layered struggles over the city.

New situations, demand new politics. As I show in the following chapters, Kigali’s residents are responding to the takeover of the city center by engaging in new projects to take the streets (see chapter 2); maintain the zig-zagged space of occupancy politics. These new commitments to maintaining *akajagari* over the world-class
aesthetics of the Kigali model are more than just nostalgic poetics. These are conscious political commitments that wager on unregulated urbanism over the hi-risk, crisis-prone, speculative enterprise of global city building as both city residents and municipal authorities struggle to bring the processes of speculative urbanism and ruination under control.
3. Worlding Markets

“Markets do not lie.” - H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda

The real action in Biryogo begins before the market officially opens. Every weekday morning at sunrise, thousands of retailers of all types—illegal street vendors, wholesalers, porters, and people who just like to watch—push into every available space in the market. There is no opening bell, but shouts and insults immediately begin to fly along with wads of cash and clothes. To an outsider this scene might look something like a carnival, potentially a riot, or a potlatch of money and clothes. But this is serious business. The abashoramari—investor-wholesalers who really profit from this trade—are behind the scenes feeding stacks of cash into electronic counters in strategically located depots as 45 kg bundles of clothes move out of their storage space and into Biryogo market on the backs and heads of day laborers. Their clients, small-time wholesalers who move the contents of these bundles, stand on any available elevated space above the market crowd: perhaps a table that will be used as a vendor’s stall later in the day or a ledge in the wall around the market. They reach into their bundles with some idea of the quality of merchandise inside, pull out a shirt, trousers, or pair of jeans, give whatever comes out a good flap, and then scan the crowd for an acceptable offer.

The buyers in this situation are retailers of all types. They bid by thrusting fingers in the air indicating how many hundreds or thousands of francs they are willing to pay for an article of clothing. It never hurts to shout an insult like “umunyako, sha!” (Hey loser!),
at wholesalers to get noticed. When a wholesaler likes a bid s/he will toss whatever is on display to the buyer who throws crumpled wad of cash back. The buyer then has a few seconds to inspect the article and decide whether to keep it or toss it back for a refund. Small-time wholesalers do not have space to store surpluses. They only have four and a half hours to liquidate the thousands of articles they purchased that day limiting the time of every transaction to just a few seconds. Retailers are well aware of this, factoring the wholesaler’s need to unload their bundles as quickly as possible into their bid. Rwandans, as they often do with trade jargon, borrow a Kiswahili word for used clothes: caguwa, to choose, pick, or select. In theory anyone can participate in this trade, and many different people do. Those that bid range from abazunguzayi, illegal street vendors looking for a good deal on a couple pairs of jeans they might resell on the street that day, to the owners of hip boutiques in Kigali’s trend setting neighborhoods. But to limit the risk of this trade, you need a good eye and the ability to calculate and make decisions, or choose, quickly. Regardless of their stature, successful retailers have an encyclopedic knowledge of brands from Europe, America, Asia, and are able to assess the varying levels of fakes from a distance. Counterfeits are not necessarily a problem. There is a market for those too. But to be tricked into paying the “original” price for something that is ipiraté, (pirate) or igichinois, (Chinese) in the morning is to take a hit later in the day. These are used, and in many cases used up, clothes and accessories, discards from

17 Caguwa is the Kinyarwanda phonetic spelling adjusted to a noun. The Kiswahili verb is kachugwa.
wealthier economies in North America, Western Europe, and Asia. What determines price—what retailers are really looking for in an article—is not its value as is, but its convertibility into something else. How much work is required to make it whole or new again or perhaps less fake in order to sell it for a marginal gain?

![Image of a market scene](image)

**Figure 3 wholesale in Biryogo Market**

Biryogo market is the largest but by no means the only place with an early morning *caguwa* wholesale. A kilometer north, in Kimisagara market the shoe trade is underway. Handbags are being wholesaled down the street in Nyimirambo market.
Biryogo is, however, the only caguwa market that was made in one day: Thursday October 16th, 2014 to be exact. On that day, an attempt to save a shopping mall from foreclosure did not go as planned. Nyabugogo Market, one of the most successful centers of caguwa style and trade was left in ruins, and Biryogo opened as the new hub for caguwa.

This chapter is about refusing to become a bad copy of somewhere else. It examines the worlding of Kigali by focusing on the productions of, and interventions in, a particular urban spatial form: public (meaning state-owned) caguwa markets. I argue that the financial, commercial, and cultural practices of the caguwa trade produce spaces and identities that extend well beyond their built environments calling into question how urban informality, center-periphery relations, and global city-ness are conventionally understood. Despite their success as centers of global trade and cutting-edge fashion, Kigali’s caguwa markets are considered antithetical to the city’s development by its international team of managers, consultants, and planners. Defined in the Kigali City Master Plan as informal, these markets are targeted for demolition in order to make room for legible, iconic, built terrains such as shopping malls and high rises that announce the city’s arrival on the world stage. Even though they are written off as informal, by city planners, Biryogo, and markets like it produce billions of Rwandan francs in tax revenue for the city every month, absorb tens of thousands of jobs, and make it possible for many of the city’s inhabitants to feed and clothe their families. These spaces are often demolished at the height of their
productivity, not when they are in ruins, and replaced by costly structures at great loss to the municipality and the residents who depend on them. But despite the amount of resources that Kigali’s managers spend on demolishing public markets, they have been unsuccessful in clearing these spaces from the city’s surface.

Why is it so difficult to erase caguwa markets from Kigali’s city surface?

In exploring this question I focus on body surfaces—how Kigali residents convert secondhand to what they identify as authentic global fashion. First, I explore the history of caguwa style and its rise to prominence as a response to the 1980s global credit crisis. I then turn to merchants and the environments they work in as well as the popular culture that surround caguwa style. Drawing on Rwandan popular audio and visual culture—specifically music videos, I show that for many Rwandans, caguwa style and the spaces it produces are not just discount economies, but about refusing to be a bad copy of somewhere else. Finally, outlining the process by which these markets are reconfigured as informal by urban designers I trace the improvised and contradictory design processes that left one market in ruins, and gave birth to another. I conclude that world-class city building is itself an informal enterprise.

While the concept worlding can be traced to Heidegger (1927), its use in urban theory is more recent and rarely gestures to this earlier genealogy (although see Ong 2011). In recent writings on the city, worlding is used by theorists writing from, and about, cities in the global South in order to speak back to global cities theorists (see Robinson 2002, 2005, Roy 2009a). AbdouMaliq Simone (2001), for example, argues that
while African cities never make the list of global cities, urban residents across the continent have always used the city for operating outside of the limits of their immediate surrounds. He calls this “worlding from below:” practices that use the city to gain access to the outside world and its resources. Worlding practices, however, do not just come from “below.” Throughout much of the global South, master plans are being drawn up for cities that aspire to take their place on the world stage as global and regional hubs of trade, transport, and hi-tech information economies. Worlding at the level of design and management is about building—or at least planning—a city with “world-class” infrastructures, industries, sport facilities, and architecture. These plans often emulate recently converted world-class cities such as Singapore, Dubai, and Shanghai. Critics of world-class planning trends argue that these designs are inappropriate for cities like Kigali. They make no provisions for poorer residents, and will require the dispossession of thousands of urban and rural dwellers for their implementation (see Robinson 2002; Watson 2013; Myers 2014). But whether or not worlding at the level of design is “good” or “bad” these practices are more than just collective fantasies to be global. The drive to be world-class often leads to new institutions, laws, and radical transformations in how a city is managed and governed (see Goldman 2011). In focusing on the unplanned collision of caguwa fashion and urban design in Kigali, I seek to place both Simone’s and Roy and Ong’s concepts of worlning in a single frame of analysis. I reject the topographical distinction between worlning from “above” and “below” to highlight both projects as highly contingent and vernacular processes, aimed—in classic anthropological
terms—at converting material objects to symbolic value. What world-class design practices seek to eradicate above all, however, are the spaces and practices that global cityness is defined against: informality.

Informality is often treated as a descriptive term that catalogues spaces and practices as either unregulated or illicit (Castells and Portes 1989: 12; Hart 1973), or improvised and unplanned. Whether it is celebrated as creative resilience, or threats to urban security and order, informality is used to delineate alternative ways of organizing labor, finance, and property beyond formal governance. Many question the usefulness of informality as a concept. Economies and spaces thought to be informal at first, often turn out to be highly regulated, organized, and disciplined on closer inspection (see Guyer 2004; Hoffman 2010; Roitman 2005). Rather than making new practices and spaces visible, the concept informality often conceals the ways that formal and informal institutions interact and co-produce each other (see Mbembe and Nuttall 2008: 9; Guyer, Denzer, and Abagje 2002).

Regardless of the above debates that rarely make it into the worlds of actual city building, informality is nevertheless used by policy makers, designers, and architects. In this sense informality is a discursive practice that fixes value in some spaces while unhinging it in others, or, as Roy puts it, “[b]y demolishing slums while granting legal status to equally illegal suburban developments” (2009b:10). When planners and architects describe a place like a *caguwa* market as informal, they are not attributing any specific qualities to the area, but rather legitimizing its future demolition and sale. In
other words, the question is not whether “informality” exists, but how is informality used by certain actors, to what end, and for what license? Significantly, informality in this sense is a debate about built form, rather than content. Yet in the case of caguwa markets, the contents being sold matter as the environment that houses these commodities.

Journalists, economists, and anthropologists began writing about the global used clothes trade in the 1990s (Hansen 1994; Haggblade 1990). Trade liberalization throughout the global South and former Eastern Bloc ended tariffs on used clothing imports in many countries, while closing textile factories closed in others. Between 1980 and 1995, global used clothing exports increased six-fold from $207 million in 1980 to $1.4 billion in 1995 (Hansen 1999: 347). By 1997 the net worth of this trade reached $14 billion and is worth $55 billion today (UN 2013). Over 20 million tons of used clothes are shipped around the world every year. The directionality of this trade is also shifting. During the 1990s and early 2000s, North America and Europe were the chief sources of used clothes. Currently, however, China is the second largest exporter next to the United

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18 Rwanda is a somewhat atypical example. There has never been trade tariffs on importing used clothes, making it a smuggling center for Uganda (where secondhand clothes used to be called “Rwanda”). Other major secondhand clothing importers in the region such as Zambia, Tanzania, and Kenya had until recently tariffs to protect (often nonexistent) textile industries.

19 These statistics are from the United Nations commodity trade database and should be read as low-ball estimates. The United Nations simply compiles data as it is reported by governments which means that used clothes which are smuggled (a significant part of the trade) are not listed. Furthermore, rags, tags, and other loose ends that are also part of the used clothes trade are not listed under the worn clothing code in the UN statistics, but fall under “industrial textile rags such as wipers,” are missing from these figures. But in Kigali, as in many places, rags and tags are crucial for fixing articles before placing these on the shelf.
States, and in South Korea and United Arab Emirates’ used textile exports increase every year.

Not surprisingly donation-commodities like *caguwa* make people, at least the donors, uncomfortable. They are matter out of place: objects that blur the boundaries between gifts and commodities, altruism and entrepreneurism, the sacred act of giving and the profane pursuit of profit. Pull on any thread in the global used textile trade and you will uncover a complex web of charities, for-profits, distributors, importers, wholesalers, market vendors, smugglers, tailors, all working from various posts throughout the world. Few actors are aware of the presence of everyone else in the network giving the trade a mysterious character that popular and academic renderings tend to exploit. Journalists either highlight growing inequalities between supplier and consumer in which the latter is reduced to wearing the former’s rags (Packer 2002, Brooks 2015), or celebrate the creative resilience of third world entrepreneurs who recycle our waste and turn a profit (Planet Money 2013).

In her germinal work on the trade, Hansen (1994, 2000) argues that secondhand clothes force us to see used commodities in a new light. She traces the cultural biographies of secondhand clothes as they travel from the United States to Africa and, among other things, argues that Zambia’s demand for used clothes from the West is not about the former’s desire to imitate the latter, but created through local consumption practices. As secondhand clothes travel from the West to Africa, their meanings are converted and then reinvented anew. The used clothing trade “democratizes” (1994: 508)
fashion allowing Zambians dress for a wide range of lifestyle scripts they would otherwise not have access to. But, it is also about rejecting peripheral status. In Kigali, *caguwa* is a concept that articulates the complex relationship between legibility and authenticity that go into the process of worlding the urban fabric with dressed bodies and is equally important as a means to reject cheap counterfeit clothes manufactured specifically for African consumers. *Caguwa* gives the body a form and an identity that is neither Western, nor local, but *mpuzamuhanga*, international. In turn it produces subjects that are dislocated from rural Rwanda, commensurable to the world as an urbanite yet aesthetically different and not just a bad copy of somewhere else. And it is powerful enough to cause panic in New York.

### 3.1 Making Caguwa

There is a crime wave sweeping New York City. According to a July 7th 2014 edition of The New York Times, several Jezebel bloggers, and Facebook shamers who followed suit, the streets of New York are being littered with tens of thousands of illegal secondhand clothing collection bins. These bins block pedestrian traffic and act as magnets for graffiti, dog piss, and other unsanitary and criminal activities. No one knows who owns the clothing collection bins, but they are gobbling up the city’s sidewalks faster than municipal workers can remove them. The New York Times does know,
however, that for-profit bin owners lure clothing donors with signs promising to help the needy. The good stuff is then sold to hipster vintage stores in Brooklyn, while the rest are sold in bulk to international distributors who make their own profit by exporting donated clothes overseas. Well-known charities do the same with donated clothes. In fact, many estimate that more than eighty percent of donated clothing is exported overseas (see BBC 2015). The difference, at least according to Jim Gibbons president and CEO of Goodwill Industries International Inc., is that unauthorized collectors make profits with “a charitable veneer,” while charities distribute their gains “in a more thoughtful way throughout the community” (New York Times 2014: A15). This New York Times article is not the first exposé on the used clothing trade (See Packer 2002, NPR’s Planet Money 2013; BBC 2015). What the Times does differently, however, is force the reader to acknowledge the powerful agency of those who want our castaway fabrics: a demand so strong, it is now blocking sidewalks in New York. How, they ask, is this trade going beyond charity? And who could possibly want our cast-offs so badly that it is creating a shadow industry of for-profit donation collectors? If one starts the other way, however, and writes the story from the perspectives of those who wear it, a more complicated picture of this trade emerges.

Everyone in Kigali knows that caguwa is secondhand, but there is no stigma attached to wearing it. On the street, in minibus taxis, or anywhere in public, residents from all walks readily offer that they are wearing caguwa and will have no trouble telling you why. Enthusiasts will tell you that caguwa is original, original and authentic,
bitandukanye, different/unique, komera, good quality (strong), and mpuzamuhanga, international and worldly. Caguwa is often opposed to magazini (from the French magasin) the only new clothes widely available in the city which, despite its international origins in China and South Africa, are understood to be generic, fake, and hopelessly unhip. Caguwa also offers Kigali residents what the name promises: an array of choices to adorn their bodies and construct various urban identities. Kigali residents, however, have not always loved caguwa.

“Reka reka reka! no way!” Germaine managed to cough out, doubled over in a fit of laughter. We were sitting in his family’s two room adobe brick home in Batsinda, a housing experiment for residents recently displaced from the city center (see Chapter 4). Germaine, a musician who came of age with post-independence Kigali, (see Chapter 1) was reminiscing about the early years of igisope: a Kinyarwanda fusion of rumba, reggae, and funk that dominated Kigali’s music scene in the 1970s and 80s. I set off Germaine’s laughing fit by asking if igisope musicians wore caguwa in his day.

“Listen, (umva)” he eventually continued, trying to recover “[In the 1980s] caguwa was sold in the provinces, you know (urumva)? to abahinzi, farmers? We didn’t wear caguwa in the city, and if you did, you lied and said it was magazini, new clothes.”

I told Germaine about market traders I know who scuff up magazini counterfeits, hoping to pass these off as caguwa for a higher price.

Right (using the French bon), but magazini was different [in the 1980s]. It wasn’t fake (pirate). Magazini was made by tailors here in Kigali. They knew what they were doing and could make anything we wanted. There was quality cloth too. Urimokumva, you
know? Bellbottoms, wide collared shirts with a front pocket for your cigarettes, costumes, suit jackets, and big sunglasses. We wanted to look like Papa Wemba and James Brown (more laughter)! We had good boots too, not like santiagos (cowboy boots), but leather boots from Italy….You could buy magazini from Europe from the abarabu, [Kiswahili speaking Omani-Rwandan traders] and abahindi,[East Africans of Indian descent] in [Quartier] Commerçial, but that magazini was original, not like today. It came from Paris or Brussels, I think, not China. It was expensive too! You did not wear caguwa then, not in the city, not if you had a little cash. (amafaranga make, literally “a few francs”).

So what changed? Germaine looked up at his ceiling “sha20, ubuzima,” he sighed, “bumije guhenda, life kid, it got expensive.” Ten times more expensive in fact.

The cold war played a significant role in making the city that Germaine grew up in. In 1973, with military and financial support from the French government, then minister of defense Juvénial Habyarimana seized control of the Rwandan state in a coup d’état, ousting the country’s first democratically elected president, Gregoire Kayibanda, a supporter of the non-aligned movement, and close friend to socialist president Julius Nyerere in neighboring Tanzania. Habyarimana shifted Rwanda’s geopolitical position by establishing a one party development state, the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National Pour le Développement (MRND) (see Chapter 1). He warmly embraced pro-western Mobutu Sese Seko21 in neighboring Zaïre (present day Congo). Habryarimana joined La

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20 sha” used in this context is an informal mode of address, usually endearing but can also be used offensively to belittle someone. The closest American English equivalents are “dude,” “man” “kid,” “son,” or “bro.”

21 Mobutu Sese Seko was the American and Belgian governments’ hand-picked replacement for Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected president of the Congo whose assassination is widely believed to be the work of the CIA and the Belgian military (see Dewitt 2002). Mobutu and Habyarimana became so close that when Habyarimana’s plane was shot down on July 6, 1994, sparking Rwanda’s genocide, Mobuto managed to get Habyarimana’s body smuggled out of the country and into Zaïre where he kept it in a private mausoleum until May 1997. When it became apparent that the Rwandan Defense Forces and Congolese rebels were about to march on Kinshasa, Mobutu had the body of
Françafrique, the pro-west francophone Africa alliance. These moves were rewarded with an outpouring of development and military aid from France, the United States, and later, the World Bank. In the following years, agriculture modernization programs, funded largely by international donors gave rise to a booming coffee export industry and rapid economic expansion. During the coffee boom years the Rwandan franc held steady and then strengthened against the dollar. What this meant for Kigali residents is that the upper and middle classes could import and purchase foreign made clothes, cars, and electronics. Even struggling musicians like Germaine could purchase *magazini* to maintain his style.

As the economy grew, so did Kigali. People and things from Kinshasa, the Kivus, and Paris populated the city bringing with them new sounds and fashions. By the late-1970s Kiyovu cy’abakene, (Poor-Kiyovu), and Kimicanga (See chapter 1 and Chapter 4) had grown from peripheral outposts to thriving cosmopolitan centers of urban culture, music, and fashion. Kigali had entered the world. Then, as Germaine says, life did become very expensive, and the world suddenly left Kigali.

In the summer of 1989, the global coffee price crashed and took the Rwandan franc with it. In 1990, the same year that the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) invaded from Uganda, national income from coffee exports dropped from $144 million to just $30

Habyarimana (who was Catholic) cremated in a Hindu ceremony so that his former friend’s body would not be desecrated when the city fell (see French 1997).
million (Mamdani 2001: 149; Uvin 1996: 11). By 1991, the Rwandan franc had lost 67% of its value. Import prices, such as petroleum skyrocketed, increasing 7 fold, while other commodities such as imported fabric simply disappeared from the city. As discussed in chapter 1 above, the currency crash, the outpouring of development aid to a militarized regime, structural adjustment, and the mismanagement of Rwanda’s economy cannot explain the 1994 genocide—no single event or process can. These processes did, however, create many of the necessary political and economic conditions for ideologically motivated mass violence: staggering unemployment, rural famine, and a government that needed a scapegoat population to blame for its economic failures.

Many long term Kigali residents, however, remember this moment as an evacuation of the world from the city. Indian and Omani traders left for Tanzania, or for “homelands” they had never been to. The business districts of Quartiers Mateo and Commercial were emptied out of commodities that Rwandan francs could no longer purchase. Congolese migrant workers, no strangers to war, returned home to Zaïre which, despite its own troubles, suddenly appeared safer than Rwanda. Rumba, reggae, igisope, and R&B disappeared from the airwaves as Radio Rwanda and RTLM went into full time, state-sponsored anti-RPF and anti-Tutsi propaganda. Rwandans themselves deserted the city in mass. Many walked away to wait out the war, making two week
journeys on foot to Burundi and Zaïre (See chapter 1)\textsuperscript{22}. Others left to escape ethnic violence, later the 1994 genocide, and finally, to flee the RPF’s advance from the north. Several well-known accounts by RPF officials describe the city as eerily deserted when they marched on Kigali in July 1994 (See Mamdani 2001, Gourevitch 1998; Goodfellow and Smith 2013)\textsuperscript{23}.

The city did not stay empty for long. When the RPF took Kigali in July 1994, the children of “old caseload” Rwandan refugees from the violence of 1959 and 1972, and “new caseload” Refugees from the civil war and genocide began to flood into Rwanda from Uganda, Congo, Kenya, and Tanzania. These were Rwandans that were born in Nairobi, Kampala, Dar es Salaam, Goma, and Bakavu and they brought new fashions and music with them. The final wave of refugees were later forced back into Rwanda when the RPF’s military, reorganized as the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) invaded Zaïre in 1996 and 1997, attacking refugee camps and chasing Rwandans back across the border. Post-war famine and several years of continued violence and war in the provinces sent rural migrants into Kigali in search of imibereho (a living/existence/job) and Kigali’s markets and business districts became packed with traders searching for, what many who were previously farmers, refugees, and students, remember simply as “ubuzima

\textsuperscript{22} As discussed in the introduction and chapter one, the genocide studies perspective that saturates writing on Rwanda has reduced the country’s sociological profile to perpetrators, victims, and heroes. Little attention has been paid to the majority of Rwandans from all ethnicities, class, and descent who chose not to participate in the genocide at all. They have no “genocide story” and for this reason are often ignored by journalists and researchers searching for testimonies of violence. Much of the population, however, were not perpetrators, victims or heroes. They just—quite literally—walked away, refusing to have anything to do with the war or genocide.  

\textsuperscript{23} The most accepted estimate is that there were about 50,000 people (from over 268,000 in 1991) left in the city on July 4 1994
bushyashya, the new life.” While Kigali eventually recovered from the genocide, the Rwandan franc never did.

By the late 1990s, shops in the once prestigious Quartier Commercial were full of commodities again, only these were different from the magazini that Germaine remembers. Thanks to its inflated currency, Rwanda, like many other countries in Africa, had become a post-cold war dumping ground for cheap and fake surpluses from new manufacturing centers in Asia and Eastern Europe.24,25

New situations demand new styles. Thanks to the end of the cold war which brought with it the end of trade tariffs on many commodities, the global secondhand clothes trade expanded while the Rwandan franc collapsed. Caguwa, in more styles and better quality provided an antidote for the cheap, mass produced counterfeits flooding the city’s shops after 1994. The pre-war caguwa that Germaine remembers are still part of the trade, but by the late 1990s, nearly new or first-quality caguwa appeared in Kigali’s shops and markets to compete with cheap counterfeits. Specific brands from Levis to Hugo Boss to Timberlands were also available. A novel logic of pricing, categorizing, and naming surfaced on Kigali’s streets and markets to tame the uncertainty and risk that came with cheap and fraudulent imports and the newfound aesthetics of used clothes. The

25 Writing about similar events in Nigeria, Jane Guyer shows how the 1986 naira crash altered both material life and the logics of exchange in Ibadan. Urban populations were suddenly presented with “a new consumer situation: totally new goods…goods labeled in Chinese, Russian, and other languages that even a widely traveled population might have no expertise to decipher” (2004:85).
value of *Caguwa* and *magazini* flipped as the former was no longer the preserve of the rural poor and the latter could be counted upon to be a cheap reminder of Kigali’s new place-in-the-world as a dumping ground for cheap surplus.

Elevated in value and prestige, demand for *caguwa* increased. Kigali now imports over 26 million kilograms of used clothing every year (UN 2014). The city is bursting at the seams with *caguwa* covering nearly every surface from bodies, to overflowing clothing boutiques, market stalls, the arms of *abazunguzayi*, to the shops of tailors and shoemakers charged with fixing and redesigning *caguwa*. While Kigali is by no means the largest importer of used clothing in Africa, the desires and practices that make used clothing more valuable than new in the city help answer the questions raised by the *New York Times*. Used clothing bins in places like New York City provide the raw materials for people who live in cities like Kigali to reject their assigned place-in-the-world. The process of making *caguwa* inverts the relationship between center and periphery in which African cities are extracting raw materials from the United States, Europe, and Asia, and in the process transforming these into a worldly, urban aesthetic.

### 3.2 Putting the Body Together

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26 More than 20 kilograms per inhabitant per year. This figure, however, only includes the taxed and reported *caguwa* imports. Many traders in the *caguwa* business estimate that half of what makes its ways onto Kigali’s streets are smuggled and therefore unaccounted for in official statistics.
Dressed bodies speak, albeit through non-verbal channels. In Kigali the stakes are high in the labor of caguwa consumption. Conform too much to any one culture industry, American hip-hop style for example, and you will be called out for kwibesha, to be a wannabe or poser, (the self-reflexive verb to lie, literally with one’s self). Over-do individualism and you will send out short signals that could get you branded as an umuturage, 27 a peasant with no fashion sense or brand knowledge. The point, as with fashion everywhere, is to wear imyenda y’ ibigezweho, 28 the latest brands and styles, without looking like anyone else. Caguwa style is often irreverent, confronting dress codes and gender norms, but it can also be extremely formulaic in order to conform to a particular space or lifestyle script. Caguwa retailers, individuals who cater to micro-publics, purchase their wares based on these principles. A pair of shoes might be a fashionable brand, like Adidas, but that does not guarantee someone will buy them. A customer will, however, want that pair of Adidas: the black shell-tops, with the hunter orange stripes, and the white skull and crossbones on the toes, simultaneously a worldly, well-known brand, and different from all of the others on the street.

While actual practices are much more varied, there are scripts for what to wear, why, and in which space. Want to mix poolside with the expatriate crowd at Kigali’s five-star Milles Collines or Serena Hotel? You better have the wardrobe of a “boss:” an

27 To call someone umuturage is only pejorative in a particular context, usually urban vernacular. It is similar to calling someone a peasant or a common person. In most contexts the word is neutral and simply means rural dweller, or can also mean “the ordinary people” in a populist sense.
28 A literal translation of ibigezweho would be “things that have just arrived”
Italian suit, or at least a button down with cufflinks implying that you were wearing a suit at your legitimate job earlier in the day. The ideal women’s fashion in high-end spaces is also constricted to elegant but respectably conservative: one piece dresses and pant suits, scarves and shawls covering shoulders. Hang out with abasitari, hipsters, abanigazi, hip-hop heads in Nyamirambo, or Rastas in Muhima and it would be better to wear skinny jeans, a pair of Chuck Taylors and thick-rimmed glasses. Alternatively, dreads with baggy shorts, and a tank top under an open US army shirt would do. While brightly colored skinny jeans, tank tops, spaghetti strap tops, and miniskirts are the standard women’s wear in these spaces, some are also using caguwa to queer the city’s gender norms: American baseball caps, aviator sunglasses, oversized t-shirts, and baggy jeans with the legs tucked in behind the tongues of unlaced boots—a look celebrated by Nyamirambo rapper Young Grace in her (2013) music video “Like a Boy.” (see Figure 1). Of course, dress codes that are articulated verbally are not nearly as neat in practice. Abasitari often ironically incorporate boss signs into their outfits: bow ties and blazers over t-shirts, while women mix men’s and women’s fashion to produce hybrid looks.
It would be tempting to read *caguwa* fashion through the lens of cultural appropriation. After all, the fashions described above are recognizable to anyone from New York, Shanghai, or Paris. Isn’t this really just about performing a desperate fantasy to access these places (see Weiss 2009)? This type of interpretation, however, misses the point made by the many residents who wear *caguwa* themselves. Kigali’s *caguwa* style is not about mimicking the west or anywhere else. *Caguwa* is valued because it provides consumers with clothes that are simultaneously definitive of urban life everywhere and unique to those who wear it. It is about making a place “in the less and less rarefied
international field of cultural production” (Luvaas 2012:4), and above all else, constructing an urban identity that is *mpuzamuhanga*, and *originali*, international and authentic; simultaneously legible in a global field but not just a bad copy of somewhere else.

But since dress is a non-verbal mode of communication, one cannot get at the substance of style by simply speaking to wearers.

*Caguwa* fashion, or *ibigezeweho* mediates an ongoing conversation between the street and the screen, persistently creating and remaking Kigali’s city-ness. Kigali’s culture industries flood the city with low budget music videos that circulate through various publics weaving the urban fabric into barbershops, minibus taxis, and street-side “studios.” Caguwa enthusiasts, however, are not just passive receptors of culture industries. The fashion conversation often moves the other way. For example, the 2014 hit “*Caguwa*,” a collaboration between rapper Jay Polly and the R&B trio Urban Boyz, elevates the city’s love for *caguwa* to a young man’s love for a woman. The song’s lyrics are not about clothes, but play with *caguwa*’s double meaning, using the word literally “to choose,” in one line, while in the next, likening the woman they are singing to secondhand clothing, because she, like *caguwa* is unique, she is different from all the rest:

*ndakumenyesha ko uri caguwa*, I have always known that you are *caguwa* [repeat].

*Ndagucaguye mu bandi barora*, I would choose you from all the others [using *caguwa* literally, in creolized version of the Kiswahili, *Ndagucaguye*, I choose you].

*Uri caguwa, uratandukanye, wandutiye benshi caguwa!* You are caguwa, [metaphorically, using
the noun caguwa clothes] you are different/unique; you stand out above the others, caguwa!

Uri nta magazini caguwa, wowe caguwa, ni wowe caguwa, caguwa! You are not magazini [new, counterfeit clothes] you are caguwa, it is you! caguwa!

In the video, Jay Polly and the Urban Boyz wear clothes purchased in caguwa markets but originated in every corner of the world: a Chicano Bulls sweatshirt, itself a DIY rip-off of the Chicago Bulls logo, Japanese t-shirts in kanji. The musicians in the video, however, do not just put these clothes on, but rework them into identities that are recognizably urban (see figure 3). Just like caguwa on the streets, the musicians, and dancers in “Caguwa” convert a hodgepodge of international brands, cuts, and fashions from all over the world into color-coordinated, individual styles that are, like the woman they are singing to, different from the others.
Not all secondhand clothes are *caguwa ibygezweho*. A persistent theme in *caguwa* style and Kigali’s pop cultures is the tension between the country and the city. Before June 2013, the phrase “*kanda amazi,*” (literally “to push/squeeze water”) would have sounded like gobbledygook to anyone except of a handful of young people in Nyamirambo. By the end of that month, however, *kanda amazi*, slang for “Let’s drink! (to get drunk)” was being used by everyone: men, women, old, and young. The source of the phrase is arguably the most popular Kinyarwanda song of 2013, “[Kanda Amazi. ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXJGlsB6yME)” The song’s lyrics, which tell the story of a man’s fall from grace to the depths of alcoholism
are sung, and received, ironically. When it is played in a bar, patrons down their drinks, order another round, and clink their glasses shouting “kanda amazi!”

While none of the musicians who appear in “Kanda Amazi” wrote the song, it is a star-studded cast called the Kina All Stars: celebrity rapper Jay Polly, the pop duo Dream Boyz, R&B singer Knowless, and rapper/singer Tom Close. Rather than appearing in their signature styles, however, each musician is dressed in third (lowest) quality used clothes. Jay Polly, known for setting footwear and leather trends, wears a worn down purple windbreaker, a frayed grey cap with a visor that advertises a fly-fishing shop, and a pair of stained, baggy white trousers. The Dream Boyz’ MTZ wears a tank-top, cut off jean shorts, while the other dream boy, Patini wears a pink knit sweater with a single stripe of white snow-flakes running through the center, a winter hat and slacks with one leg ripped off at the knee. Knowless, known for her elaborate hairstyles, has a plain head-wrap, frayed at the edges, a black blouse printed with European city names, and a worn ibitenge, a single cloth held together by another wrapped around her waist. Tom Close, who plays the song’s alcoholic protagonist, wears an old and frayed jacket that once belonged to a three piece suit over an equally worn v-neck sports jersey, dusty trousers that are several inches too big at the waist, yet fall short of covering his bare ankles.

Putting the city together begins with putting the body together. In “Kanda Amazi,” the Kina All Stars mock the drinking habits, dance moves, and fashion sense of
The video achieves aesthetically what no engineer or planner can do concretely: it draws the line between the country and the city, and it does this by using the former to define the latter. Filmed in Kigali, the city’s other is summoned with body surfaces that say “rural.”

Figure 6: The Kina All Stars Performing the Rural in Kanda Amazi

In his (2014) music video “Ni Danger” Danny Vumbi pushes this line further. The boundary between the country and the city also separates modernity from tradition, and the local from the global. The story about a young man from Nyamirambo, or as Vumbi calls it “muri, (in the) ghetto,” who wishes to marry his girlfriend. After a few shots of

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29 It is worth noting that there was no uproar from rural Rwandans about the obviously pejorative stereotyping in the video. In fact, the song and video are as popular in small town rural areas outside the city as in Kigali.
Nyamirambo, the music video takes viewers to a familiar scene: *gusaba*, a bride wealth ceremony in rural Rwanda.

The two *abavuguzi*, spokesmen, for Vumbi’s protagonist are Nyamirambo *abasitari* dressed in the height of *caguwa* fashion. They look obviously out of place as they face elders in a rural *gusaba* ceremony\(^{30}\). One wears a black bucket hat, horn-rimmed sunglasses, a brown button-down shirt with purple paisley, a pink scarf around his neck, and black jeans above grey Italian designer boots. The other spokesman, has a backward baseball cap, thick-rimmed glasses, a purple and black plaid shirt open over a white v-neck t-shirt, baggy jeans that hang down to his Converse Chuck Taylors. The first *umuvuguzi*’s narrative is like *caguwa* itself: a Kinyarwanda vernacular specific to Kigali, but made with English, French, Kiswahili, and Kinyarwanda neologisms that matches his outfit. “*Uyu mujama akunda umubabi wanyu*, this dude here, he is in love with your baby, right” he begins. “*Twatuye muri ghetto, aha umwana na hirya si namubona twamufasha*, we are from the ghetto where I first saw your daughter, and we picked her up. *Murabona ko turi kumyako*, you can see now that we are cool/hip together. In the next verse, Vumbi gives the Elder’s response: “*sinzi niba ibyo uvuze ni iKinyarwanda*, I do not know if you are even speaking Kinyarwanda, *agahubwo atagire umuco karakika*, but you have definitely thrown away your culture/tradition. *Sinzi ko ndamenya icyo ushaka*, I have no idea what you are even asking for! *Kuyoka, kumwako,*

\(^{30}\) This scene is meant to represent the rural but is actually shot in Nyamirambo
"ibyo ni biki?, to be “cool,” “hip,” what are these things? Umujama, umubaby reka
sinshoyobwe we, a dude? a baby? C’mon! These things don’t exist… musubira iwanyu,
go back home/to wherever you came from.”

Figure 7: Abasitari Style in Danny Vumbi’s "Ni Danger"

“Ni Danger,” like “Kanda Amazi,” was a smash hit a week after it was set loose
on the streets. Also, like “Kanda Amazi” it is sung and received ironically. Rather than
lamenting a lost culture, the song celebrates the knowledge and worldliness of Kigali’s
urbanites—knowledge that villagers apparently not have access to. Still, a particular idea
about the rural is necessary to uphold an equally specific idea of what the city is. In both
“Kanda Amazi” and “Ni Danger,” clothing is put to work to define what the city is and what it is not. This does not to keep rural Rwanda out of city, but smuggles the village back in, while folding it into the urban fabric as a necessary component of Kigali’s city-ness.

In focusing on these processes I do not wish to celebrate caguwa style—essentially a hyper-capitalist mode of self-making through consumption—but to demonstrate why it is valued in Kigali. Unlike Indonesian punk rockers who Luvaas (2012) writes about, Kigali’s caguwa wearers are not self-consciously DIYers. Yet, the DIY ethos that emerges in Luvaas’ ethnography is helpful for understanding why Kigali residents value secondhand fashion. DIY punk rock rejects one component of capitalism—alienated labor (do-it-yourself!)—while simultaneously reproducing the neoliberal logic of individual responsibility. Kigali’s caguwa culture, on the other hand has no anti-capitalist ethos, and is complicit—embraces even—processes that reproduce capital, not to mention commodify bodies (as in the video “Caguwa”). And yet, caguwa style allows Kigali residents to reject their assigned place-in-the-world as a neoliberal dumping ground for cheap counterfeit surplus goods from new centers of manufacturing. Just as Marx needed his coat to gain access to the British library where he unpacked the commodity fetish, (Stallybrass 1998), Kigali residents need second hand clothes to reject the “counterfeit modernity” (to misuse Comaroff and Comaroff 2006) that has been assigned to their city.
I was hanging out with Georges, the manager at JBP imports in one of his depots, for months before Nyabugogo Market closed “We buy secondhand, we sell caguwa,” he explained, using the English “secondhand,” nicely summing up the conversion process. We were standing in a concrete room in quartier Mateo, one of Kigali’s oldest commercial districts. Bundles of caguwa were stacked throughout the room on wooden shipping crates. They were arranged according to three origins: United States, Belgium, and China. Georges explained to me how they make their money.

Georges works for one of over a hundred caguwa importing companies in Kigali. They have two depots and import, on average, 10 maritime shipping containers of secondhand clothes every month. Each container has 540 amabaro, 45 kilogram bundles of used clothes. Used textile bundles are priced on a grading system based on condition of the clothes. Georges orders a mix of hi-grade (like new), medium, low-grade, and counterfeits to meet the variety of demand in Rwanda. You can add on premium bundles, like-new name brands, for an extra charge. Georges is well aware of the distribution competition in North America, Asia, and Europe and is not shy about demanding credit and threatening to take his business elsewhere when he receives a “bad” bundle, not as
advertised. They order in dollars and sell in Rwandan francs. When the franc makes one of its common nose-dives against the dollar, they raise their prices.

It takes about a month for a shipping container of secondhand clothes to make it to Kigali from New Jersey or Shanghai via Dar es Salaam. If they can weather the time and risks, however, payouts can be substantive. One bundle of a particularly hot item—medium grade second-hand jeans, for example—can cost JPB around $145 in purchase, transportation, import tax, and labor costs. It sells for around Rwf 250,000, or $357 at current exchange rates to a small-time wholesaler. A skilled wholesaler can then take the bundle to one of the early morning wholesales and on a good day make 500,000 francs selling individual articles to retailers. Why not vertically integrate imports and sell directly in Nyabugogo for a higher profit? The problem, Georges explained, is time and risk. Once a sealed bundle leaves his office, there is no guarantee that its contents will sell in the market, or that profits will be returned in four hours, or ever. In passing a bundle off to a smalltime wholesaler for less than its market value, Georges is also dumping the risk of a volatile local market onto his client while still making a respectable profit. As the bundle is disaggregated into individual articles, gains become smaller, risks greater, and more actors enter the trade.

After articles are purchased in Biryogo’s early morning wholesale, they travel across the street where former residential areas have been taken over by sewing cooperatives. Thousands of abadozi, tailors are busy at work hunched over push pump sewing machines and coal irons, with stacks of replacement patches and labels at their
feet, taking orders from various retailers, mending holes, working out stains, and switching out brand name tags. A good umudozi can take a shirt with years of wear and convert it into a new-looking product in just a few minutes. In Kimisagara market hundreds of shoe workers are packed in next to the wholesale and retail areas, resoling, gluing, touching up, and polishing caguwa shoes. These are by and large self-employed workers. A tailor or shoe worker can make between 3,000 and 5,000 francs on a good day ($3-$7), but of course nothing during a bad day or week. After they have been transformed, cleaned, fixed, ironed, and polished caguwa are sent out into the city to populate market stalls, boutiques, and the arms of illegal street traders, more independent operators who all work to unload their merchandise as quickly as possible.

Final prices are not necessarily low. While a t-shirt can sell between $0.75 and $2, fashionable items—a pair of good condition Converse, or an Armani button down shirt for example—will cost as much, if not more, than a new version of the same design in New York. To be sure, part of the final price is determined in the long chain of independent operators, each making a gain in transporting, disaggregating, fixing, and finally selling these articles, hedging their bets on the uncertain temporality of wageless work. But where quality, value, and desire come together in a final price, is in the process that Georges identifies as the source of his income: converting “secondhand,” waste from one economy to caguwa, desirable commodity with meaning in another. Georges, and everyone else caught up in the caguwa trade, make gains by situating themselves at particular thresholds of exchange and transformation. But converting secondhand to
caguwa is not simply a process of moving these objects from used clothes bins in New York to market stalls in Kigali. Georges makes his money through what Bourdieu calls the “social alchemy” of transforming economic capital to symbolic value (cited in Guyer 2004:33), or as Georges puts it, buying second hand from one sphere and selling it as caguwa in another.

Anthropologists have always been interested in how things generate value (in whatever form) as they travel as gifts and commodities (see Appadurai 1986; Bohannan 1955; Guyer 2004; Hansen 2000; Kropytoff 1986; Malinowski [1927]1961; Mauss [1923]1990; Strathern 1988). The focus is usually the object itself, and the relations that are made in circulation. Munn (1986:9) however, reminds us that circulation does more than link people to places and things, but “constructs” space-time itself. Munn focuses on gifts as non-alienated forms of exchange. Gifts generate intersubjective spaces through the processes of giving, receiving and produce temporal extensions of pasts and futures as objects that are remembered and anticipated. Her observations, however, are useful for understanding how converting secondhand to caguwa does more than transform waste to symbolic value (c.f. Hansen 2000; Guyer 2004), it makes the city itself. When Georges receives a shipment of secondhand clothes sending bundles of caguwa into circulation he is setting in motion an endless conversion process that threads the city’s wholesale markets, sewing cooperatives, market stalls, streets, shops, bodies, television, computer, and cell phone screens, as well as the desires, identities, and imaginaries of city residents together into an urban fabric that, however complex, is nevertheless legible to Kigali
residents as “the city.” And, like fashion everywhere, the caguwa trade extends into the future. Fashion survives by relentlessly producing the new. Wearers and sellers must always anticipate the next style, fashion, or brand, and be ready to reinvent their corporeal surfaces. While city authorities may be able to threaten a particular built space that is crucial in the caguwa trade, they have no control over the global networks, practices, and desires that go into producing those spaces.

3.4 A Real Market?

“Nyabugogo,” Pascale liked to say from the balcony of the Mashirahamwe where he, Manzi and I would go to drink kambuca watch the crowds, and unwind after the market closed, “ni mpuzamuhanga,” (Nyabugogo is international). It would be difficult to disagree with him. Trucks and buses from Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya, the Congo and Burundi drop people and things from all over the world into Nyabugogo day and night. Kinyarwanda, Lingala, Kiswahili, Luganda, French and English are all spoken in the area while global brands are always on display.

Nyabugogo market was built in 1977 in what was then a swamp on the outskirts of Kigali. It remained a peripheral market on the edge of the city until the early 2000s when it became the transportation and commercial center of Kigali, around the same time

31 A slightly fermented East African-Chinese fusion of tea, ginger, honey, sugar, and various herbs, not to be confused with the raw food health drink by the same name in the United States.
that Manzi and Pascale started selling *caguwa*. Manzi was fourteen when the RPF marched on Kigali. He had been hiding in the forests with his mother outside his hometown in Nyanza for three months, after Interhamwe (youth militias responsible for most of the killing during the 1994 genocide) killed his father and sister. When word spread that the RPF had secured Kigali, Manzi headed to the city. He needed a job. Pascale had fled the RPF with his family across the border into Zaïre and ended up in a refugee camp in Bakavu until 1997 when he, two years younger than Manzi also made the trip to Kigali in search of work. They both ended up working Kigali’s streets as *abazunguzayi*, first selling snacks, then graduating to *caguwa*. In 2000, the municipality started its campaign against street traders (see chapter 3), and, after a couple of stints in the infamous “containers,” both Manzi and Pascale decided to join the traders moving to Nyabugogo where they became best friends and business partners, joined Cocomanya, the market cooperative. Then, in 2004, when Kigali City Council closed the central market and bus station in an effort to clear the city of informality. Pascale and Manzi found themselves selling from the hottest real estate in the new city center (see chapter 3). Rather than demolishing Nyabugogo, the city converted it into a source of tax revenue. Cocomanya was incorporated into the government’s Cooperative Association and used to collect taxes, market rents, and cleaning fees. With 5000 *caguwa* traders operating 3000 plots, the market became the most productive in the city.

Most people and things enter Kigali at Nyabugogo’s bus and taxi-park where international and regional bus lines discharge crowds of people and things from all over.
the world into Kigali’s streets. You do not walk in Nyabugogo, you *katakata*, zigzag, through dense crowds of pedestrians, minibuses, motorcycle taxis, and *abazunguzayi*. Push your way across Boulevard de Nyabugogo: a four lane perennial traffic jam that utterly fails in its function to separate the market from the taxi-park and you will hit The Marathon. This is a one kilometer stretch where hundreds of *abazunguzayi* hustle to catch shoppers with discounted merchandise before they enter the market. Frequent police raids send *abazunguzayi* running through the crowds of vendors and shoppers who cheer them on as they try to escape a bribe or (much worse) a stint in Kigali’s infamous Gikondo detention center (see chapter 3). Somewhere near the top, Marathon bleeds into the official clothes market where a handrail, a long brick wall and tin roofs are the only standing traces of long abandoned attempts to contain this space.

Nyabugogo market swallowed every attempt to discipline it through design. Areas that were once built to serve as walkways would be immediately rented out and colonized by the *caguwa* trade. Annexes, built one day to catch overflow disappeared under bundles of clothes and crowds of people the next. Yet despite its appearance, Nyabugogo was highly organized, and internally regulated. It was divided into six administrative zones. Each zone had 500-1000 vendors, loosely organized on the type of clothes sold there. Every zone was under the supervision of a chef, an elected senior trader who makes sure each parcel is up to date in taxes, rents, security and cleaning fees. Built into the edges of each zone are *amaduka*, “shops,” these are roughly four square meters each, stacked floor to ceiling with *caguwa*. *Amaduka* are the most expensive sites to rent at Rwf
50,000/month which is usually split between two or three vendors. A step down are *ibibanza*, “plots” or small, back to back stands in the zone’s center that measure about 2 square meters each and rent for Rwf 30,000/month. Alternatively one could rent floor space in front of *ibibanza* and dump a pile of clothes for bargain hunters to sift through. Prices are always negotiated, sometimes for several hours, but there is a general ratio of rent to quality that sets price expectations in particular spaces. *Amaduka* sell high-end, first quality *caguwa*, and are expected to have the latest fashions. *Ibibanza* retailers generally have a mix of first and second quality and somewhat lower prices, while those that work the floor offer bargains at rock bottom prices for clients willing to shift through piles of *caguwa* or buy in bulk.

Until it closed, there were about five thousand traders operating in Nyabugogo clothes market on any given day. *Caguwa* traders are men and women, Muslim and Christian, drunks and teetotalers, parents and youngsters, well-off and struggling. What they all have in common is the gift of gab, a rough-edges no-nonsense way of communicating, and expert knowledge of their product and client base. To be successful in a space like Nyabugogo, you need to operate in a micro niche market. One does not just sell shoes, for example, but hip-hop sneaker fashion, Italian dress shoes, high end European suits, or discount t-shirts. Hustling a living from the market is, as Manzi always reminds me, not just about selling, but telling people what to buy. You need to move through the market, recognize your base from the crowd, pull them in to your area, and
thrust the latest fashion in their face. Remind them that Jay Polly now wears Timberlands, and those Nikes you bought last month? They are out *sha*, being sold in Marathon right now at a discount to some farmer, don’t believe me? Go check it out. So what is *umucheri*, (your girl/boyfriend) going to think when s/he sees some farmer walking around in your shoes? Come on, let’s have a look, then we can chat about prices.

It is not just traders who depend on Nyabugogo market to make a living. Day laborers looking for *ibiraka* or *afakijab* (truncated from the English “any fucking job”), show up every morning knowing that they are bound to make a couple thousand francs carrying or fixing something. There are also a number of self-appointed “commissionaires,” or touts who hang outside the market and guide time-strapped shoppers to that particular product or style they are looking for. In addition to traders, thousands more tailors depend on the market making their living. Beyond its popular economy, the *caguwa* trade in Nyabugogo is responsible for a real estate and banking boom that has attracted finance capital from all over the world. Walk back towards the bus station, down Marathon past the hundreds of Congolese barbershops and salons, cafes, and bars that serve the market’s vendors and customers and you will hit Mashirahame: a series of three story buildings built in 2003 that rent premium space to American microfinance organizations and Kenyan, Nigerian, and Rwandan banks. These finance the upper levels of the caguwa trade while sport betting facilities rent out the top

32 *Caguwa* retailers often physically grab people and drag them into their shops
floors of the building to help successful traders part with their money. Across the street from the market is kwa Mutangana (Mutangana’s place), a massive structure built in 2008 that warehouses produce as it arrives from the provinces in its basement, operates one of the city’s largest fruit and vegetable markets on its first and second floors, while the rest of its space pulls in overflow caguwa from the market. While it is clear that there is much capital flowing through Nyabugogo, it is less apparent how the “large numbers of small operators” (Guyer 2004) that make up popular economies like Nyabugogo actually survive. Manzi and Pascale will often go days, sometimes weeks, without making a sale, and then receive a large payout. In the meantime, rent, school fees, and taxes are due.

“Amadeni, credit” is Manzi’s first response when I ask him how he and his family weather the risks of the caguwa trade. Every caguwa trader lives on credit. They have credit at their local corner store, with their landlords, relatives, wholesalers, and other traders. Deferring payment allows traders to manipulate time until the next sale. In addition, collective saving schemes that are underwritten by trust keep a somewhat predictable flow of cash going. Each zone has their own savings society—an informal association—broken down into 10-15 traders contributing between Rwf 5,000 to 20,000 a week. The traders in each society draw numbers at the beginning of the month and, depending on the payout schedule, receive the entire balance at least once a month (sometimes once a week), making it possible for a trader to partially settle his/her accounts. This keeps lines of credit open and makes value available before it has actually
accumulated (see chapter 3 for a more in depth description of this system). Credit originating from relationships forged in the market mitigate some of the job risk. In addition, traders often work collectively with their “competitors” citywide in ways that keep everyone in business.

In order to make the market work for them, caguwa traders are always prepared to forge collectivities across associations, markets, and neighborhoods and to activate city-wide networks of consumers and commodities. Every trader, for example, has his/her “boss” clients. These are wealthy Rwandans and very often government employees who dress caguwa but will not enter Nyabugogo or take the time to navigate its space. Anyone willing to pay more can call a caguwa trader tell him/her what they are looking for and their size. The trader will show up at their home at night with bags full of clothes for them to try on, very often not from their own stock. The trader will then charge an inflated price to his/her boss and receive a commission from whoever’s clothes s/he sells.

Iyo zibaho, nzazishatse, if it exists, Manzi likes to brag, I can find it. Any of Manzi’s clients can send him a picture of any shoe they want from the internet via WhatsApp. Manzi can then activate the city’s network of traders until he finds the exact pair and size that his client is looking for. When he has the pair, he confirms with his client who pays him via mobile money, a cellular money transfer system where you transfer money

33 See also Simone (2008) on “People as Infrastructure.”
34 Mobile Money is a form of cell phone currency (banned in the United States), that make it possible for people to send remittances, pay bills, or even buy at markets with their mobile phones.
from one cell phone account to another via text message, and receives the shoes delivered in person the same day. In other words, *caguwa* markets are just like the “new sharing economies,” identified in a recent Harvard Business School study of Amazon.com, Ebay, and Airbnb. Only, the fixers in the *caguwa* sharing economy who link large numbers of small operators and their goods to a city-wide client base are individual traders themselves, who depend on each other play all three roles at different moments.

In her ([2009] 2015) best seller *The Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy*, economist Pietra Rivoli advocates for free trade by following the global clothing industry. Rivoli travels the world, following the process it takes to produce a single t-shirt. Instead of a global economy, she encounters state tariffs and subsidies that block competition and protect old networks of the fabric trade every step of the way. It is not until she traces the “afterlife” of her t-shirt to Manzese, a *mitumba* (secondhand clothing) market in Dar es Salaam, that Rivoli finds what she is looking for: a perfectly competitive free market. Rivoli presents market life in Manzese as just that, working individuals competing with each other for goods and clients. In her account of Manzese, Geofrey, her only *mitumba* trading interlocutor, works on his own to find the best wares and draw clients to his stall and, constantly competing against others:

“For Geofrey,” she writes, “the day ends in a seller’s competition as intense as the buyer’s competition with which he started the morning. If he rests in the morning, the competition will snag the jewels, and if he rests in the evening, the competition will snag his customers. The markets at the center of Geofrey’s livelihood are more flexible—and closer to a ‘real’ market—than anything the T-shirt has experienced before” ([2009] 2015: 234).
This is a teaching moment for Rivoli’s central argument: free market trade, she argues, includes the poor in capitalism rather than hindering them. If only the world could operate like a secondhand clothing market. She follows up with Geofrey years later and finds out that he has thrived thanks to his own ingenuity, moving “up the latter” of second hand clothes trade from retail to wholesale. These all support Rivoli’s central argument that free market capitalism is beneficial to the global poor, and informal markets should be seen as a source, rather than a block to development. Rivoli is not the first to use informal markets to advance a populist (neo) liberalism (see de Soto 1989, 2000; Prahalad 2004). Only, it is unlikely that Geofrey, however smart and dedicated, would be able to survive as a merely independent actor in the situation that Rivoli describes. How does he negotiate the “turbulence” that characterizes daily life in neoliberal African cities (Guyer 2002, 2004, de Boeck and Plissart 2006)? What happens when the Tanzanian shilling crashes and he cannot afford to buy new stock one morning with the money he made the night before? How does he weather the days when markets become political spaces such as elections, strikes, and municipal moves to close these spaces? What is happening to all of his “competitors” that he is beating to the punch? And where did he get his startup money to begin wholesaling? Seeing no obvious state regulation, Rivoli assumes that there is no regulation at all. Recent Marxian critiques of informality and its proponents also have trouble identifying the specific ways that markets like Nyabugogo operate. In a rush to dismiss their political adversaries like
Rivoli, de Soto and Prahalad as advocates of what amounts to merely “self-exploitation” (Davis 2004, 2006; Watts 2004), they forget to ask whether or not these particular spaces actually match the liberal assumption of what a market is. Instead, they keep the model of informality and free markets intact as the sum of individuals competing against each other in an unregulated space. The debate is then reduced to whether or not free market trade is good or bad for “the poor” (c.f. Brooks’ [2015] response to Rivoli). But so-called “informal proletariats” only appear to be a self-exploiting “surplus” (Davis 2004) and “superfluous” (Mbembe 2008) population if one imposes a liberal model of the market as merely the lump (or lumpen) sum of individuals competing against each other.

In forging collective economies of common stock and planning their way through the city’s turbulence with communal savings schemes, Kigali’s secondhand merchants, tailors, and consumers have managed to survive in spite of, not because of, the neoliberal city. Their entire lives are organized around practices that limit individual competition in favor of collective livelihoods that keep Kigali dressed and the city’s popular economy, or “large numbers of small operators” (Guyer 2004) in business. Seen through this prism the question is not, to what extent does Kigali’s international secondhand markets resemble free trade, but how do these practices challenge liberal economic models of “the market” as a site of individual competition? Nyabugogo forces us to come to terms with a different idea of what a market is. Here, competition is limited as a response to political and economic processes such as currency crashes and the uncertain temporality of trade. The market is a space that also generates radical forms of self-reliance in the absence of
state support; where competitors need each other to survive in order to make the market work and mitigate the risks of city life\textsuperscript{35}. The question becomes, how stable are these associational forms of exchange, conversion, style, and city making in the face of plans to discipline this trade into a liberal market of individual entrepreneurs and Nyabugogo into a shopping mall? To what extent can these practices persevere in the wake of competing visions of what Kigali’s surface should look (and dress) like? What urban planners often underestimate when dealing with “informal” markets like Nyabugogo is that every part speaks back to the whole, and—importantly in Kigali—what designers see as a mess, market traders see as their refusal to be a bad copy of somewhere else.

### 3.5 Worlding Nyabugogo

Nyabugogo Market closed on October 16th 2014, and was demolished shortly thereafter. The sudden closure of the city’s largest caguwa market shocked the city and blew up the Rwandan press. The popular Kinyarwanda daily, Umuseke, ran an article titled “Nyabugogo: No one knows why it was suddenly moved.”\textsuperscript{36} Umuseke interviewed several traders and the head of Cocomanya Cooperative Noah Ngiruwonsanga. The traders told of their frustration at having to leave so quickly, fears over their potential loss

\textsuperscript{35} Market “competitors” also work together outside of business, dishing out large sums for each others’ weddings, as well as their relatives’ funerals, helping each other with school fees for their children, and smaller acts like buying each other beer at the end of the day.

\textsuperscript{36} Nyabugogo: Abaturage Ntibumva impamvu bimuye huti huti literal translation “the people/citizens do not understand the reason it was moved suddenly”
of business, and an overall disbelief that Nyabugogo was “finished.” As the cooperative boss, Ngiruwonsanga expressed a different perspective: “It is a good thing,” he says “We are going to build a modern shopping mall in line with our country’s vision. I am sure we will get our money back in a few years. We will start building in January [2015]” (Umuseke 2014). The money that Ngiruwonsanga refers to is the Rwf 30 million the cooperative had to pay for the land that they were being evicted from. The plan was to build a Rwf 32 million upscale shopping complex on the former market site. Stranger still, however, was that all of this was attributed to the vision of the Kigali Master Plan (see also Igihe’s September 12, 2014 interview). But how did the city’s largest and most successful clothing market end up in the crosshairs of city authorities and urban planners? The path from plan to demolition is not as straight as the concept Master Plan implies.

In 2005, Oz Architecture, a small firm from Boulder, Colorado, was contracted by the Government of Rwanda to write the Kigali Conceptual Master Plan (KCMP). With very little quantitative data in the way of maps, photos, or statistics to work with (see chapter 3), and apparently nothing in terms of previous plans for the city, Oz’ designers worked to build a qualitative database. They walked through neighborhoods, observed everyday life, and held focus groups with residents and city authorities (see Oz/City of Kigali 2007 Chapters 1-3). Not surprisingly, these conversations were about anxieties over eviction and the need for public spaces that could deliver educational, health, and commercial services. According to the first three chapters of the KCMP, Oz worked
through this data to develop a working concept for Kigali’s future based on what they call the “non-tangible,” or beyond surface qualities of space:

“[Rwandan] people’s attention to the non-tangible aspects of urban space attests to their sense that cities are more than purely functional entities. Aspects of these observations have been incorporated into the [sic] urban design recommendations…These planning approaches emphasize public multi-use space... offering social public space that can bring people together” (Oz/City of Kigali 2007: 3.32).

The KCMP’s concept for Kigali’s future is a polycentric design. Semi-autonomous mixed-use urban “clusters” make up an anatomical units of the city. Each cluster branches out from a public market and plaza, like Nyabugogo, into mixed use residential, health, and education facilities (see figure 5). Instead of zoning each plot as an appendage to the greater metropolis, Oz’ clusters are designed so that small areas of the city are self-sufficient spaces where work, leisure, and living are possible in a single space, independent of the downtown center. In other words, very similar to the present organizational logic of the city.
Oz’ clusters are inspired by Kigali’s current built form rather than an image of somewhere else. They are derivatives of the city’s “informal,” or unplanned built environments that, according to the KCMP, makes up about 83% of the housing stock (Oz/City of Kigali 2007:2.23). Informality is not necessarily a bad thing. Much of the “densely populated informal settlements,” they write, “are remarkably sensitive to the topography and provide a good mixed use framework” (ibid: 2.24). What these neighborhoods need, the KCMP’s authors reason, are infrastructure, land use regulation, and plans for future growth. Informality in this sense is a resource that can be cultivated (yet still controlled) and learned from rather than destroyed. As the KCMP scales up, it proposes shifting Kigali’s center of gravity away from the present downtown in
Nyarugenge—the former colonial center where Nyabugogo is located—to rural Gahanga (see figure 6 below). Building in Gahanga would transport the city’s economic center to its geographic center. More importantly, building outside the present city would limit the political and financial costs of demolishing the current city. It “reduces the number of people that will need to be displaced or integrated into the plan” (Oz/City of Kigali 2007: 4.92). Nyabugogo Market is rarely mentioned in KCMP, and certainly not as an obstacle. It is not in the way of the new city so there is no reason to propose demolishing it. In addition, Nyabugogo and the other government markets in Kigali are listed as valuable assets, contributing to the city’s dynamism and a crucial component of public space which, as the Oz team notes, is in scarce supply in the city. Finally, Nyabugogo is not part of the city’s “informal” spaces that Oz identifies for upgrading. And why would it be? Nyabugogo traders pay taxes, are organized into cooperatives, and are subject to government regulations, hardly informal economies in the conventional sense of the term. In fact, caguwa markets are some of the few spaces in Kigali that are being used for what they were intended for. It would take a radical shift in planning methods, definitions of urban modernity, and aesthetics to place Nyabugogo in the way of Kigali’s future.
“It is a tabula rasa approach.” I was having lunch at a downtown Kigali restaurant with an Italian architect who works for the Singapore based global design powerhouse Surbana Ptl. LLC. In 2010, the design giant beat smalltime Oz in a bid for the contract to write the entire Kigali Master Plan (KMP). Surbana’s Central Business District Master Plans for Kigali proved a hit with the ruling party. This consultant’s job was no longer to design, (the KMP was finished in 2013), but to work with sector-level engineers who issue building permits (see Chapter 6). Still, I wanted to know about the actual planning process. How do you make something like Surbana’s Master Plan?
“Basically, you start with aerial photos and satellite images.” Individual plots are then graphed onto the photos, he explained, and assigned GPS coordinates giving the designer an idea of what type of settlement, business, or home, exists in each of the overlaying grids. These data are the foundation of a GIS database—the raw material for zoning, concept making, and planning. “Then, you scale up, say to five hundred meters, to work through neighborhoods, then up to sectors, then up to districts. The rest,” he concluded, “is design work. It’s all best practices…I mean there is not really anything new to discover in urban design” (non–recorded interview reconstructed from Fieldnotes February 10, 2014).

The aerial photos that this consultant referred to were taken in 2008 as part of the national land registration program (see Chapter 5). Unlike Oz, who had to venture out into Kigali to speak with residents, few Surbana employees have actually set foot in the city. Surbana’s master planning method is based on a set of universal standards that can be replicated and applied to any city, anywhere. It is a process that is self-consciously general, or to use Rem Koolhaas’ (1995) term to theorize Singapore, “generic.” Images of the city’s surface move between various locations along fiber optic cables while architects, planners, and engineers design Kigali’s future, often remotely. The army of technicians that work on the GIS database know what to do, not based on any prior knowledge of the particular city or the people who live there, but based on the world-class facilities and structures—high-rises, parks, research campuses, international convention and sports facilities—that they are contracted to remap onto the city’s surface.
as its future image. Importantly, Surbana’s plans are not aimed at city residents but outside investors. The idea behind this approach is that the plan should pay for itself by attracting foreign capital.

This tabula rasa approach to urban design is known as the Singapore model, not because it follows that city’s 1968 transformation (see Chapter 4), but because it conjures an idea of what global cityness should look like with Singapore as its referent. Singaporean-ness is what Surbana sells, and it is incredibly popular. According to the company’s website, they have over 90 master plan projects in 30 countries across Asia and Africa. Their clients are as diverse as Lagos, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Rizhao (China), and yet, all of their finished products look alike. The firm makes no attempt to conceal this, or their method of erasing difference in order to design spectacular world-class futures. Rather, they advertise this skill through online promotional materials (see figure 7). Slums, decaying colonial town centers, and polluted swamps are converted to green spaces, clean wetlands, and iconic high rises. The aerial scale from which these designs are built are all that is left of the present city. It is a perspective that creates a visual aesthetic in which a viewer can imagine him/herself arriving on an international flight at no-place-in particular, a clean, green, hi-tech, anywhere.
In theory, the Surbana plan should be an extension of the Oz concept. In reality the two plans could not be more different. The Oz KCMP calls for shifting downtown south to develop rural areas. Surbana scraps this proposal and moves downtown back to the current city center (see Chapter 4). Surbana also abandons Oz’ polycentric mixed-use cluster plan in favor of a more traditional urban core with separately demarcated residential, commercial, and entertainment zones. The new plan’s most significant contribution, however, is not in its design, but in a radically new way of understanding the city and its relationship to informality. The future city is based on external, global standards that elevate surface aesthetics over what Oz calls the “non-tangible” aspects of

\[\text{fig:10}\text{ Two world-class city futures from Surbana: Rizhou International Ocean City Master Plan (Left) and The Kigali Master Plan (right) Source: surbana.com}\]

\[\text{Footnote: } 37 \text{Ironically, people were told they were being evicted because of the KCMP, the very plan that cautioned against this (see chapter 4).}\]
urban space. Any built environment that does not meet these aesthetic standards—whether or not it is taxed or regulated—is fair game for demolition and sale. The code for these spaces is “informal,” a term that it is worth returning to.

In contemporary urban administration and policy, the conventional definition of informal is: practices that are not regulated by the state. Even when a particular place, such as a neighborhood or market is defined as informal, it is because the practices (i.e. squatting, illegal building, non-tenured occupancy, untaxed commerce), that produce that space, are informal. In addition to this definition, policy makers and city managers use informality is to describe built environments that lack the necessary infrastructure, security, and sanitation to meet basic human needs. While these two ways of speaking about informality are certainly related, the former uses informal as a spatial designation. It situates certain practices outside of formal state regulation. The latter, uses informal in a temporal sense. An informal space is an incomplete, or not yet formed project. It is an undeveloped space that with the right amount of capital and expertise can be converted into a formal environment. The Oz plan uses informal in this sense of the term and the KCMP works to diagnose informality and offer remedies: upgrading, retrofitted infrastructures, as well as land regulation. Surbana, however, uses informality in a way that does not speak to either of these definitions. For example, three years after it was catalogued as an important public space by Oz, Surbana demarcated Nyabugogo as “informal:”
“The transformation of the Nyabugogo Market primarily aims to preserve its existing vibrant character and appealing allure to locals while at the same time, balance the redevelopment needs through developing selective sites into complimentary shopping complexes which could offer a larger variety of goods and services as well as international brands that are familiar to the [sic] tourists and expatriates…through these measures, Nyabugogo Market is transformed from the current informal market activities into a unique and attractive tourist destination that retains the existing character while sensitively adding some complimentary and [sic] shopping experiences to the area” (Surbana City of Kigali 2010 v4: 5.27 emphasis added).

Figure 11: "The City Bazaar" Source: City of Kigali/Oz (2010) Final CBD Report

While the language of transformation and preservation does not call for demolition, it is difficult to imagine any other outcome from their illustrated future (see fig 8 above). But also, as Manzi pointed out when I showed him Surbana’s design, there is a structural flaw: you cannot zig-zag. A browsing situation where shoppers are designated to pathways and merchants are immobilized in designated shops would not
work for the *caguwa* trade where merchants and shoppers need to mix. How could anyone find anything, let alone connect with each other and produce the relationships that are required for exchange in the above illustration? Like Rivoli, Surbana’s designers mistake a *caguwa* market for liberal market of individual competitors who should be able to sell in any built environment. In an attempt to make the space more “formal” they have rendered it unusable. You cannot just pick up one vender and slot him/her in a shop here, and another over there. Everyone needs to be able to network, access each other’s stock, speak, laugh and fight. At the center of this misunderstanding is the Kigali municipality’s definition of informal that assumes there can be no logic to a space like Nyabugogo.

“Informality can mean a lot of things,” the Rwandan Director of Urban Planning reminded me. We were sitting at her desk in Kigali’s One Stop Center that houses the Kigali City Master Plan. I had asked her how taxed and regulated spaces like Nyabugogo could nevertheless end up listed as “informal” in the Kigali Master Plan.

“Okay. But a market is supposed to be easily accessible, have thoroughgoing traffic. There are standards. Some people are not contributing to the [municipal] tax base, but others are not meeting standards. You can see that people just do it by themselves. No plan, no design, no professional architect” (non-recorded interview FN April 1st 2014)

In this definition, informality is self-evident (“you can see…”) and can be assessed visually without actually consulting regulations, laws, or infrastructure. A space like Nyabugogo that everyone knows is regulated, taxed, and planned can nevertheless be classified as informal because it looks informal. In his study of world-class planning in
Delhi, Ascher Ghertner (2011, 2015), draws our attention to similar codes for defining space. Definitions of informality and formality are shifting from conventional understandings based on laws and regulations to an “aesthetic normativity” (2015:2). Ghertner’s example is an illegal upscale shopping complex that violates Delhi’s zoning laws and would, by conventional definitions, be classified as informal. The mall’s developers agree that their building is illegal, but evade demolition by convincing Indian law makers that their structure still looks sufficiently planned and world-class to remain.

Ghertner’s second example is a lower class Delhi neighborhood that is razed by city authorities. The neighborhood complies with the city’s zoning laws and is inhabited by people with legal tenure. But it looks like an “informal settlement.” This alone justifies demolition and eviction without compensation. Similarly, Surbana’s Kigali Master Plan introduces Kigali city managers to a new way of seeing urban surfaces based on world-class aesthetics rather than laws and regulations. A designer or policymaker can assess informality based on how a built environment might look to the outside world, rather than whether or not it is actually unregulated or illegal. The question is no longer whether a space or practice is legal or sufficiently serviced. The question is: will a global class of tourists and expatriates be able to recognize Nyabugogo as sufficiently urban, world-class, and modern?

Ghertner is interested in the uptake of these ways of seeing, and how residents themselves begin to speak like planners. World-class design, however, is much more than a ruling strategy. The KMP aims to convert Kigali’s built environment into a holistic
urban form that an international financial class will recognize as a compelling global city to inhabit and invest in. The plan wagers on the external uptake of Kigali’s future by foreign investors in order to build the new city. In this sense, the KMP has much in common with *caguwa* style. Just as Georges, Manzi, and Pascale make their money by anticipating future consumer desires, converting secondhand castoffs into fashions, Surbana seeks to dress the city’s surface in an urban fabric that the outside world will recognize as global and authentically modern. The difference, is that the logic of *caguwa* works and is regulated by a series of government and professional obligations. Because the foreign population that is expected to pay of Kigali’s future has not yet arrived, city managers have shifted towards improvised, ad-hoc, and deregulated strategies in order to finance the plan. In other words, the Kigali Master Plan is informalizing the municipality. 

### 3.6 Nyabugogo’s Generic Future

Two years after the first image of Nyabugogo’s future appeared in Surbana’s CBD Master Plan, the ruling party press ran a story titled “Muhima to Get Rwf 30 Billion Shopping Mall” (New Times Feb 1, 2012). The future of Nyabugogo Market, this article announced, had undergone its third design metamorphosis. This time, Nyabugogo is a high-end shopping complex, styled in industrial urban chic. Glass elevators and exposed balconies lead to faux smoke stacks, making the future mall appear as though the
building was once a factory (see figure 9). According to the New Times, this eight story complex is scheduled to break ground in June 2012. And then nothing happened.

Figure 12: Nyabugogo's second future as post-industrial urban chic

Thanks to cooperative meetings, Manzi, Pascale, and their colleagues in the market were well aware that the city intended to demolish and sell Nyabugogo. We had lively debates on the balcony of Mashirahamwe and in the market over if, when, or how it would happen. Manzi thought the plan to demolish Nyabugogo was “just words,” (amagambo gusa). He cited Nyarugenge Market, a public market that was demolished in 2005, sold to an investment group in 2006 who built a struggling shopping mall. Then
there were the mass evictions in Kiyovu and Kimicanga (see chapters 3 and 4) that failed to lure foreign real estate developers leaving the national pension fund holding empty lots in the city center. Besides, it was already 2014, Nyabugogo was supposed to be demolished in 2012. Many other traders were not so sure. The market was “old,” (ishaje) and certainly not in line with the images they had seen of the Master Plan. Pascale reasoned that the other shoe would drop any day. “Dufite igihe gito, we only have a little time left,” he would joke, in mock self-pity as though he had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Manzi was correct about the city’s investment woes. Surbana master plans are designed to do more than just zoning and growth management. Despite an award winning world-class plan, and a global campaign to attract foreign capital, Kigali’s global class of financial elites never arrived. City management needed a plan B.

“Participatory Expropriation” is the term Donna Rubinoff used in 2011, when it became clear that the Master Plan could not depend on foreign investment (See Rubinoff 2011). Rubinoff is an American geographer and architect who first came to Kigali on the Oz team and then stayed on as senior advisor to the City of Kigali until 2014. Her understanding of participatory expropriation recognizes small scale collectives, such as market vendors as a source of potential economic growth and resource pooling. The concept proposes using cooperatives and associations to purchase their own property and then take out loans to develop that property within the guidelines of the Kigali Master Plan. In other words, market vendors and city residents could pool their resources and expropriate themselves at which point, the cooperative would become a real estate
holding corporation. With their land as guarantee, the cooperative could gain access to credit and build Master Plan approved projects. The benefit of participatory expropriation is that it could potentially resolve the city’s investment shortage while incorporating residents as beneficiaries of Kigali’s future. The true brilliance of this model, however, is that it outsources both state violence and financial risks to the very people who are victims of these processes.

The first experiment with participatory expropriation and cooperative led real estate development was announced by state media on January 10th 2012 (see New Times 2012). Duhahirane, a furniture building cooperative had purchased a plot they once worked at to build a shopping complex with a Rwf 1 billion loan from the Rwandan Development Bank. In the end, the three storied complex would cost more than 1 billion francs, have room for 184 shops and ample parking. Just two years after the project was launched, the building was already heading towards foreclosure, threatening to ruin Duhahirane. According to an interview between the Kinyarwanda daily Igihe and Duhahirane’s vice president, the cooperative was only able to rent 30 of their units, and had to discount these to one third their original asking price. The vice president tells Igihe that in addition to their high rent, which they must charge to make mortgage payments, no businesses wanted to operate out of the building because of its “modern” aesthetics. Everyone in Kigali knows that rents in private shopping complexes are much higher than public markets. Businesses pass these costs on to their clients with higher prices, so why
would anyone want to shop there? *Igihe’s* final section of the article is subtitled “Will the state intervene to mitigate [the cooperative’s] losses?” Yes, the state certainly would.

On October 12th, 2014, just two months after the *Igihe* article, Cocomanya called all caguwa traders in Nyabugogo to a meeting. They had been put on notice by the municipality. Nyabugogo Market would close in six days. Cocomanya traders would become tenants in the empty Gisozi building on the other side of Kigali in order to save Duharirane from going into foreclosure. Since there was no actual demand for the high-end retail space that Duharirane built, the city had to manufacture demand by closing a public market and forcing caguwa traders to become tenants in the empty building. In line with the framework set out for self-expropriation, Cocomanya had to purchase the Nyabugogo market plot for Rwf 30 million in member dues. In other words, the municipality forced Nyabugogo traders to buy a government plot, move into a high-end retail space, and save the Rwandan Development Bank as well as Duharirane from an expensive loss. Nyabugogo market traders were predictably angry over the move. City authorities inoculated themselves against a protest by closing the market immediately so traders did not have enough time to organize, speak with the media, or launch a complaint. In the end, however, there was no need for caguwa traders to resist. It turns out that the taxes Manzi, Pascale and their colleagues generate mattered after all. So did the alternative aesthetics proffered by caguwa style. Nyabugogo had 5,000 traders

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38 Ese leta haricyo yafasha abafite impungenge zo guhomba?
operating out of 3,000 plots, paying Rwf 50,000 per month, per plot, in district taxes. In other words the market was generating 150 million francs (about $215,000) per month in tax revenue for Nyarugenge district. Gisozi is in Gasabo district meaning Nyarugenge district stood to lose 1.8 billion francs from its annual tax base with Nyabugogo’s closure.

In an impressively quick move, Solange Mukasonga, the Mayor of Nyarugenge managed to clear out Biryogo Market, one of two remaining public markets in her district. She invited 3,000 Nyabugogo traders to Biryogo rent-free, so long as they continued to pay the Nyabugogo monthly tax-rate. Manzi and the others enthusiastically responded. Biryogo however, was built for only 1,000 traders surrounded by one of the city’s oldest and most densely populated neighborhoods. Furthermore, 3000 traders would bring thousands of tailors and wholesalers, not to mention the bars, cafes, and salons that came to serve caguwa traders and their clients. It was a plan that was—to borrow from the Soviet science fiction writer Arkady Strugatsky—like trying to fit an octopus into tuxedo pants. Still, in a single day, caguwa traders and their clients managed to convert Biryogo, an empty market, into the thriving space that Nyabugogo once was.

When the caguwa trade came to Biryogo, it not only made short work of the market’s built environment, but devoured every street leading out of the market for several kilometers. To be near the trade, sewing cooperatives and wholesalers outpriced other tenants. They took over all available rental properties within a 5 kilometer radius. Homes were converted into wholesale depots, bars, restaurants, and teahouses while the market had to be extended out into the neighborhood. In the end, the aesthetics of
Nyabugogo’s built environment never changed. The market just moved a few kilometers south. The Master Plan projects, on the other hand, have yet to materialize as planned. As of January 2016, the Nyabugogo site remains an empty lot, one of many that now scar Kigali’s landscape while Duhahirane is still under the threat of foreclosure (see figure 10). Yet, the logic of caguwa style is certainly related to the techniques of world-class design. Both center on converting material objects—built environments and second-hand clothes—into symbolic value that can be converted again into financial resources. Both also depend on generating compelling notions of global cityness that will be taken up and consumed by either the streets (as in the case of caguwa) or a global investor class. How then, has caguwa style managed to thrive despite a concerted effort to erase the built spaces of this trade, while urban designers seem unable to build anything but empty buildings and vacant lots?
Figure 13: Nyabugogo in ruins: October 17th 2014 (left) and January 3rd 2016 (right)
Part of the answer to this question lies in divergent processes of planning and risk management. *Caguwa* style is based on collective, common sense notions of global cityness that are produced from within the city’s urban fashion itself. Their “audience” can be looked at and spoken with. In addition, *caguwa* traders and their clients are persistently planning for, building, and designing their future, not as a utopian investment project, but through risk. For example, they must plan around Kigali’s fickle economy and the ever changing world of urban fashion. As I showed earlier, *caguwa* traders are
well aware of these risks and work together to weather the turbulence, unforeseen consequences, and manage the future.

The Kigali Master Plan, on the other hand, is designed for a global class of foreign investors that does not yet—and may never—inhabit Kigali. As a marketing tool that necessarily functions to generate confidence in the city’s future through a compelling narrative of progress, the Kigali Master Plan, never deals with the future as risk. Instead, planners rely on hubristic notions of “best practices.” When implementing the plan proves trickier than initially intended, the municipality has no option but to shift the risk and financing of the city’s built environment onto the very populations that are designed out of its future.

Roy (2009b) argues that informality is not the preserve of the poor but embedded in planning practices themselves. Rather than the antidote to informality, plans are instruments of deregulation, fraught with exceptions and ambiguities. “In other words” she writes, “informality exists at the very heart of the state and is an integral part of the territorial practices of state power” (ibid: 83). World-class city design like the KMP design, certainly produce their own failures. But these failures also shed light on the importance of often overlooked practices like caguwa. The work that everyone in the caguwa scene does to convert secondhand to fashion; urban style that converts secondhand to valuable commodities. caguwa stretches Kigali’s urban fabric beyond its official boundaries folding the city into global networks of commodities, desires, and identities. When city authorities and foreign consultants move to rip through this fabric
by tearing down markets, they often overestimate their own authority over the city and the bodies of those who live there. In the next chapter, I demonstrate how this works out on Kigali’s streets.
4. The City is Burning! Street economies and the Production of Nomadic Space

“ubuzima ni danje” life is dangerous—Kigali Streets

Marathon has no built environment. It is just a crowded lot located at the intersection of Nyabugogo transport and commerce hub, the densely populated neighborhoods Kabakene (literally “for poor people”), and Dobandi (from the French de bandits). Since the 1990s Marathon has been about two things: buying and selling commodities, and running from the police. The city has never been able to wrestle the space from abazunguzayi—illegal street traders that give Marathon its name—long enough to do anything else with it. And even if city authorities did, Marathon would just move and take the name with it. Nothing needs to be advertised here. Everyone already knows that if you want the least expensive produce, clothing, utensils or anything else in the city, you go to Marathon. Usually this space is just the loud, dusty bustle of street trade: women carrying baskets of produce on their heads, or laid out by their feet. Men and women walking through the crowds as human display racks with clothing and accessories hanging on their limbs. Babies crying, men and women haggling, joking, gossiping and arguing. Everyone is zigzagging through the crowds, but not too quickly, keeping time with the rhythm of this mobile economy. Once or twice a day, however, the rhythm will pick up and then erupt. Someone will hiss. There will be a pad of feet and a cloud of dust as a few abazunguzayi start running.
Then someone screams:

“UMUJYI WUHIYE! 39” (The city is burning!)

And Marathon earns its name.

When the streets are on fire, you don’t run, you fly (kuguruka) 40. Head up, towards the dense “slum” Dobandi, or down into Gitega, but never towards Boulevard de Nyabugogo where the abapandagare 41, (slang “cops”) are waiting. The point is to get into a place where you can use the city to your advantage to disappear or stash your merchandise. Dobandi’s crowded built environment, which under normal circumstances appears to block crowds, affords a surprising amount of movement in a pinch. Small pathways that appear to lead nowhere are often dead ends, but in other areas will open up into courtyards that lead to smaller foot paths just wide enough for a single person to fit between cramped buildings. Some abazunguzayi know shop and café owners who let them stash their merchandise and blend into the crowd as regular pedestrians for a few moments until it is safe to return. While it is technically illegal to buy anything in the streets, the police have never actually arrested customers. So the crowd stays. They cheer, jeer, joke, and comment on the raid. A police raid might shut down Marathon for 30

39 Mumujyi wuhiye is just one of many warning calls. “Tigo Yigeze!” (Tigo is here!) is another from the advertisement for the Nigerian mobile company Tigo. The joke makes fun of both Tigo’s advertising and the Rwanda National Police uniforms that are the same shade of blue as Tigo’s logo. Another is “Imvura yirawa!” (The rain is falling!), an imperative to take cover.

40 Literally to erupt

41 Abapandagare is a phrase that traveled to Kigali streets from Rwanda via refugee camps in Uganda. It is pejorative and comes from the Kiswahili imperative panda gari (get in the car!). In Uganda it refers to special-forces that were used during the Milton Obote II’s regime to disappear political dissidents. In Kigali, it is similar to calling police “pigs,” but used as frequently as the American “cops.”
minutes and arrest maybe five to ten *abazunguzayi*. Then, the thousands who avoid arrest go back to work, buying, selling, hustling, arguing, and laughing—business as usual.

This chapter is about street economies, the production of nomadic space, and the subjects that are expected to inhabit or exit Kigali’s future. Placing debates over collective agency in conversation with writings on the production of urban space, I argue that *abazunguzayi* run the city by exploiting a contradiction internal to the logic of world-class city building: municipal aspirations to produce Kigali’s future as the “center of urban excellence in Africa” depend on the very subjects and practices that are considered antithetical to those futures.

After outlining the contemporary debate in urban theory over agency “from below” and state violence from “above,” I turn to the events that produced Kigali’s contemporary street economy. Nomadic space, I argue, is generated through the triple processes of techno-centric planning, the dissolution of built environments, and social practice. I then examine the largest and most important sector of this economy: the produce trade which is run by women. Extending Lefebvre-influenced theories of social space into discussions of gender, temporality, and anticipation, I demonstrate how women *abazunguzayi*—however antithetical to municipal ideas of “clean streets”—are nevertheless indispensable to the interests of capital. Organizing as collective entrepreneurs who control the city’s vital discount economy, *abazunguzayi* leverage the reproductive needs of the city’s labor against municipal visions in order to stake a claim to the city’s present and its future. I then turn to attempts by city authorities to arrest the
street economy. Kigali’s violent “disciplinary apparatus” (Foucault [1975]1995) may have produced a lot of bad memories, but in the end it only manages to train better abazunguzayi. I conclude by arguing that while municipal officials may seek to produce urban authority by ripping down built environments and raiding streets, they have no control over the actual economic processes that give discount economies their form. The streets have learned to wager against state authority, not through cunning creativity, but by correctly anticipating that the city’s managers will always, and hopelessly, fail in their efforts to discipline them.

So-called informal actors such as street traders and slum dwellers often rely on a politics of encroaching, occupying, and holding space against municipal strategies to remove or block their access (Bayat 2010; Kinyanjui 2013, 2014). These acts can be read as a form of resistance or politics “from below” (Appadurai 2002) that, under the right conditions, eventually become recognized and socially accepted if still illegal (Holston 2008). Other theorists of informality, however, caution against romanticizing street level agency as effective, or always positioned against state authority (see Davis 2004, 2006; Lindell and Ihalainen 2014; Meagher 2010). Roy (2011) warns that the politics-by-occupation perspective, or in her words “subaltern urbanism,” overstates economic ingenuity and political agency in a way that reproduces the bootstrap logic of neoliberalism. Why argue for public services when one can show how the urban poor always find ways to fend for themselves? Roy has point. Theories that highlight the creativity and latent potentiality of urban subalterns often do so at the cost of obscuring
the very conditions—historical, political, and economic—that place people in the slum or the street in the first place. Instead, she argues, we should turn our attention towards state generated informalities, exceptions, and entrepreneurism—the very processes that simultaneously criminalize the urban poor on the one hand, and validate illegal elite practices and spaces on the other (ibid:233). Quayson (2014) however, observes that the limits to the debate over agency from below and state violence from above are not in how the urban poor are represented, or to what extent state presence or absence determines daily life, but in the conceptual structure that both sides rely upon. At issue is an assumed topographical divide between city management at “the top” and urban subalterns working “from below,” and a horizontal division between center and periphery. The problem is that these simple binaries lead “to a number of distortions and skewed conceptualizations” (2014:6). Namely, that the state (at the top) is always out to get the ordinary folk (at the bottom), and that subalterns are always in a position of resistance. What we need, Quayson suggests, is not an imaginary line between state and society that prematurely bounds analysis to a question of which direction one writes from, but an urban theory that focuses on the internal contradictions of planning, managing, and living in the city. We need Henri Lefebvre.

Lefebvre ([1972]1991) provides a framework to replace the vague yet often taken for granted notions of space as a container, or “just emptiness” (Smith [1984] 2008: 98). Disrupting a 2,500 year intellectual history of space, he wrestles the concept from geometry and physics in order to make a “unitary theory of physical, mental and social
space” available to urban studies (Lefebvre [1972]1991: 21). The city cannot be reduced to the built environment alone, but is constituted by maps and plans that represent it and conceive its future; iconic architectures that render capital and authority visible to urban residents; and the people who inhabit, transform, and subvert the work of technocratic authority. These three elements of space—the conceived (mental), perceived (physical), and lived (practiced)—are not distinct spatial forms but dialectical processes that are always in tension with each other, stitching, stretching, and ripping the urban fabric.

What makes Lefebvre’s perspective so useful in understanding contemporary struggles over urban space is that it leaves room for the possibility that no single process or interest ever fully controls the city. It is an urban theory that is receptive to capital, not as a dominating logic of urban life, but a capricious set of divergent processes that often disrupt each other (ibid: 10). In this chapter, I place Lefebvre in conversation with the concrete struggle over Kigali’s streets, the gendered politics of a runaway discount economy, and subaltern urbanism to interrogate the messy relationship between urban governance and daily life in a 21st century metropolis. Kigali’s street economy is not an improvised result of urban bricoleurs, but the product of expert design.

4.1 Planning the Street Economy

“It was hot! (harashyushe cyane!) Listen, (umva): I had my box, I put it on a crate every day. It was ‘Manzi’s Place’ (kwa Manzi). I sold peanuts, cigarettes, tissues, gum, cookies,
chocolate, like that. There were a lot of us, but there were also a lot of customers…especially in the bus station. There were a lot of UN people around in those days and they had dollars! I had one regular, he was…Canadian?...maybe… a soldier... Every morning he gave me three dollars for a pack of cigarettes and some biscuits! [about a 500% markup depending on the day]” (April 28 2015).

Manzi (see chapter 2) is now a medium-sized player in Kigali’s caguwa (secondhand clothing) trade. He was twelve years old when the RPF marched on Kigali in July 1994, effectively ending the genocide. He managed to survive the 1994 genocide, along with his mother by hiding from interhamwe42 militias in the forests outside his hometown in Nyanza. When he heard that the RPF had marched on Kigali he, like many others in his generation, headed straight to the city. He needed a job.

“It was like you could build anything, anywhere then! You could set up a small shelter on the side of the road and then it was your kiosk. You would just start selling whatever you had: cooking oil, fish, like that (gucya). We worked the city and people were setting up little shops and kiosks everywhere. In Nyarugenge, (downtown), there was the bus station, Commercial, Mattheus, and the market. Sometimes, soldiers would come by and tear down a shelter, or sometimes you would have to pay a little something, [akantu, a small bribe literally “a little something”] but mostly, it was just business (ubucuruzi).” (April 28, 2015 non-recorded conversation in public).

Dieudonné, a 34-year-old umuzunguzayi agrees:

“sha, (Kid), I am telling you, in those days, [late 1990s] it was just one big market in the city: the bus station, Commercial and Matheus, Nyarugenge…You had every type of merchant[abacuruzi] selling everything. We [abazunguzayi] were walking in the streets, behind us, you had little shops selling clothes and electronics…there weren’t buildings like now…just people!… you had merchants with stalls, there were women selling food everywhere, from the basket, or from a spot… You just picked your spot and you worked

42 Machete wielding youth militias of genocidaires. Interhamwe were often directed by the military, but composed of young men who carried out most of the actual killing during the genocide.
it. Then, [in the late 1990s] you could say ‘I am going to the market’ but you did not mean inside the market. It just meant you were going to town [mumujyi city center], because the whole town from the bus station to Nyarugenge was one market!” (recorded interview March 30th 2015).

After Kigali was secured in July 1994, Rose Kabuye, then a lieutenant colonel in the RPF was installed as mayor. Her priorities were crisis management. Corpses had to be removed from public, identified, and buried. Water and electricity had to be turned back on. The utility company itself had to be staffed. Schools, hospitals, and healthcare clinics had to be reopened and there was the gargantuan tasks of security and public trust along with post-conflict justice and reconciliation. In the meantime, the RPF had its hands full fighting the (1996-2000) insurgency in the north and supporting Congolese rebels as they toppled Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaïre (1997). Kigali was essentially a city under military occupation and being run by Rwandans who had spent most of their lives as refugees in Uganda. The municipal government simply did not have the resources to handle day-to-day tasks such as tax collection, building permits, and business registration (See KIST 2001). This meant that the city’s thousands of street traders could more or less operate where they liked, and they flooded the city center. Until 2001.

A few months after Kabuye’s successor Theonesté Mutsindashyaka was appointed Kigali’s mayor, he commissioned Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) to carry out the (2001, revised in 2002) Kigali Economic Development Survey (KEDS). KEDS was the first government commissioned attempt to figure out what was going on in Kigali, who lived there, and what the city’s resources were since the 1994
The report’s authors were clearly frustrated by many limitations. They list Kigali’s lack of written records, city offices that were empty or held by officials who refused to comply with their requests, or were simply incompetent (2001: 11), as their challenges. Despite being incomplete, frustrated, and in unreadable, the report brought Kigali’s street economy to the attention of city authorities.

In every chapter the city’s ubiquitous street economy returns as both a problem and solution to Kigali’s woes. The report notes that this critical mass of “hawkers,” “micro-entrepreneurs,” and “informal operators” are the only way to understand how 600 to 800 thousands (no one really knew how many people were living in Kigali) of residents are surviving in a city with little to non-existent public services or salaried employment. At the same time, the street economy is held responsible for urban issues that are sometimes surprising. For example, KEDS notes that in 1999 there were more than 150 automobile accidents per month in the city. Where one might expect a discussion of traffic laws or drunk driving, KEDS argues that these accidents are “caused by the concentration of commercial and administrative activities in the city [center]” (2001:6). Walking street traders like Manzi and Dieudonné were congesting the city center, making it impossible for automobile traffic to safely move throughout Kigali’s administrative zones. Later the report recommends “removing hawkers” from the city center altogether (ibid: 17) only to return to the streets in a section devoted to “gender development.” KEDS’ authors observe that many abazunguzayi are women and these “informal activities,” if properly supported, could be a source of women’s economic
empowerment. KEDS grapples with the issue of tax revenue in a similar way. Kigali’s untaxed street economy is a problem for the city’s tax base. At the same time, the report reasons, this means that abazunguzayi are also an untapped source of municipal revenue. Why eliminate the street trade if it can be taxed? In the end, the report recommends moving the street economy to designated spaces. The same year that KEDS was released, Mutsindashyaka started a campaign to clear the city center of abazunguzayi, street children, and other undesirables, while building new markets on the periphery. The purpose was not to eliminate the street economy, but to move it away from the central business district to the city’s edge and fix it in place. Only, there was no business outside the central business district.

According to Dieudonné the 2001 campaign to clear Kigali’s center began with radio announcements by the mayor himself, urging traders to leave the streets and move to the markets. When this did not work, the Rwanda National Police (RNP), assisted by Local Defense Forces (sector level security guards, now called abadasso), began regular raids on the central business district to pick up street children and abazunguzayi. The raids, however, created new problems: what were the police supposed to do with abazunguzayi when they caught them? Street traders were violating the mayor’s orders, but what laws were they actually breaking? In the end abazunguzayi were threatened

43 By 2001 the UN media project, International Regional Integrated Network (IRIN) reported that Local Defense forces and police had “stepped up” their efforts to clear the streets of hawkers and street children. The 2003 Rwanda country report by Human Rights Watch quotes several informants being detained through “roundups” in Nyarugenge as early as 2000.
under colonial-era vagrancy laws. There were, however, more logistical problems with
the raids. There was no room in Kigali’s overcrowded prisons as these were already
overflowing with genocidaires. The police had to improvise a solution: The Containers.

The Containers were actual shipping containers, used during the early days after
the genocide to hold suspected genocidaires. From 2001 to 2003, however, the Rwandan
National Police (RNP) used the containers to warehouse abazunguzayi who were picked
up in raids on the city center. As Deiudonné remembers:

“Kid, if you came from the containers, everyone could tell where you had been. They had these
bedbugs, like this [laughing holding his thumb and forefinger half an inch apart]! I am telling
you, God’s truth, [n’ukuri kw’Imana!] that big! So if you wanted to make up some bullshit about
where you were…say your mother wanted to know why you hadn’t come to visit her and
you wanted to lie like ‘I had something to take care of out of town,’ she would know you were
lying because you were covered in bedbug bites…[shaking his head. We are both laughing] I am
not joking though! That place was awful…they would just throw everyone in and lock the
doors…when you got out, you would be such a mess, the wind could knock you down.”
(Recorded interview March 30th 2015). 45

These early police raids on Nyarugenge produced a lot of bad memories, but were
ineffective in moving the street economy away from the city center. Street traders simply
learned to run from the police and local defense forces, calculating detainment into the
cost of doing business. And business was good. The bus station and market continued
dropping customers from all over Kigali and Rwanda into the street. The only hope to

44 Akakabyo, could also be translated as “exaggeration” but “bullshit” best captures the spirit in which it was
used.
45 While it is not verifiable the following is certainly believable: several firsthand accounts of the containers that I
gathered during research speak of inmates frequently dying of heatstroke and exhaustion.
clear the street economy from Kigali’s center was to get rid of the infrastructure that was fixing it in place. By 2003, the RPF run Kigali City Council shifted their strategy from rounding up street traders to a revanchist take-over of downtown real estate.

The public Nyarugenge market was closed in 2003, demolished in 2004, and the plot was sold in 2006 to Kigali Investment Group (KIG) who opened a private shopping mall in 2012. Without the market, traffic to the central bus terminal dwindled until the station was closed in 2005 and sold to a high ranking party official and real estate tycoon, Hatari Sekoko who built the iconic Kigali City Tower over the station. After the market and the bus station, the city demolished the surrounding neighborhoods.

Between 2006 and 2012, thousands of homes and businesses were demolished in Kiyovu cy’abakene (poor-Kiyovu) and Kimicanga: two neighborhoods that bordered the CBD to the northeast and provided much of the consumer base for the city’s street economy. In addition to thousands of homes, both neighborhoods had their own markets, taking hundreds of public market stalls from the city’s inventory (see fig 1).
Demolishing the market, bus station, Kiyovu cy’abakene, and Kimicanga certainly took out the physical infrastructure that was supporting the street economy.
Instead of forcing traders to the peripheries, however, these demolitions set them in motion. Market traders and their clients pushed north-west and took the city center with them. Nyabugogo bus terminal, a former swamp, became Kigali’s new transportation hub and commercial center, while many market traders who lost their stalls joined the ranks of abazunguzayi in the streets. By 2003, the Containers were no longer large enough to hold the swelling ranks of abazunguzayi and the RNP had to improvise again, converting an old warehouse to Gikondo Transit Center (Kwa Kabuga), a center I will return to. The point here, is that in twelve years, the efforts of three mayors and the RNP to move, tax, and discipline Kigali’s street economy did not produce expected results. Instead, they set the street economy in motion generating an entirely new way of occupying, embodying, and practicing urban space.

4.2 Nomadic Space

Abazunguzayi are not the only actors in Kigali’s street economy. Repair people, tailors, day laborers, commercial sex workers, and drug—recreational, traditional and prescription—dealers make their livings on Kigali’s streets. There are also legal street trades, air time and mobile money vendors that are bankrolled by multinational telecommunication corporations. But abazunguzayi are by far the most visible; are represented in the largest numbers; and receive the most attention from city authorities
and the Rwandan press. They also clearly articulate the links between the streets and urban, national, and global economies in ways that are often obscured and difficult to access by other illegal trades. Still, as city and police spokespeople often remind the public during radio and newspaper interviews aimed at discouraging people from shopping in the streets, this is not the only job available in Kigali. For example, there are cooperatives and NGOs that offer free training in tailoring and basket weaving. Why not join one of those? Alternatively, why not be a sanitation worker and sweep Kigali’s famously pedicured tarmac roads? Or, why not just get a stall and pay rent and taxes?

The short answer is that even with police violence and the risk of detainment, street commerce is one of the steadiest gigs in Kigali. The growing demand for discounted commodities in Kigali guarantees cash every day for anyone willing to take on the risk of moving these goods. In two years fieldwork, I have known barbers, construction workers, street sweepers, domestic workers, market vendors, airtime sellers, restaurant workers, security guards, farmers, and many others quit their straight jobs to zigzag on the street. When I asked a former construction worker, three months after he started selling caguwa as an umuzunguzayi what he gained from switching professions, he replied: “the benefits? Life continues… you can eat everyday…that is the profit.” (Recorded interview May 6th 2015). And in a city where the vast majority of residents live on non-contract, non-salaried work, somewhat predictable daily gains are certainly a benefit.
“We have no address” is the most common response when I ask *abazunguzayi* how a diverse group of people engaged in various forms of street commerce came to be categorized as a single population. The term *abazunguzayi* (sing. *umuzunguzayi*) is important. The noun’s root is the verb *kuzunguza*, to wander, twirl, or shake, without any particular direction and certainly not in a straight line (*kumurongo*). It speaks of what many see as the single defining feature of their occupation: mobility.

Ask for specifics on how *abazunguzayi* do their job and you will get an assortment of verbs that playfully, if abstractly, index movement. Straight money? It doesn’t exist. If you want to make and keep cash, you need to zigzag, cut, run, erupt, and fly from one location to the next. You must always be prepared to exit stage left, discount a product to make a quick transaction, or part with some or all of your merchandise in a moment’s notice.

Persistent mobility and the threat of arrest creates particular challenges for advertising and display. Some *abazunguzayi* who sell clothing and accessories for example, drape their wares on their arms, necks, and heads and walk through the street as human display racks of handbags, trousers, women’s blouses, pillows, and towels. When the raid warning sounds, they just pick up and run as fast as possible in the other direction. Others prefer to be less conspicuous. They keep their stock in a backpack, large purse, or stash it nearby, holding out a promotional pair of jeans or t-shirt while they keep

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46 There are some items that are awkward to get away with. An arm full of pillows, for example.

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an eye out for raids. When the police show up, they blend into the crowd as just another person with a backpack. Women (almost always women), who sell produce on the street walk through the city carrying fruits and vegetables from woven baskets on their head. Other produce sellers try to hold on to specific patches of real estate for moments at a time, laying their fruits and vegetables on a cardboard box or bag that can be snatched up and run with in a pinch.

Mobility also has its advantages. *Abazunguzayi* do not just run from the police. They also move with the rhythms of urban daily life. Many start their days working the early morning commuter crowds between residential neighborhoods and major transport hubs. By mid-afternoon, the street economy migrates downtown to the city’s business districts—Commercial and Matthaeus—to meet the masses of shoppers, salaried workers, and those caught up in the never-ending search for work. During early evening hours, the trade shifts again, towards the city’s packed bus stops. After 8pm, you follow people home into main thoroughfares in residential neighborhoods. At night, entirely different sectors of the street economy come alive. *Abazunguzayi* who sell *caguwa* hit the streets of Nyamirambo, Nyakabanda, and Kimisagara. In these neighborhoods they sell secondhand clothes to crowds of Kigali’s culture producing classes. Young hip-hop heads, rastas, and hipsters move through the streets looking for that unique find: a set of shoes, jeans, or a shirt that no one else has.

Despite the need to be mobile, there are areas in the city that are always “hot” with the street trade. In addition to Marathon, the edges of every market and major
transport hub in the city are always packed with *abazunguzayi*. While the police play their role in keeping the street nomadic, *abazunguzayi* garner public support as they become more embedded in street scenes and speak to the overall hustle that many suggest characterizes Kigali’s cityness.

In her study of street commerce in Mexico City, Crossa (2014) treats nomadism as a tactic. Certain street traders, she observes, keep on the move to avoid the police. I would like to add, however, that the verbs *abazunguzayi* use to describe how they make a living as wanderers (and likely Mexican street traders too) offer much more than a description of tactics to avoid police. These concepts help us understand the production of urban space as well as the street’s inscription in broader economies of anticipation in a world where—to borrow from Jones (2010) “nothing is straight.” *Gukatakata* (to zigzag), for example, is used interchangeably to describe persistent physical movement—the zig *(kata* literally “cut”) towards clients in the street, and the zag *(kata)* away from the police. The tacit knowledge of when to zig and when to zag is crucial in order to make a living and avoid arrest. But *gukatakata* is also used metaphorically to indicate the hustle and scheming one needs to make it in the street economy. *Ndakatakata* (I zigzag) is one of the many ways that *abazunguzayi* identify with their profession, but *ndakatakata* can also mean to hustle in general—to make use of the streets in order to cut through an otherwise unattainable straight life. In his work in Harare during hyper-inflation, Jeremey Jones (2010) describes the widespread use of a similar chiShona concept *kukiya-kiya* (also ‘to zig-zag’), “that suggests cleverness, dodging, and the exploitation of whatever resources
are at hand, all with an eye to self-sustenance” (ibid: 286). What makes this concept significant, is not that it describes how some people hustle (while others don’t) but that in contemporary Harare, as in Kigali’s streets, “the entire economy has come to be defined as kukiya-kiya” (ibid). You have to zigzag in order to generate possibilities in an otherwise impossible situation. Writing on Oxford Street, Accra, Ato Quayson (2014) also observes zigzagging as a general condition of urban life. What Quayson notices in Accra is a convergence of limited physical structures such as sidewalks and roads as well as practices that ignore norms intended to regulate certain activities to particular places. On Oxford Street, stalls and hawkers have taken over the sidewalks pushing pedestrians in and out of the street where they compete with motos, trogos, and cars. The physical movement of pedestrians, hawkers, and motorists all zigzagging around and into each other produces a theatre of social interactions where actors collide and trade insults and jokes in front of a participating audience. Oxford Street, which otherwise does not exist\(^\text{47}\), comes into being through this convergence of limited built space, physical practices, and social interactions. Kigali’s abazunguzayi certainly zigzag in Jones’ use of the word—through hustling—and in Quayson’s use of zigzagging as physical movement that generates social space in limited built environments. But Kigali’s nomadic space generates something else: a rogue response to Kigali’s managers who, unlike Harare’s or Accra’s municipalities, have no tolerance for slack.

\(^{47}\) Oxford Street, like Marathon, is a moniker.
Why is the street economy illegal? In every interview with abazunguzayi there is a two-part answer to this question: “We don’t pay taxes” (ntidusora) is the first response. But lots of people do not pay taxes in Kigali. Why do they only arrest you? Dutera akajagari, we create akajagari, a mess, disorder, chaos, crowding. Akajagari (see chapter 4) according to many abazunguzayi is where the business is. It is produced by crowding in and hanging out in a way that the municipality would never authorize, making impromptu markets that Kigali’s managers wish to erase from the city’s surface. Until a raid, abazunguzayi convert the streets into a sort of “festival of the people” (Lefebvre YEAR) in a city where public space is quickly disappearing (see chapter 2). Many argue that their akajagari is an asset, precisely because it is illegal. In addition to the products they sell, they create an opportunity to disobey an authoritarian government without actually taking on the risk of political opposition. As I show below, Abazunguzayi often cultivate a hustler subjectivity in order to offer their clients the universal pleasure of sticking it to The Man, by buying in the streets. Despite being wiped from the images of Kigali’s official future in the Master Plan, they continue to be present in popular representations of the city. Hip-hop videos, news shows, and Kinyarwanda film (see figure 2), frequently feature abazunguzayi as representing the hustle in the streets.
In demolishing the city’s public markets, and the physical infrastructure that kept the city’s informal economy in place, municipal authorities contributed to the very roaming economy that they then disavowed and criminalized. All of this only added value to the streets as a source of public space and rogue cityness. The city really does, however, need this nomadic economy to operate.

### 4.3 Street Economics

There are no reliable statistics for Kigali’s street economy but many abazunguzayi claim that it is the fastest growing occupation in the city. Unlike selling in the market or from a shop, it is an occupation that requires very little start-up money, no formal
government procedures, and promises daily, albeit marginal, returns. Abazunguzayi sell everything: kitchen utensils, bibles, snacks and drinks, loose cigarettes, recycled paper bags, jerry cans, even pharmaceuticals. Produce and clothes, however, make up the bulk of the street economy, with the produce sector easily accounting for the majority of abazunguzayi. It is also the only sector that is controlled by women.

“A lot of us are single mothers,” Geraldine explained when I asked her why only women sell from the basket. “It is easier to get started without borrowing money [from men]” (March 12th 2014). In 2008, she and her former husband were evicted from their home in Kigali’s Gacuriro sector to make way for a gated community of McMansions. They were compensated Rwf 90,000 (about a $150), not enough to buy a new plot in the city. Immediately after they were displaced, Geraldine’s husband abandoned her and their four children, taking the compensation money with him.

Geraldine was pushed into a sole care provider position. Now living under the financial temporalities of monthly rent, credit, and repayment obligations, she sells tomatoes in Marathon and Nyabugogo.

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48 A strictly enforced ban on plastic bags in Kigali has created a demand for packaging alternatives that, along with the city’s building boom, has given a rise to an innovative form of paper recycling. Abazunguzayi collect dry cement mix bags from construction sites, then spend hours beating the cement residue from the bags before cutting, folding, and regluing the paper material into a variety of retail sized bags. Ironically, this form of environmental regeneration—because it is unregulated—is as illegal as the plastic bags that it has replaced.

49 The only expression that comes close to a term for single mother in Kinyarwanda is pejorative and also means prostitute (indaya). “Dutafite abagabo, we do not have husbands/men,” is literally what she said.

50 Women who sell produce as abazunguzayi, when you need to qualified are called abagore ko bacuraza udutaro (literally “women who sell from the basket”)

51 Evictions in Gacuriro happened in waves. The first in 1999, then 2008. All were done by Casse Sociale (now RSSB)
Returns in the produce trade are lower but more consistent than other sectors of the street economy and consistency is what Geraldine needs to feed her family. On a good day she can buy a basket of tomatoes during the city’s wholesale market at 5 am and sell out by 1pm with a profit around Rwf 1,000-2,000 ($1.70-$3), minus overhead costs. This is only possible because Geraldine does not compete against, but works with, several other women who she shares street space with. To attract clients, she needs to sell below market prices. Selling at a discount is possible in part because she does not pay taxes, licensing fees, or rent that market and shop vendors do and purchases low quality produce. However, in order to make a meaningful return she also needs to negotiate a lower wholesale price. There are a number of ways to do this, all involve associations with other women. She and her colleagues\(^\text{52}\) gather every morning, pool their cash in order to buy a large bulk of downgraded tomatoes during the city’s early morning wholesale market and then divide their purchases and continue working together, selling side by side while keeping a look out for police.

The wageless work of childcare is also gendered in Kigali as “women’s work.” Women who sell from the basket, have arrangements with other women to take care of their children in case they are arrested. If one member of a wholesale association is arrested, the others either notify a neighbor to look after her children until she is released, or take in her dependents themselves. Many of these associations between women street

\(^\text{52}\) Geraldine refers to the other women that she sells with as bagenzi, colleagues. A word that a professional office worker would use to refer to her/his colleagues.
traders are made in the very place designed to break the street trade. The cramped communal women’s cell at Gikondo provides an excellent ground for women abazunguzayi to network and form associations as well as to call in childcare debts from those outside. Not all women who sell from the basket narrate their situation as Geraldine does. Many choose to raise their children in households headed by two or more women where men have no control over their earnings or resources.

“My husband? You mean the father of my child” Sandrine clarified, looking at Innocent who inquired. “My God (Imana yanje)! He was worthless. He just sat around all day. I didn’t want that” (recorded interview February 6th 2015). Innocent, a retired umuzunguzayi in her early fifties and I were hanging out at Sandrine and Violet’s place—two cousins who have been selling vegetables on the street for eight years.

Sandrine and Violet are raising Sandrine’s son. They were born in Kimicanga, and lived in the same home until it was demolished in 2012, then they moved to Kinyinya, one of Kigali’s new edge settlements. Like many of their colleagues on the street, they choose not to live with men, and run a two women headed household sharing financial and childcare responsibilities. This situation mitigates the risks of arrest posed to children as it is unlikely that they will both be in the streets at the same time to be arrested, and protects their earnings from men. Their home also overhauls the “traditional” gendered division of labor in the Rwandan household where men control money, property, the movement of people, while women are responsible for domestic
care and social reproduction.53 There are other ways that abazunguzayi pool their resources to survive in the city.

It is rare to meet someone in Kigali who does not participate in ibimina, collective savings schemes, but these are particularly necessary for abazunguzayi. Daily returns on produce are predictable, but low, between Rwf 800-2000 ($1-$2.75) a day. In addition to daily sustenance, large payments such as rent, school fees, and monthly credit will come due. On such a low income an individual needs to manipulate time in order to access value before it has actually accumulated. Ibimina allows participants to do this. For example, an ibimina group of women can meet once a day for a month. There are 30 members, and they decide as a group that every member will contribute Rwf 500 a day for a total pot of Rwf 15,000. On the first day, the names of all 30 members are put into a hat, one person will win the entire pot by lottery. Everyone returns the next day and repeats the lottery minus the name of the person who won on the first day. Only one person in the group will have to wait the full time it would otherwise take to accumulate Rwf 15,000, with everyone else accessing interest free credit to pay their bills. The trick is to belong to as many ibimina as possible, so that you are constantly receiving big

53By “traditional,” I do not mean static, non-modern, or even very longstanding but rather scripted notions of (umucyo, culture) gender hierarchies, divisions of property and labor, and who belongs where that everyone can easily articulate (even if these are not practiced). The “customary” notion that men control cash and land is the product of three processes: the expansion of the Rwandan kingdom, colonialism, and capitalism. Each process worked to erode lineage organizations that made it possible for women to claim property through inheritance (see JeffreyMoyas 1991; Burnett 2013). Property-less, women’s personhoods became defined in relation to the male property owners whose households they moved through—their fathers, brothers, and husbands. In Kigali many rules about gendered spaces and practices are not widely observed, yet these can nevertheless be readily articulated.
payouts before you have actually accumulated value. You may be making $2 a day, but receiving more, at least on some days, by manipulating time.

*Ibimina* is based entirely on trust. There needs to be a sense of community, shared responsibility, and shared ethics in the absence of any regulation to compel someone to return and contribute after they have won the lottery. For this reason *ibimina* associations/societies\(^{54}\) are always people who either work or live together. In general, women *abazunguzayi* form *ibimina* groups with other women *abazunguzayi*. They are likely to have the same contribution levels, and the group will also be able to respond to situations that require flexibility, in case someone is arrested, for example.

These associations of collective childcare, savings schemes, sharing the risks of arrest, and communal purchase practices are what Kinyanjui (2013, 2014) calls “solidarity entrepreneurialism;” business ethics based on communal care and collective well-being rather than expanding individual profits. Kinyanjui, however, posits “solidarity entrepreneurialism” as somehow outside of large corporate and national processes of capital accumulation, arguing that it is an alternative way of organizing economically, even suggesting that these ethics are somehow an “African indigenous social order”(2013: 150), and belong to a much older tradition of *ubuntu* (footnote).

Scale up, however, and solidarity entrepreneurialism not as an alternative capitalism, but entangled in larger processes of capital accumulation, some that are assumed to be in

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\(^{54}\) Rwandans sometimes use the French *société*. 173
competition with the street economy. For example, many policy makers argue that
*abazunguzayi* “steal” clients from tax paying, market traders. Most *abazunguzayi*
however work with market traders as an outlet to move clothing that is either out of
fashion or food that is about to go bad to discount economies.

In the produce trade, there certainly is competition between market vendors and
*abazunguzayi*. Competition, however, is limited by divergent return schedules, quality
and price scales, and distinct consumer bases. In addition, wholesalers, market vendors,
and shop owners often depend on *abazunguzayi* to move surplus stock, or commodities
that are near the end of their shelf life into the hands of consumers. In other words, illegal
street commerce does not work against or inhibit the city’s formal trade in food and
clothing, but is essential to these economies’ operations providing a discount outlet to

The produce wholesale works like this: There are shop and restaurant owners,
independent market traders, and women *abazunguzayi* who sell from the basket. Shop
and restaurant owners work independently. Market traders form collectives with their
colleagues, usually as a cooperative to purchase in bulk which lowers prices. They pool
their finances and can purchase up to an entire truckload of any particular commodity,
which in turn reduces the price-per-kilo while increasing their potential profits. Because
of their strong purchasing power, and their need for stock with the longest shelf-life,
market cooperatives generally purchase only first quality produce. Investor-wholesalers
then deal with *abazunguzayi* who move produce much quicker than market vendors and
will purchase the cooperative rejects as shelf life is not a particular problem for the streets.

*Abazunguzayi* also pool their resources in small associations that they form with their colleagues—people who work and often live together—but their collective finances are usually just enough to participate in the wholesale trade and purchase by the kilogram, the smallest available unit. In addition to working with limited resources, *abazunguzayi* also risk losing their entire stock if they are arrested or shook down that day, which means they have to keep their daily purchases low to minimize potential losses.

In Kigali’s street economy, you cannot work like a market vendor. There is no inventory stock, no regular clients, you certainly cannot offer credit. You need to be able to work fast while converting the needs of people who cannot afford to purchase more than a day’s sustenance into small gains. This is particularly true for women who sell from the basket, as they are dealing with produce that is about to go bad. You do this by manipulating three units: time, quality, and quantity.

Startup capital is lower, and so are returns in the produce trade. Most women who sell from the basket agree that between Rwf 5,000 and 10,000 (about $7-$13) is an ideal daily purchasing.\(^5\) On a good day in the right season, you and a few friends can pool your money and talk a wholesaler into letting you take several kilograms of third and fourth

\(^{55}\) Although many point out that as low as Rwf 2000 would be enough to buy produce to sell for the day.
quality tomatoes about to go to waste off their hands. You split these up. Now you need to unload your two kilos, preferably as soon as possible so you can make it home safely with a little cash. One option is to push across the street with your basket and join hundreds of other *abazunguzayi* in Marathon. Most of your client base are households eating on less than a thousand francs (about $1.75) a day. They work intermittent day labor in construction or informal sectors, some are *abazunguzayi* themselves, and others are low paid salaried employees such as public school teachers and sanitation workers. Use time to manipulate quality. In Marathon, third quality tomatoes are an advantage. Your clients cannot afford to buy by the kilogram in the market, they are going to eat what they buy that day anyways.

Make your gains by manipulating quantity. Disaggregate the smallest weighted unit of wholesale (the kilogram) into affordable daily rations: depending on size, these will be small piles of 2, 3, or 4 tomatoes that you sell for 100 francs each. If it is a slow day in Marathon, or if there is a police raid, pick up your basket and move: hit the bus terminals, market entrances, construction sites, or anywhere that has heavy pedestrian traffic. Hustle and you can unload three quarters of your basket in a couple hours and the rest on your walk home. Your profits should be between 1,000 and 2,000 francs (10%). Pay your daily *ikimina* which will give you a large payout before end of the month so you can pay rent, school fees, and other bills. Take the rest to the streets and pick up your own hundred franc piles of food for the day. There are, of course, other ways to work.
More established *abazunguzayi* have relationships with market vendors which gives them access to better quality goods, higher returns, and credit.

Adele, a single mother of seven in her forties has been selling produce on the street since 2000. She now works the busy sidewalks, with hundreds of other *abazunguzayi* outside the massive market at Kwa Mutangana in Nyabugogo. Instead of buying from wholesalers, she purchases second quality tomatoes by the half basin (plastic wash basin) from a tax paying vendor inside the market. It costs her Rwf 7000 for a half basin of slightly lower quality 2 tomatoes. On the sidewalk she disaggregates her basin into Rwf 200 piles of five tomatoes each. On a good day, she makes between Rwf 1000 and Rwf 2000 profit per half basin, and can easily move three half basins in a single afternoon. Market vendors gladly work with her as she moves their stock quickly before it loses value while absorbing all of the risks of arrest. In this scenario both *umuzunguzayi* and the market vendor make a marginal gain. Adele gets credit for the first basin which she can pay back in a couple of hours and hustles for profit the rest of the day (recorded interview 5/17/2015).

Women who sell from the basket manipulate several temporal registers in order to unload produce, access value before it accumulates, and mitigate the risks of the street trade. It is not just that these temporal registers are creative forms of solidarity entrepreneurialism. More significantly, *ibimena*, new household arrangements and the circulation of *abazunguzayi* throughout the city ground nomadic space in a temporality of anticipation. *Abazuunguzayi* are always prepared to be arrested, lose stock, or call in
debts and credit. But they also depend on, and wake up every morning anticipating, that the state will fail to put an end to the street trade.

This is a cat and mouse game (*injangwe na imbeba*), but it is also a numbers game. Victoire, who has been selling produce from the basket for over ten years responded as many others did when I asked her about Kwa Kabuga, the extralegal detention center where *abazunguzayi* are held if they get arrested:

“It is bad. You are traumatizing me by just saying it [Kwa Kabuga] (*urahahamutse*) [laughter]! They lock us all up together...one right next to each other, like a bunch of chickens and they feed us like chickens too, a little corn each day...they shave our heads...the General [a head prisoner appointed by the center’s staff] rules with a stick. It is bad (*hantu habi*). People die in there. I am serious! [more laughter]” (recorded interview April 3rd 2015).

Despite being arrested and sent to Kwa Kabuga for stints ranging from 3 days to a month, Victoire always goes right back to selling on the streets. Like many of her colleagues, she describes her relationship to the police as a game (*umukino*). Sometimes she gets caught, sometimes she gets away. So who is winning?

“We [*abazunguzayi*] will always win! [laughter]. We win every day (*Tuzabatsinda Turastinda buri munsi!*” she declares. “Listen. A cop (*pandagari*) can take one [street trader]...but there is a lot more of us...one [*umuzunguzayi*] goes down and a hundred of us take her place (*hapfa umwe ijana rikanjira* literally “one dies, a hundred will enter”).” This sentiment, “if you take one, a hundred more will come to take her place” is frequently expressed by *abazunguzayi*. It does not matter whether they get
caught or not, because the street trade will always beat the municipality, not with cunning but by meeting the city’s material needs.

In discounting goods and moving them quickly, women street traders link a consumer base that lives outside the temporal and pricing limits of regulated trade to legal wholesalers and retailers. They help to keep the city’s wages down. In Kigali, what some economists call the “wage puzzle.” (see Davis 2004), or the question of how the vast majority of the world’s urban dwellers live on less than $2 a day is solved by abazunguzayi. Most Kigali residents work ibiraka, non-contract day labor. Unskilled labor pays Rwf 2000 a day (about $2.75). If you have a trade you can make up to Rwf 5000. The problem with ibiraka is that workers often go several days without a job. This means that the Rwf 2000 that an individual makes in one day’s work needs to last a week, maybe even several. Salaried work in the city is also low wage. Sanitation cooperatives and companies pay street sweepers Rwf 20,000-30,000 per month (less than $1.50 a day) and waste collectors and sorters make Rwf 50,000 per month (less than $2 a day).

Primary public school teachers start at Rwf 60,000 per month ($2.50 a day), and often go months without a paycheck. Kigali’s booming construction and real estate industry and the city’s maintenance depends on large reserves of cheap human labor to keep the city running and private industry profitable. Low wages, however, cannot be explained through a large supply of unemployed labor.

The street economy is a discount economy that keeps wages down, and converts would be wasted produce and clothing into value. Marx ([1891] 2006) observed some
time ago that the price of a commodity—particularly when that commodity is human labor—does not start with supply and demand, but production costs. Wage-workers sell labor and need to be paid enough so that they can reproduce their labor power and work again. Kigali’s unsalaried majority that makes on average between $1 and $2 a day, certainly deploy a number of strategies from associational living arrangements to informal credit and savings schemes which mitigate the risks and uncertainty in the city’s low wage economy. But in order for these strategies to be effective, workers need to be able to access daily sustenance. Abazunguzayi like Geraldine, Sandrine, Violette, and Victoire discount the commodities that Kigali’s workers need (food and clothes), and legal retailers can no longer sell to prices that meet low wages and move with the daily temporality of precarious work.

Women abazunguzayi who sell produce, both because of what they sell, and because they are women, pose an acute problem for city authorities who wish to discipline this trade. The Rwandan state has worked hard to rebrand itself as Africa’s most gender progressive government. The country has more women in parliament per capita than any other country in the world. The ministry of gender is devoted specifically to “women’s development,” and spends its resources on programs to change men’s “mindsets” towards women, as well as more concrete projects such as revising inheritance and property laws. And at the same time, the Rwandan government locks up hundreds of women abazunguzayi a day in an informal detainment center. State officials are fully aware of this problem and have tried everything from microfinance schemes to
reframing women who sell from the basket as “vulnerable” people in need of assistance from state cooperatives. Women *abazunguzayi*, however, often choose their own *ibimena* programs and refuse state services and microcredit which comes with fees and interests. They leverage both the city’s aspirations to market Kigali as gender progressive and the needs of capital in order to maintain a foothold in the streets.

### 4.4 Disciplinary Breakdown

Rather than an example of the Rwandan state’s effectiveness (c.f. Goodfellow 2015), Kwa Kabuga is the product of official failures to manage capital and regulate the streets. In 2012, for example, city spokesperson Bruno Rangira issued a Kinyarwanda press release that announced that the municipal government will pay a years’ worth of taxes, rents, and market fees for any *umuzunguzayi* willing to move into a regulated market space (see *Igihe* 2012). While the program itself proved too complicated to implement it inspired another project that looked like it might work. On July 30th 2013, the district mayor of Nyarugenge where Marathon is located, offered legitimate market space and a six month tax and fee holidays to *abazunguzayi* willing to leave the streets. The district mayor had several hundred *abazunguzayi* rounded up in Marathon, but instead of being thrown in Kwa Kabuga they were taken to Biryogo market (see Chapter 56).

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56 For the city of Kigali to do this for just one individual for one month, it would require cooperation of a number of district and sector level officials, not to mention private tax collectors, security and sanitation cooperatives.
Every trader was given a plot and explained how their tax holidays would work. The ruling party press, *The New Times*, featured an article praising the city’s generous leadership in “helping street hawkers” (New Times 2013). The project lasted three days with all of the *abazunguzayi* returning to Marathon.

The district mayor forgot to also truck in the clients. Unlike Marathon, Biryogo market was no longer near a transportation and wholesale hub. In addition, the street economy which depends on mobility and fast transactions with discount goods, operates on an entirely different temporality than market trade which depends on regular clients, credit, and larger units of higher qualities sold over longer periods of time. It was simply not possible for *abazunguzayi* to make the switch without large sums of start-up cash that can weather clients who need credit and lulls in business. This revelation, however, did not stop the RNP from reacting.

In early August 2013, after Biryogo was left for dead by *abazunguzayi*, the police ran a series of aggressive raids on Marathon arresting over 175 traders in one day. The RNP then issued a statement on its website explaining the heightened raids as a response to the “insubordination” from *abazunguzayi* who abandoned the Biryogo market project (see police.gov.rw/news). But being imprisoned was nothing new to *abazunguzayi*, and the city still had no coherent program to deal with its growing street trade other than dumping traders in extralegal detention centers for indefinite periods of time.

An interchange between the Kinyarwanda daily *Imirasire* and Fidel Ndayisaba, then mayor of Kigali on April 4th 2013 highlights the extent to which the municipality has
never been able to control the streets. When *Imirasire* asked about police violence against *abazunguzayi*, particularly women who sell “from the basket,” the mayor responds:

“no one should be treated with violence or be forcibly removed, but, we also know that we cannot allow street commerce because it poses certain risks to the economy, security, and public hygiene…we have decided to put our energy into building large markets. However, before we get these built, there are other places to sell legally, Nyarugenge (a private shopping mall built on the old market with skyrocketing rents and close to foreclosure) is one…” (2013:2).

The journalist replies:

Thank you, but honorable Mayor, you did not answer the question I hoped you would. You did not explain why *abazunguzayi* are treated with violence, thrown in the back of police trucks, youngsters are beaten down and police chase them, et cetera. So, may I ask, is it possible that the city of Kigali uses force [against *abazunguzayi*] because you have no other way to clear the streets? Thank you.

The mayor gets agitated:

The city of Kigali is the state. No one can wear out the state [make it tired]. However, you can see that there is the right way of doing things and we take away [literally carry away] people who are doing it the wrong way because if you let something go on, it will just keep causing problems…it is like corruption…we cannot tolerate it, or it gets worse. That is all [for this question]. I cannot tell you every little thing that we are going to do and how we do it.” (*Imirasire* 2013 my translation)

This exchange nicely illustrates the impossible situation that city officials face with regards to the street economy. In asking about *abazunguzayi*, the journalist skillfully forces the mayor to respond by listing two divergent programs that have so far been ineffective in deterring street trade: service provision and support on the one hand, and zero tolerance policing on the other. In addition, the mayor reveals something else.

Unlike the street economy, which is governed by a discernable logic, set of rules, and
business ethics that everyone knows and can readily articulate, the traditional regulatory institutions (the state) no longer has a clear policy towards *abazunguzayi*. In their efforts to regulate the street economy, the municipality has been informalized, left only with an extralegal detention center.

Officially it is Gikondo, but on the streets it is Kwa Kabuga, Nkoko (the Chicken), and Guantanamo. Kwa Kabuga is a low-budget operation. There are no inmate uniforms, just a handful of staff, no recreation facilities and very little resources (although I am told there are a few bibles lying around). Men and women are housed in separate areas. Instead of having guards within, the police assign a “leader:” a fellow detainee who inmates call “The General” on the men’s side, and “The Concierge” on the women’s. Generals and concierges are apparently never street traders, but usually a repeat offender of a more serious, preferably violent, crime, who will be in Kwa Kabuga on a long stretch. They need to be inmates who the staff know and trust, and it helps if they are good with a stick. Generals and concierges usually employ a couple of “soldiers” [*ingabo*] who assist them and work as informants. It is not clear what benefits or incentives generals and concierges receive in exchange for keeping order, but they apparently do it with enthusiasm, frequently beating other detainees. *Abazunguzayi* call

57 Kabuga himself is wanted by the ICC and ICTR for crimes of genocide. He was recently named “the most wanted man in Africa” by Forbes Magazine (2011). A multi-millionaire former tea tycoon, Kabuga is widely believed to have bankrolled RTLM, the radio station that broadcast non-stop anti-Tutsi hate speech, and directed *interhamwe* militias towards Tutsi “targets,” in the lead-up to, and during, the genocide. He is also believed to have bankrolled much of the 500,000 machetes that were imported to Rwanda between 1993 and 1994 that armed *interhamwe* militias who were responsible for most of the killing during the genocide.
Kwa Kabuga “The Chicken” because inmates really do eat like chickens: one meal a day of corn and beans with a cup of water. Everyone is taken out of the communal cell twice a day: 8:00am and 2:00pm to use the warehouse facilities. Inmates sleep side-by-side on the cement floor and wear the same clothes they came in with until they are released. There is a shortage of mattresses and blankets. It is crowded, hot, rank, and, with the exception of the occasional beating, incredibly boring. The worst part, many assure me however, is not the heat, the food, the smell, nor the beatings. It is the non-human cellmates. The place is infested with bedbugs and former detainees have tracks of bite scars to prove it.  

Kwa Kabuga is no secret. The facility is frequently written about in Rwanda and abroad, often as the focus of international outcry. Human Rights Watch condemns the facility in every annual Rwanda country report since 2003, making it the focus of a (2006) special report, and a more recent (2015) report. In fact, the organization makes so much noise about the transit center that the ruling party press recently accused them of “recycling material” (New Times 2014, 2015). Amnesty International (2012) also frequently cites the center as an “illegal detention facility” and it is listed as a concern in every U.S. Embassy report on human rights since the center opened in 2003—a somewhat facetious example as “Guantanamo” is quickly catching on as Gikondo’s new nickname (see the Kinyarwanda daily igihe.com 2012). Academic researchers have also

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58 This narrative is based on over 75 recorded interviews with abazunguzayi who live in different areas of the city, who have spent time in Kwa Kabuga.
written about the center. In Kigali, it would be difficult to find an individual who is not aware of Kwa Kabuga and its conditions. Not surprisingly, no one wants to end up at Kwa Kabuga, and many abazunguzayi never do. There are plenty of areas in the city that never get raided. However, if you want to work the neighborhoods with the highest and fastest rates of return—the city center, Nyabugogo, Nyamirambo, and outside the markets—you need to always be ready to do time at Kwa Kabuga, repeatedly. And every abazunguzayi who works the “hot” areas plans to return to Kwa Kabuga if not today, then the next. Many repeat returnees claim that Kwa Kabuga regulars speak differently, with more slang and neologisms, and articulate their relationship to the police differently, always using the pejorative abapandagare⁵⁹, (similar to “pigs”) instead of the formal abapolisi, and I tend to agree.

“Sha, look at my head! Do you see any hair? Narakubiswe (I am all fucked up!), I just got back from Chicken! [laughter]” Sandrine and her younger cousin Violette are abazunguzayi that became key interlocutors for me (see above). We were all hanging out and catching up towards the end of my fieldwork. “They cut the chains though….”

(toboro ishene, slang for being let out early)

Violette, her cousin who is also an umuzunguzayi interjected:

“She got picked up by a plainclothes (umucivil), so she couldn’t run! [laughter].

“How did they get her?” I asked

⁵⁹See footnote 3 above.
“You see?” Violette responded, enjoying taking over her older cousin’s narrative with her own expertise.

“You have pandagare who dress like regular people…like work clothes, like that (gucya) sometimes they have a bag like they are shopping….they come up to you and start a conversation, like they are going to buy something, they will say ‘bites?’ [what’s up?], and while you are talking, they slip the cuffs on you, poo!” (recorded interview May 22, 2015).

Violette and Sandrine work one of the most raided areas of the city, Nyabugogo. They both estimate that they are arrested on average ten times a year.

“Look, for us, it’s [Kwa Kabuga] no problem, it’s our place, right? (ni iwacu sibyo?) we are used to it. But you also have the new ones (umushyashya) [laughter], they get scared on the way (bafite ubwowa), they say ‘they are going to beat me!’ [laughter] and they are! We call them umuvubuka, (infants) because they act like they are in nursery school (muri gardienne) --

--“Because,” Sandrine interjected, “You go there [Kwa Kabuga], and you don’t know what it is like. But then you get used to it, you realize you can do it and it is not a problem, you can go back” (ibid).

This way of narrating Kwa Kabuga was, at least partially, for my benefit. Sandrine and Violette know that I enjoyed hearing about the center and they spent hours retelling stories about escapes and near misses, and times in the center. At the same time, these responses are also telling of the extent to which abazunguzayi have incorporated Kwa Kabuga into nomadic space.

Consider an earlier conversation with Violette:

“It’s [kwa Kabuga] our place (iwacu) “[Being arrested is] not a problem. We are used to it…Listen: you go there for a time, you suffer a bit, they let you out, and you return, you
go back to selling on the street. They [police] can’t do anything” (Recorded conversation 2/6/2015).

Kwa Kabuga, is just another space that they circulate through. Rather than regulating or disciplining the street economy, the center has become *an extension* of the streets.

Many *abazunguzayi* embrace their opposition to the police and Kwa Kabuga as a source of agency, rather than suffering or violence. They brag about escapes, jumping out of police trucks, and always emphasize that as soon as they are released, they return straight to work, in order to zig-zag in the streets. They narrate the violence that they experience at the hands of police and in Kwa Kabuga as an uncomfortable, but familiar, part of the job. Some even argue that being chased and arrested helps them become better at what they do. Those that spend time at the center, regularly articulate a street subjectivity referring to themselves as “thugs” (*abagome*, also terrorist), and express mock pity for the *pandagare* (cops) who have no control over the streets and whose disciplinary institutions are repeatedly rendered useless by subjects who refuse to be disciplined. In addition, as Violette and Sandrine always remind me, *pandagare* and Kwa Kabuga help them control the best real estate in the city. Everyone, they reason, would sell in Nyabugogo if it were not for police raids. With this set up, those not willing to do repeated stints at Kwa Kabuga—who can’t figure out how to use *ibimena* and rearrange their households to mediate this risk—are weeded out keeping the best turf for them and their colleagues. It is not, however, just Kwa Kabuga’s failure to discipline the streets. In disavowing the street economy, state authorities rely on a structural blindness towards the
city’s need to reproduce the labor that makes it function. The municipality is policing human subjects, *abazunguzayi* because, as the mayor says, they are perceived to be a threat to the state’s authority and clear divides between order and chaos, and cleanliness and hygiene. But his failure to control the streets is not due to the cunning of urban subalterns, but because he has no control over low paid wage labor such as teachers, trash collectors, and other municipal workers who the city depends on and in turn depend on the street economy.

In their attempt to regulate the streets, city authorities have simply displaced informal economies into the realm of policing. Many *abazunguzayi* complain that Kwa Kabuga has given police leverage to raise the price of *utuntu dutoya*60 (literally “little somethings”) in order to get out of doing a stint at the center. Others observe that the standard fee to get out of the center since 2009, Rwf 10,000 is more often than not, pocketed by police. The evidence is an absence: not getting a receipt on payment. Either way, every street trader believes that the police profit more from raiding the thriving illegal street economy and would never fully commit to shutting it down. What has been created is simply another source of extractive value. In other words, the police are as actively invested in the reproduction of this discount economy as everyone else in the

60 There are several ways of describing corruption in Kinyarwanda. All have their own moral cosmologies and require speaking about corruption without naming it. The exception to this rule is graft. The result is that if a person uses the “proper” Kinyarwanda word for corruption (*ruswo*) it is assumed that s/he is speaking about graft instead of everyday nickel and dime corruption that permeates the social fabric in Kigali.
city. The relationship between the police, Kwa Kabuga, and the street economy however, is certainly not a benign one, nor is this situation sustainable.

4.5 Thresholds

On Friday October 17, 2014, Vedaste Niyomugabo raised a chair over his head and brought it down full force on the backside of a Rwanda National Police officer. He did this across the street from Marathon, in Kigali’s busy Nyabugogo bus and taxi-park. This happened in front of a daytime crowd of hundreds of commuters, moto-taxi drivers, shop owners and abazunguzayi on the day after Nyabugogo caguwa market was torn down (see Chapter 2). The police officer fell to the ground. The two men then struggled for a few moments before the officer killed Niyomugabo, shooting him twice. During the commotion a pregnant woman in handcuffs quietly slipped away into the crowd, leaving behind three mats that she was selling on the street that day.

In a number of press interviews in Kinyarwanda and English, police spokesperson Modeste Mbabazi cleared the shooting as self-defense. The police officer was obviously “doing his job, keeping order.” Niyomugabo was a threat to that order the moment he attacked a police. No one, he warned, could expect to attack police without “consequences” (ingaruka). As news of the event spread on the radio, on the streets, and online, Kigali residents learned more about Vedaste Niyomugabo aka “Nyinya” (tooth gap), and the events surrounding his death. The twenty-three-year-old was recently discharged from the Rwanda Defense Force in an IMF push to reduce the country’s military spending. Out of work, he joined the ranks of abazunguzayi on Kigali’s streets.
The woman who escaped was a friend and colleague, also an *umuzunguzayi*. It is not clear exactly why Niyomugabo attacked the police, but his death increased tensions between Kigali’s swelling ranks of *abazunguzayi* and the RNP that came to a head in early May 2016.

On May 7th 2016, four days before Kigali hosted the World Economic Forum, Theodise Uwamahoro, a 27 year-old *umuzunguzayi* was beaten to death during a police raid on Nyabugogo. This time, the crowd of thousands of *abazunguzayi* and other residents responded. In front of State Television cameras, they jeered and whistled at police reinforcements who were called in to restore order (see FIG X SCREEN SHOT). They paraded Uwamahoro’s covered corpse through the bus depot. The Kinyarwanda broadcast Voice of America (*ijwe rw’amerika* the only foreign Kinyarwanda media since the BBC’s Gahuza was banned in 2014), called it *kwigaragambya*, a protest, an action that is normally not tolerated by Kigali authorities. Police spokespeople were worthless in quelling the crowd. Facing a riot, just days before Kigali was set to showcase itself as Africa’s future ICT hub to the World Economic Forum, the mayor of Nyarugenge and the Minister of Family and Gender decided to create an impromptu public forum in Nyabugogo. *Abazunguzayi* could speak openly into microphones that faced state media cameras. One woman after another stood up and spoke about police brutality and corruption—topics that are normally censured in the media and taboo in public. They then reiterated something that scores of *abazunguzayi* told me: they will continue to zigzag. It is how they make a living.
In focusing on the production of nomadic space, collective economies, and the extent to which the streets have informalized Kigali’s municipal management, I do not wish to celebrate the streets as a source of subaltern politics. Abazunguzayi are well aware of their own stations in life, and see little that is worth waxing romantically about. They do what they do, not because of a political project, but because of what Marx calls “the dull compulsion of economic relations” (2006: 899). Kigali’s municipality is the source of its own opposition. I would like to underscore, however, the internal contradictions of urban design that hinges on a hubris of environmental determinism and a structural blindness towards to material needs of everyday life in the city. The state project to control Kigali does not fail because of a utopian ambition to improve (c.f. Scott 1998). It fails, repeatedly, so that a runaway discount economy can succeed. In their attempts to discipline this economy, and capture nomadic space, municipal authorities have generated violent encounters between police and those the city needs most, and this situation may not be able to sustain another body in Nyabugogo. But for Geraldine, Adele, Dieudonné, Violette, Victoire, and the other abazunguzayi that make Kigali work every day, there is no subaltern political remainder, just a dangerous living. For them, there is only one choice: Keep on running.
5 Liquid Futures

When potable water does arrive in Muganza, a community in one of the highest elevated western edges of Kigali, it is the result of a little physics and a lot of good luck. A blast of pressure from the electric pump down below in Nyamirambo will send treated water into the area’s limited piped grid and push the liquid against the pull of gravity. If the signals sent from the command center designate the right force—a combination of electric voltage from a transformer and built up pressure in the tank—the water will find its way into the thick blue, steel pipe that travels up through Mount Kigali’s forest towards Muganza. As the stream becomes more distant from its source of pressure, it loses momentum and is siphoned off into other locations—mostly wealthier residents who live further down-hill. However, if today is Muganza’s lucky day, the blast will have enough pressure to send water to the top of Kigali’s hydraulic line and partly fill one, but never both, of the area’s small cement *utuzu tw’amazi*, or water kiosks (literally “little water houses”). The kiosk’s meter will then awake and quiver, bounce a few times, and stabilize with a reading of how much water reached it that day.

Pasteur⁶¹ is the second in command of the lowest and most often hit kiosk. His job is two-fold: to announce the arrival of water—a task that thanks to a multiplier effect

⁶¹ All of the names that appear in this chapter are pseudonyms.
completes itself after a single cell phone call—and fill several 20 liter plastic yellow jerry cans while collecting the tariff (20 Rwandan francs per 20 liters filled). If the area is not already crowded with waiting men, women, and children, each with as many jerry cans as they can carry, it soon will be. Illegal street traders (abazunguzayi) will take advantage of the assembled crowd, hoping to unload a used coat, a few tomatoes, or a pair of flip flops on the instant market of waiting residents. Depending on how much pressure is let loose below, how leaky the underground network is, and how much water is siphoned off by connections in lower elevations, the blast might serve Muganza with drinking water for anywhere between twenty minutes to one hour. There is never enough water for everyone; there will be accusations against Pasteur of favoritism, and sometimes a fight before the kiosk resumes its normal status as an oddly shaped, functionless cement box with a dry tap.

The scene described above happens on exceptional days, maybe once a month, sometimes not for months, or even more than a year on end. Most days Muganza residents ignore their empty kiosks, fetching water several kilometers downhill in neighborhoods more likely to have consistent water supplies. The average two hour round-trip journey on foot they have to make for each jerry can limits a household of four to just 40 liters of water per day.62 Using precious drinking water for bathing, irrigation,

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62 In theory, there is—or at least was—a division of labor when it comes to fetching water. I am told that in “the old days” (umuco wa cera) fetching water was delegated to women and unmarried young men. The demands of urban life and the city’s water shortage however, have replaced gendered and generational divisions of labor with economic
and other luxuries is out of the question. Water for these activities must be found from different sources, usually rain water (if it has rained) or from one of the city’s quickly disappearing *amazi y’isoko*, (literally “water from the source”) ground water reservoirs.

This chapter is about engineered breakdowns, corporeal infrastructures, and liquidated free time. I argue that Kigali’s water distribution system is designed, not to deliver water, but to convert the bodies and time of people who live in areas like Muganza into municipal profits.

Muganza’s water troubles are, to be sure, a complex assemblage of urban politics, physics, municipal financing, and global trends in urban water management and distribution. Also entangled in this mess are solid infrastructures such as water kiosks, valves, and (live) human bodies. Most residents access their water in spite of, not because of, the city’s delivery system. My purpose in exploring the “embedded strangeness” (Star 1999) of this network, however, is not to discover a new form of insurgent or quotidian urban citizenship, but to show that the creative practices that Kigali residents use to circumvent the city’s hydraulic network, are nested in broader processes of capital accumulation that convert free time into wageless labor.

In contemporary urban theory, visible struggles over access to municipal water, shifts in hydraulic engineering practices, and new perspectives in urban political ecology relations. Everyone, except those who can afford to pay someone else, the elite and expatriate who have private sources, or those unable to work, must use their bodies to get water into their homes.
have brought the politics of water—and the infrastructures that move it—to the surface (see Gandy 1998, 2014; Latour and Hermant 1998). Water flows tell us about a city’s metabolism (Gandy 2004), unequally distributing finance and resources throughout its landscape (Anand 2012,) and the production of political subjects who are defined by their access to water (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008). To follow the flows, blocks, and leakages of water through a city’s underground up to the surface is to also trace how abstract forms of management and control, including finance, political power, and engineering, structure the daily lives of city residents (see Bender 2008; Swyngedouw 2004, 2015; Kaika 2005).

To control water is to control the city. But water leaks. To gain access to drinking water in many cities, those unwilling or unable to pay for utilities must “tinker” with meters, poke holes in pipes, and reroute flows (Von Schnitzler 2013). In return, engineers and an army of valves, pumps, and pipes are deployed to wrest control of this resource from the disenfranchised who respond with more sophisticated ways of hacking the network. The people and things that facilitate and block the flow of water throughout the city do more than just work with H₂O. They generate political, social, and economic effects (Chafflin 2013; Simone 2001, 2004, 2008) particularly when they breakdown (Anand 2011, 2012; Larkin 2013). While Kigali’s hydraulic infrastructure may not “work” in the sense of efficiently delivering water throughout the city, this network is nevertheless productive. The municipality’s limited water grid enrolls the bodies of city residents, converting collective dreams for a better hydraulic future into financial and
political resources. This chapter explores these themes ethnographically while linking science and technology studies influenced scholarship with Marxian theories of bodily labor and urban political ecology.

First, I examine the spatial-temporality of Kigali’s hydraulic present and attempts to convert it into something new from one of the most difficult areas to service: Mount Kigali. While the city’s hydraulic infrastructures do not facilitate the flow of water to the mountain’s summit, they nevertheless produce a foreseeable future that cultivates participation in, rather than antagonism against, the city’s water distribution system. I then turn to another future in the pipeline: a public private partnership designed by the World Bank, an international utility firm, and Rwanda’s public utility corporation. Drawing on Quayson’s theory of “free time,” Denning’s (2010) concept “wageless life,” and Marx’s writings on fixed capital, I argue that this future of surplus water necessarily depends on human wageless labor that is used for water distribution in the present, literally converting the bodies of the city’s inhabitants into corporeal infrastructure. I conclude by arguing that the subaltern practices that Kigali residents deploy to get water into their homes are being anticipated as a future sources of capital accumulation by private international service providing firms.

Research for this chapter took place during uninterrupted research between July 2013 and August 2015. It is based on in-depth interviews with city residents, kiosk operators, and pump technicians. It is also based on participation in several umuganda, monthly compulsory community service days; community meetings about water;
carrying 20 liter jerrycans of water up Mount Kigali, and waiting in lines for water with Kigali residents. All of the research in this chapter was done in Kinyarwanda and the translations are my own.

5.1 Empty Kiosks and Infrastructural Time

No one really wants to live on Mount Kigali, but it is one of the fastest growing areas in the city. Mount Kigali residents joke that they occupy two spaces at once mucaro cy’umujyi, the country in the city—a status that Eric Harms (2010) would call “social edginess.” They live in that particular type of sprawl that city planners produce in spite of, and often because of, their efforts to contain urban growth. To make way for Kigali’s new business core, financial hub, and entertainment districts, previously affordable areas of the city have been rezoned and demolished. Real estate speculation has driven land prices up, making it impossible for the less affluent or new arrivals to build, own, or rent dwellings near better serviced areas of the city. With no other choice, these populations have moved up to dangerous elevations that planners do not want them to settle in. Areas like Muganza: steep slopes in high elevations with little to no infrastructure, that are difficult and expensive to regulate and service, and prone to lethal landslides. Nearly every structure in Muganza is technically illegal according to the city’s new building and zoning codes while residents live under the persistent threat of eviction.

63 When they are not joking they use the term nkengero, the edge or periphery.
64 Two of my interlocutors have been killed by mudslides since this research began.
Despite being officially incorporated into Kigali’s municipality in 2005, Mount Kigali residents argue that a lack of water, electricity, and non-existent public transport place them outside of the “real” city. At the same time, most depend on inner city areas below to make a living, and the inner city depends on them for their cheap labor. They spend their days in transit, as walking street traders, doing intermittent day labor in markets and on construction sites, or as public school teachers and sanitation workers in better serviced areas of the city. In Muganza, mucaro cy’umujyi is also understood as a temporary condition, one that is anticipated to shift after their community projects to produce hydraulic networks yield desired results.

The material source of this surface anticipation lies underground. The pipe that is charged with carrying water to the top of Mount Kigali was laid in 2011 as part of a campaign to improve access to water by increasing the amount of people who live near “an improved water source” (Republic of Rwanda 2010). With the pipe laid, Muganza residents planned, paid for, and built their water kiosks and connections, expecting a steady flow of safe drinking water from the pipe to their taps. Despite failing to deliver the expected results, these hydraulic infrastructures nevertheless continue to cultivate collective investments in future water supplies.

The future of water in Muganza was the subject of discussion at a July 2013 community association meeting on top of the mountain. This meeting, a consortium on the community’s water troubles, took place in an unfinished primary school with a steel roof but no walls. Everyone knew why we were there: to address Muganza’s empty water
kiosks. The *abayobozi bw’umudugudu* (elected community leaders) had broached this issue with their higher ups, the *abayobozi bw’umurenge* (sector leaders) who had presumably contacted someone in EWSA\(^6\), the state utility company. A response had come back, making its way from EWSA headquarters down the decentralized channels to the sector office and then up to those of us in the school. We learned about the prohibitive cost of pipes, the shortage of municipal water, and the power/pressure needs that made it difficult to pump water to the top of Mount Kigali. We were told however, that it would be possible to create the necessary conditions for a steady flow of water. What EWSA needed from Muganza residents were more piped connections and more kiosks. We learned that it would be possible to use gravity to direct the flow of water down to densely populated areas on the north side of the mountain servicing thousands more residents and generating more revenue for EWSA. More pipes serving more clients, the community leaders informed us, would make it worth the utility company’s while to send water to the top of the mountain. The community itself would have to do this work using *umuganda* days (monthly compulsory community service) to lay the pipes and build the kiosks.

There was a catch: in addition to building their own infrastructure, Muganza residents would have to foot some of the bill for the pipes. According to the *abayobozi bw’umudugudu*, the total costs for the pipes would be 8 million Rwandan francs. The

\(^6\)Electricity, Water, and Sanitation Authority

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sector could pay 5 million Rwandan francs if Muganza and the community directly below them could come up with 1.5 million each. Muganza residents, many who support their families on less than 5,000 francs ($7.30) a week stood up, one after another, and pledged one and two months’ salary to the pipe fund. Each pledge was recorded and greeted with applause from the other attendees as their neighbors enthusiastically invested everything they could in their future water supply. The meeting in 2013 did not produce the expected results. It was not clear what happened to the three million francs, but the promised pipes never came. Both communities accused their neighbors and unknown sector officials of “eating” (pocketing) the money for the pipes. During umuganda days we nevertheless dug ditches to lay the new pipes that never arrived, planned the location of new water kiosks that were never built, and continued to anticipate water that never came. I often drew attention to this problem in conversations with Muganza residents. Why keep investing time, money, and labor in resources that never arrive?

The responses I hear back is that water is never just water. It is the stuff of iterambere, development or progress, literally “to cause to go forward.” The circulation of water from the city, many explained to me, would take them forward in space and time, adding a host of institutions, jobs, and people to Muganza. To be connected to the urban hydraulic network, is to be directly linked to the city and imibereho, livelihood, rather than having to search for a living far away. To make this point, two young shoe sellers who live in Muganza but work in the market at the base of the mountain had me list the busiest commercial centers in Kigali. They pointed out that in each area, one can
always find long queues of residents waiting for water with yellow jerry cans. Their plans to facilitate the flow of water to Muganza by transforming the built environment, they explained to me, will also transform existing spatiotemporal processes of accumulation, exchange, and labor while drawing the “real” city to Muganza, inoculating them against the persistent threat of eviction. To have an uninterrupted flow of water is to overcome what Guyer (2007) calls the “temporal evacuation” of the near future: an uncertain temporal present, punctuated only occasionally by miraculous bursts of H₂O. Unlike individual experience vis-à-vis global economic and religious doctrines that Guyer grounds her analysis in, however, Muganza residents situate their temporal sense on a tangible, material plane. The “foreseeable future” (ibid) is not just a horizon of expectation, it is an infrastructural time that can be visited, touched, and experienced in spaces that have access to reliable flows of H₂O.

The language of planning doctrines nevertheless helps. In our discussions about water, Muganza residents often cite Rwanda’s Icyerekezo, or Vision 2020, a planning document that few have actually read, but everyone knows about. Icyerekezo—which is better translated as “direction,” rather than vision—is understood by many in Muganza as a plan to produce a society without scarcity. In fact Vision 2020 does prioritize 100% access to clean drinking water by the year 2020 (Government of Rwanda 2000:17). While the definition of 100% access to clean drinking water has changed to the vague and conveniently malleable “access to an improved water source” (Government of Rwanda 2010), many people in Muganza hold Vision 2020 to their own interpretation, arguing
that with the right conversion of their material surrounds they can transform their status from the un-serviced city’s spatiotemporal edge (inkengerumumujyi) to the future “real city” (hagatimumujyi). This form of infrastructural time is not particular to Muganza.

Constructing hydraulic infrastructures for Muganza residents is about more than simply accessing water distribution. Ideally, the production of infrastructure should transform their urban landscape, aligning it with the spatial-temporal experience of the “real” city. Those who live on Mount Kigali must navigate the choppy space-time of global capital to get water and an urban status into their homes. Despite working from within the dominant political form and speaking the language of Vision 2020, Muganza residents’ actions are persistently interrupted by competing attempts to produce a different hydraulic future: strategies that require their kiosks to go dry.

5.2 Do Valves Have Politics?

When asked how to explain their persistent water shortages, Muganza residents initially shrug, but then a few privately indict Bosco, the water house “boss.” The kiosks are on his property. Bosco pays EWSA’s meter and then makes a small profit from individual collections at the kiosk. When water is out in Muganza, Bosco sells water that has built up in his personal tap for a higher rate (50-300 Rwandan francs/jerry can) to his neighbors that cannot make the long journey down the mountain. The rumor is that Bosco
is involved in a backroom deal with corrupt EWSA officials to limit Muganza’s water supply so he can sell his private stash for a higher profit.

I first met Bosco at his home in November 2013. When I asked him about Muganza’s water troubles, he paused, stood up, left the room, and returned a few minutes later in an Adidas track suit. “Dugenda?” he asked, ready to go? Forty-five minutes later, Bosco and I were standing at the low end of the government forest that separates Muganza from Nyamirambo looking down at a cement block raised from the ground. On one side was a handle under a heavy lock. Below the cement, Bosco explained to me, is a valve that blocks the flow of water to Muganza, redirecting it eastward towards the military barracks. Bosco explained that the valve was inserted in 2011, the same year that the pipe was buried.

According to Bosco, the valve in the forest not only reroutes the flow of water, it also controls the circulation of bodies. What makes this particular valve such an important actor on Mount Kigali is that it releases human energy into the entire hydraulic network distributing the circulation costs to Kigali’s residents that live in areas most difficult to reach. It stops the flow of water to Muganza and then activates human bodies that have no other choice but to trek down to lower elevations using their energy and time. Down below, Muganza residents pay the same tariff at the kiosk, but their labor also absorbs the would-be electricity and piping costs of sending water to Muganza’s higher elevation. While Bosco may not be the culprit, Muganza residents who point a finger at him are absolutely correct. There is an actor working against them—one that
embodies a regime of cost effectiveness while transforming their bodies into productive cost-saving mechanisms. The culprit just happens to be a hunk of stainless steel.

It is not only Bosco who points to the agency of material artifacts. Latour (1992) famously argues that any social situation consists of human and non-human actors. The organization and design of certain technologies such as seatbelt warning systems, and door handles, direct human behavior in ways that people have little control over. What is perhaps most compelling about Latour’s sociology of artifacts, however, is precisely the point that is so often missed by his adherents in a rush to declare the world re-enchanted with non-human agents. The “missing masses” of mundane artifacts make visible the agendas of designers that can be read in the interaction between technologies and their users. Artifacts like valves do not just interact with humans. These things are designed with the capacity to route a particular human action that an engineer, programmer, or architect wishes to manipulate (also see Von Schnitzler 2013; Winner 1982). There is no official EWSA policy to block water from Muganza or anywhere else in the city. And yet, we can read in the valve’s design, placement, and use, a regime of cost recovery that incorporates the human body into the network as a piece of infrastructure while completing the city’s municipal water grid. Kigali’s water distribution can “work” in a few areas by shutting it down in the rest of the city.

Understood in these terms, the water shortage in Muganza is not a failure of municipal utilities at all, but rather the successful manipulation of human bodies through technological intervention. In manufacturing a water shortage above, the valve solves
several problems at the pump down below. It incorporates Muganza residents into a strategy to recover electricity costs, and the maintenance costs of pipes, all the while ensuring that they remain EWSA clients at other kiosks. Muganza residents pay the same at the kiosks below and absorb the energy costs that would be required to pump water up to their pipes. What is surprising, however, is that no one has taken action against this setup. If dry taps are wreaking havoc on daily life, why not take to the streets and demand water, or better yet, descend the mountain and smash the valve?

Part of the answer to this question is that not everyone in Muganza wants water to flow. Private dealers such as Bosco make large profits from the breakdown. In addition, several families in Muganza support themselves by fetching water for residents who are unable to make the long trek down. Nor is this unique to Muganza. Ethnographies in cities across Africa frequently point to infrastructural breakdowns as sites of production for a number of differently situated actors. In Lagos, Nairobi, and Kinshasa, urban dwellers will maintain potholes, no-gos, go-slows, and water outages in order to profit from the business that accumulates in the blockage (see de Boeck and Plissart 2004; Gandy 1998). In fact, in maintaining a breakdown in Muganza, the municipality is operating more like an informal water cartel than a city government: holding services hostage in exchange for fee labor. Contrary to what de Boeck (forthcoming) and Koolhaas (2001) observe, however, not everyone enthusiastically embraces creative entrepreneurialism. There are other reasons why the water outage endures.
A Muganza shop owner, for example, who angrily railed against the “injustice and inequality” (*ni akarengane, kandi ubusumbane*), laughed when I pointed out that South Africans frequently stage violent protests over service outages in their cities. *Dugomba kwihangana* (we have to be patient/endure), he said. And then he continued:

“Look (*urebye*?). You can say you have a problem with water, you make demands until they put you in prison, but everyone already knows [we have no water]….The EWSA officials (*abashinzwe*) might say there will be water in the future (*ejo hazaza*)…but everyone knows these are just words. (*ni amagambo gusa nta ibikorwa birahari* literally just words, there are no actions there)” (recorded interview 1/21/2014).

It is a good point. Cutting off the water is one thing. Making it flow is another. Framed this way, the problem is not EWSA’s refusal to service Muganza, but the utility company’s inability to solve the city’s water problems. EWSA might have the water, but not the capacity to distribute it to Muganza in the first place. *Kwihangana*, in this sense, is not passive acquiescence. Rather it conveys a temporal experience in which service breakdowns and utility failures—however inconvenient—are normalized as an enduring—if annoying—characteristic of everyday life (also see Larkin 2004).

These are the politics of the valve. The scale of the valve’s work, however, does not stop at the forest. Embedded in the valve’s design are global shifts in urban water management to transform the earth’s supply of H$_2$O into liquid cash, ironically modeled as a solution to water shortages throughout the world. The valve is also the pressure point in Mount Kigali’s hydraulic network, foreclosing one future while making another possible. In drawing residents into the city’s hydraulic infrastructure, the valve blocks
projects on Muganza get water near their homes. It creates the temporal conditions of possibility to produce another future—one driven by processes of capital which extend well beyond the boundaries of the city.

### 5.3 Win-Win Water

Water is touch-and-go for the 79 per cent (World Bank 2010) of Kigali residents who do not have household connections and depend on EWSA kiosks. On good days, water can be found at most kiosks near the city center or in wealthier neighborhoods where home connections keep water from depleting. On bad days, and during frequent water outages, Kigali’s streets and minibus taxis are packed with crowds of city dwellers lugging yellow jerry cans, scouring the urban landscape for any kiosk with water. Kiosks that still have water are not difficult to spot. They are usually those nearest to treatment centers and have queuing customers, sometimes scores deep, who spend several hours waiting. This system encourages hoarding. Individual households with their own private connections make large profits on bad water days, selling hoarded water at inflated prices to their neighbors who cannot travel long distances or wait in long queues, sometimes up to 500 Rwandan francs (a 2500% markup) a jerry can.
The New Times—a ruling party friendly journal—frequently publishes chapters to allay public discontent over frequent water outages in the city. Headlines such as “Authorities Aware of Water Problems,” “Public-Private Partnerships Will Ease Kigali’s Water Troubles,” “What EWSA is Doing About Water Shortages” precede interviews with top EWSA officials assuring the public that progress is being made to bring potable water to their city if not their homes. Readers are told that Kigali’s shortage of potable water is a serious, but technical matter being solved by competent experts. The city’s engineers and ruling party journalists express the problem in Malthusian terms: there are too many people and not enough water. Kigali now needs 110,000 m³ (cubic meters) of drinkable water per day. The city’s current water treatment centers only produce 70,000 m³ (New Times 2013) leaving a surplus demand of 40,000 m³ a day. The solution, funded by the World Bank and the IFC is to utilize a private company to increase the city’s water supply. Kigali’s water shortage, government ministers and EWSA officials alike optimistically proclaim, is not a “curse” but an “opportunity” for private investments, public-private partnerships, (PPPs) and win-win solutions for the city and outside investors.

What these chapters refer to is the city’s Bulk Water Supply Project, funded by the World Bank and contracted out to the UK based private construction and utility firm,  

66 The New Times, as many Rwandans are fond of pointing out, describes itself as independent media but in reality works mukwaha kwa leta, literally “in the armpit of the state.”
67 This statistic only measures chemically treated potable water. There are several additional sources of safe water in the city. The many ground water reservoirs near Kigali’s wetlands, for example, supply residents with a so-far unmeasured quantity of safe drinking water.
Mott MacDonald Ltd\textsuperscript{68}. A little over $973,000.00 gets the World Bank an assessment of Kigali’s current water supply, suggested private investors, and a funding proposal to the IFC (the World Bank’s investment corporation) who will finance Kigali’s water supply public private partnership (World Bank Mott MacDonald 2013). The successful private bid, one likely to come from Mott MacDonald Ltd. itself, will receive funding from the IFC to develop a “bankable” (surplus) supply of potable water which will then be sold to EWSA and resold to Kigali residents. This setup is similar to most public private partnerships, a global trend to commoditize the world’s urban water supply aggressively promoted, and often times funded by international institutions (see Swyndgedouw 2005).

From a macroeconomic perspective, the anatomy of a PPP solves the shortcomings of both planned capitalism (Fordism) and total privatization (neoliberal models). It is supposed to replace inefficient and costly state utilities with lean profit-driven enterprises. The model is also designed to mediate distribution problems inherent in privatizing utilities. Private utility firms do not like to invest in costly distribution infrastructures that have no promise of returns such as pipes and pumps that bring water to populations that are far away from urban centers and unlikely to be able to pay for these services. Instead, they prefer to invest in a utility supply which promises a quick

\textsuperscript{68}Mott MacDonal has its own checkered history in the region. In 2008, the company was implicated (but never charged) in a bribery scandal over a power plant in Lesotho involving several government ministers and international corporations. Their partners, the German utility company, Lahmeyer were convicted in the scandal and blacklisted by the World Bank for five years. Incidentally, Lahmeyer was also contracted by the World Bank to privatize Rwanda’s utility company (then called ELECTROGAZ), before the scandal forced the government of Rwanda to terminate their contract and renationalize the country’s utilities.
turnover, requires no subsidies as long there is steady demand, and little maintenance. In this case the production of potable water which can then be sold in bulk to EWSA for a profit. The municipal utility company is left in charge of distribution, investing in fixed capital such as pipes, valves, and water kiosks with public funds. The “win-win” in a public private partnership is the division of labor between the two sectors in which each does what it is best suited for: the private sector corporation invests in supply, theoretically freeing up state capacity to manage and subsidize distribution. The private utility company stands to win quite a bit of money in production, selling water in bulk to the public. On their side, the public utility company will win a badly needed resource for distribution and added capacity for infrastructure building.

In practice, however, the public utility company must also operate on a regime of cost-effectiveness, circulating potable water as a commodity for sale in a way that can at least fully recover the costs of purchasing water from the private sector. Using the valve to block water from kiosks in higher elevations saves on massive energy costs (electricity at the pump), fixed capital (the installation and maintenance of pipes), and employs human bodies as no-cost infrastructure to circulate potable water. To remain cost effective and generate value infrastructures have to be able to manipulate space and time. The punctuated time of unreliable water flows experienced by residents who live in places like Muganza is the source of reliable flows of capital to Kigali’s future private water supplier.
There is nothing new about the commodification and unequal distribution of municipal water. Engels ([1845] 2009) wrote about it in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Since then many theorists have written about the long histories of this process from a variety of geographic and theoretical perspectives (Gandy 2006; Swyndgedouw 2005; Kaika 2005). In more concrete terms, however, Kigali’s hydraulic present structures the spatiotemporal relationships between infrastructure, labor, and capital through economic processes and political forms that suggest a different future is being anticipated—and contested. This is what is strange about the PPP: in order for it to work, two key elements normally assigned to (neo) liberal capitalism—the liberal subject consumer-citizen, and free market competition—do not exist.

5.4 *Corporeal Infrastructures and the Value of Free Time*

If you ask Kigali residents to describe the experience of having their bodies used as hydraulic infrastructure they will certainly laugh at the question but (not surprisingly) struggle to come up with a response. A better option is to pick up one or two empty jerry cans and join those who live furthest from working kiosks—Muganza for example—as they search for water in the city. There is never a guarantee that water can be found at any single kiosk. From the heights of Mount Kigali, to arbitrarily choose a

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69 In her (1999) essay “The Ethnography of Infrastructure” Leigh Star makes a similar observation. Users embedded in an infrastructural network have trouble speaking abstractly about how it works. They are simply *in it*
path and then go straight down the mountain is to court disaster. Working kiosks can run dry at a moment’s notice adding several more kilometers and hours to the journey. Kiosk bosses can raise prices to meet demand in a particular area, a practice that is illegal in theory, but never regulated. A kiosk with water can accumulate wait times upwards to two hours which, adding travel time could cost a person an entire days’ work or school and still not guarantee that s/he will get 20 liters that day.

Kigali residents mitigate these risks by improvising with their surrounds, activating a series of networks, and making use of what Elyachar (2010, 2012) calls “social infrastructures:” communicative channels that are simultaneously a public good and economic resource. Getting water into a household in Muganza requires cooperation from many people and a strong knowledge of Kigali’s limited hydraulic grid. After a path is chosen, residents stop and speak with those that are resting on the way up with full jerry cans to get information about the kiosks at the bottom. Those with friends or relatives in better serviced areas will be on their mobile phones, making sure that they are directed to the right place that sells water for the right price. The fact that conditions can change at a moment’s notice means that every few steps these networks have to be reactivated for updates in case a backtrack or path switch is necessary.

Fetching water is also difficult physical work. Anyone who has felt her/his body being crushed under the weight of 20-40 liters of water while struggling up a 40 degree slope, drenched in sweat, can appreciate the irony of being flattened and dehydrated by a life giving substance. While this labor is no longer strictly gendered in the city (see
footnote 3 above), it is certainly classed, performed in large part by Kigali’s unsalaried masses. Thanks to globally refined enclave architecture, the city’s elite and expatriates have delinked their bodies and families from all of the city’s fickle grids constructing their own micro-municipalities in self-contained McMansions.

From the perspective of labor, Kigali’s hydraulic network is a fickle, time consuming mess, fraught with risk, a temporality of uncertain returns. But in the Bulk Water Supply Project, it is a circuit of value that produces predictable returns with much potential for future profits. All of the problems of distribution have been dumped on Kigali’s residents who substitute wageless labor for fixed capital, as well as social and corporeal infrastructures for electric power, working pumps, and pipes.

Wageless, precarious, and temporary labor, once thought as the preserve of social reproduction, is now how much of the working world makes a living (Allison 2013; Denning 2010). While Marx is notorious for ignoring the wageless (domestic) work of reproducing labor so crucial to capital accumulation (see Harvey [1982] 2006; Denning 2010: 80), his writings on nonhuman labor can help us a great deal with understanding what happens when wageless labor is converted into infrastructure. Marx’s writings on fixed capital, (Capital vol 2) he shows how infrastructures work with humans to produce surplus value, transferring some of the capital advanced to the production or circulation process via human labor. What makes human and nonhuman labor different for Marx is not a distinction between subject and object, but property relations specific to liberal capitalism. If the wage is left intact, it mediates between the worker and capital so that
the former retains control over his/her body as his/her property “choosing” to sell time to the latter at fixed intervals (see also Harvey 2000). The means of production are private property, while socially necessary labor time—in its abstract form—is a collective good owned by workers. Things become complicated when bodies leak into infrastructural systems and are employed, not just as wageless workers, but as pipes and pumps while doing the work of distribution.

When Kigali residents substitute their bodies for missing infrastructure, and their wageless labor for distribution costs, the wage disappears as a mediating mechanism. The “free individual” liberal subject disappears with the wage and Kigali residents are alienated from their bodies which they must transfer—at least while they are fetching water—to the property of the utility company. Rather than paying for labor, the utility company draws on non-leisure surplus time—or “free-time” (Quayson 2014) of the urban poor to distribute commodified water throughout the city. Within these contexts, it can be difficult to imagine political alternatives to Kigali’s current distribution system.

Ethnographies of hydraulic infrastructures tend to lead to a concept that Kigali residents never use when discussing water: citizenship (see Anand 2011, 2012; von Schnitzler 2013, 2014). The concept is often useful to highlight political agency that emerges in the midst of breakdown and failure. In his writings on Mumbai, Anand (2011) observes what he calls “hydraulic citizenship: belonging to the city enabled by social and

70 The Constitution of Rwanda, unlike the constitutions of some neighboring countries, does not guarantee access to water as a human right.

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material claims made to the city’s water infrastructure” (ibid: 545). Kigali residents however, cannot make claims to the city’s water infrastructure because they are its infrastructure.

Water distribution does not have to be functional to be cost-effective. In Kigali’s hydraulic present, the do-it-yourself informal practices so often celebrated by urban anthropologists as the last holdout against the abstracting forces of global capital are converted into creative processes of accumulation by empty kiosks, valves, and inoperable pipes. EWSA achieves this by replacing the city’s infrastructural and energy shortage with the labor of Kigali residents. This process does not follow the traditional Marxian formula of capital accumulation in which human labor time (variable capital) transforms raw materials (constant capital) into a surplus through the production of commodities (exchange value). Instead, value is produced by substituting missing fixed capital (machines and technology) with wageless human labor, converting free-time into value through cost-saving mechanisms.

5.5 EWSA Tastes Awful!

Infrastructure may be a mode of address, but the call is not always answered enthusiastically. Under a regime of cost recovery too many water sources are a problem. Northern Muhima is Muganza’s topographical other. The community sits several thousand meters below Mount Kigali, nestled between Gasabo and Nyaregenge Hills to
the north and south with the wetlands separating it from Mount Jali to the west. Thanks to the area’s close proximity to Nyabugogo taxi-park and market, it has become a bustling inner city neighborhood of mixed commercial and residential uses. Many planners, journalists, and residents of the city, however, refer to Northern Muhima as a collection of “slums:” urban spaces of imagined criminality, low morality, and decaying built environments. The area’s high density housing can only be accessed through a maze of narrow foot paths that also function as open wastewater drains. Many homes appear to be in disrepair as homeowners do not have the necessary resources or rights to repair them within the city’s rigid new building codes.

Yet, despite the fact that it is often called a “slum,” Northern Muhima has something most low income areas in the city do not: physical infrastructure. The area’s proximity to the city’s largest commercial and transportation center, its several clinics, schools, and major hospital makes it a highly coveted chunk of real estate. Thanks to gravity and their short distance from the treatment plant in Kimisagara directly above them, residents of Northern Muhima enjoy a near steady flow of water to their many kiosks.

Many of Northern Muhima residents arrived long before the area showed any promise of urbanization and are now holding out against persistent attempts to remove them in order to make way for the city’s new central business district. In addition to being a headache for the real estate market and urban planners, they stubbornly refused to drink—and pay for—treated water until 2012 when the municipality took decisive action.
In late 2013, I went to visit one of the last holdouts against EWSA water: a single pipe in the wetlands that reaches down to a ground water reservoir well below the surface. There was a line of several people, standing in the mud, patiently waiting to fill jerrycans from this trickle of ground water. This water, the people waiting in line told me, was perfectly fit for drinking. No one was sure how long the pipe had been there, many of the older residents remember it as always being there. The year before, the pipe was buried along with several other ground water reservoir sources in the area. Several months later, residents that could not afford to pay for their water dug up the pipe, which continues to service them for free.

In Kigali it can be difficult to get an interview with government authorities, but if you are hanging out at a contested water source, they might come to you. She came hurrying towards us: mid-forties, pantsuit, shoes not fit for splashing through the muddy wetlands. The expression on her face said that she was not nearly as amused by my presence as those in the line to fetch water were. She addressed me, her back to the line for the pipe, introducing herself in halting English as a government lawyer who lives uphill from Northern Muhima. She could explain everything about the pipe, and did I prefer English or French? I asked her if she could continue in Kinyarwanda, so the others would understand. She agreed. “These people are not only breaking the law, but they are using amazi mabi, bad or polluted water,” she told me. “Look up there!” She pointed to the dense settlements on the hill above the highway. “All of their sewage comes down here to the swamp and it seeps into the ground water. When people continue using this
water they are at risk for all manner of illnesses.” Who buried these reservoirs? She looked back at me, astonished by such a naïve question. “We did!” She then warned me against using the water myself, and left before I could ask her who “we” is. When she was out of earshot, the man whose turn it was at the pipe looked up from the trickle of water he was guiding into his jerrycans and grinned at me. “Aragubeshya,” he said, and everyone else laughed, “She’s lying to you.”

If you want to dig up the past in northern Muhima, a good person to start with is Mama Janviere. She spent the last seventy-eight of her ninety-two years in the same home surviving Belgian colonialism, the Kayibanda and Habryimana regimes, the civil war. She only left her home once, during the genocide when she and her children narrowly escaped being murdered, by fleeing on foot to the Congo. When she is not working in her illegal bean farm in the wetlands or selling loose cigarettes to her neighbors, Mama Janviere is sitting in her two room house, chain smoking uncured tobacco from her pipe while sipping from a mug of urugwawa. She always has a walking stick nearby that she uses to thump people—including unsuspecting anthropologists—on the head for asking stupid questions. When I asked her about water, she reached for her stick. Fortunately for me, she only used it to point in the direction of the wetlands. “We used to get all of our water from down there” she explained:

“Not just us (Rwandans), but also abahindi, Indians, and abazungu, Europeans, drew from ground water reservoirs. Rich, poor, city dwellers and villagers used that water. There were reservoirs all over! In Kiyovu, Kimisagara, Kinyinya, hose, everywhere. Ground water has always been ubuntu, free or a common.
Sometime just before independence, 1958 or 59, the Belgians ran a pipe through Muhima and built the first water kiosks, selling *amazi imiti*, chemically treated water but we never bought it. Why would we? We have free ground water right here. Water was *ubuntu* until last year. We had several community meetings about our ground water. We were told by the *abayobozi bw'umudugudu* that all of the new settlements above us would begin to pollute our water sources with wastewater runoff. So we decided to raise money to hire a specialist (*umushinzwe*) who could build a protective barrier around our ground water reservoirs. We raised millions of francs with everyone contributing what they could. Then the *umuyobozi* disappeared. Some people say he went to Europe with the money we raised for the specialist. I don’t know, but we never heard about the money again. That year they buried all of the ground water reservoirs saying they were polluted. Some people dug up the pipe, but the rest are gone”

But who buried your ground water?

“The government! (*Leta*, literally ‘the state’)”

But who? EWSA?

Mama Janviere buried her forehead in her hands “How should I know!”

Were the reservoirs polluted?

“We [community residents] asked to see tests during *umuganda* meetings but we were told that there were no tests. I will tell you this, though (*ndagubwira*). I have drunk that water all of my life and it has never made me sick! Burying our ground water was political. We weren’t buying EWSA water. That is the real problem. You can ask anyone around here. That ground water is *amazi meza*, safe water.”

Then Mama Janviere pointed her stick at me and she said something I would hear many times from other people in the area. “EWSA water” she sneered, “tastes awful!”

It can be difficult to determine to what extent water is safe without testing it. The wetlands pipe is located downhill from densely populated areas. Since Kigali has no central sewage system, the inhabitants of these areas have no other choice but to dump
their waste water in open storm water drains that empty into the wetlands, pollution that could find its way into the pipe’s ground water supply. What is clear, however, is that before Northern Muhima residents dug up the ground water pipe, they operated through decentralized channels to maintain control over their ground water. Like those in Muganza, they organized a community association, raised their own funds and worked within local structures of decentralized leadership. In order to remain cost effective, the municipality circumvented local political form and buried their ground water without notice. Discussing this, many of Mama Janviere’s neighbors repeated her assessment of EWSA water, affectively investing the organization’s product with what they saw as its unsavory actions “EWSA tastes awful!” The ground water closures also still leave a question. If there is a shortage of drinking water in the city, why would EWSA, the government, or anyone else close Muhima’s ground water reservoirs?

Mama Janviere’s explanation echoed by many of her neighbors provides a useful starting point. In closing Muhima’s ground water source, EWSA is controlling water supply while manufacturing its own demand. The area’s residents help pay for the production and distribution of EWSA water through their productive consumption at the kiosks and their unpaid labor in fetching water. While free ground water still leaks through the last remaining pipe, accessing this water has been made so time consuming and difficult that only those who cannot afford EWSA water still use it while the others grudgingly lug their jerrycans to the kiosk. There are other reasons why EWSA or Kigali’s municipality would want to maintain a monopoly over water distribution. As
Mama Janviere reminds us, eliminating the area’s access to ground water is also a distinctly *political* act, one designed to mitigate the risks of privatizing water.

Municipal governments throughout the urbanizing world, whether driven by neoliberal theories of urban management, or induced by IMF structural adjustment programs, have lost control over entire urban political zones by withdrawing utilities. In theory this is not supposed to happen. Privatization is intended to create the conditions for independent utility firms to compete for consumer-clients, not alternative sovereignties competing for territories. As if by magic, a free market for services should replace inefficient state utilities. What happens in practice, however, is much more complicated. Organizations that are often opposed to municipal authority step in to provide services, regulate life, and in the process take political control over urban space. Some theorists argue that in much of the world’s informal urban areas “non-state actors have emerged as the *de facto* state” (AlSayyad and Roy 2006: 10). In many cities, spaces regulated by these actors are no longer the exception, but the rule. AlSayyad and Roy argue that citizenship in these contexts is based, not on rights or national sovereignty, but protection and service provision. They call these emerging politico-spatial forms “medieval modernities” in which the informal city, along with the enclave gated community and the refugee camp are taking on political and legal forms independent from—and often opposed to—the national state.

Water cartels in Nairobi and Lagos, where H₂O is completely privatized or infrastructure is absent, control vast territories by engineering prices and managing
supply. In many cities, water cartels sabotage and expand hydraulic infrastructures, meddling with preexisting infrastructures or providing their own supply. Given these contexts, it is easy to understand why EWSA would be concerned about competing water sources, especially at the level of distribution. The ground water reservoirs in Muhima not only pose a threat to EWSA’s revenue and cost recovery designs, but also provide the raw materials for other organizations to oppose EWSA, and through the provision of services, the ruling party-state and the World Bank’s designs on Kigali’s future.

In Muganza, water supply is manufactured to save distribution resources, in Muhima demand is manufactured to produce revenue. In both areas, however, attempts to save costs and produce revenue in water distribution structure the temporal experience of life as it is lived in the city. These designs disconnect those in higher elevations from the space-time of the “real” city in order to incorporate their wageless labor as hydraulic infrastructures, while those in easier serviced areas locked in to the temporal flows of EWSA water, losing control of this resource as a common.

5.6 Breakdown

Water, as Muganza residents remind us, is never just about water. On a variety of scales, the people and things that move water through a city tell us about the presence or absence of political possibilities, abstract forms of management and control, and how engineers and policy makers reflect and act on the effects of these infrastructures while
attempting to control the circulation of bodies, labor, and populations throughout the city. In dealing with the temporality, politics, and value of Kigali’s hydraulic infrastructure, this chapter aims to make visible issues that are often overlooked in studies of service provision. From a perspective of liberal citizenship, for example, Kigali’s hydraulic infrastructures would appear inefficient, or a failure: wasting the time of city residents while denying their right to municipal services. This “wasted time” however problematic is from the perspective of private utility companies, productive. It generates value through cost-saving wageless labor. In addition, the city’s hydraulic infrastructures help facilitate collective desires towards a particular future: an idea of an authentic urban modernity which can be seen and inhabited in other areas of the city. The potential opening for a real hydraulic politics is, of course, the tension between these divergent futures—one with flowing water and the other with corporeal infrastructure. What is clear, however, is that the future of water in many African cities is being designed to convert water into cash, rather than make cities with services.
6 Conclusion

It was the right song at the right time. In early 2014 Rwandan rap and R&B duo AmaG the Black and Safi Madiba let “Nyabarongo” loose in Kigali. Within days the music video could be heard and viewed everywhere in the city: bars, barber shops, salons, market stalls, minibus taxis, gyms, and anywhere else that radio waves could cut through the atmosphere. The song was still a standard for radio playlists in 2017 (at the time of writing) and have far surpassed the average life expectancy of a hit in Kigali’s unforgiving and always saturated pop music scene. What was so significant about this song? And how did a low budget production make it so far in Kigali?

Part of the answer to this question is how “Nyabarongo” speaks to the material and ephemeral processes that are difficult to name, but nevertheless work against most of the city’s residents. In “Nyabarongo” what Michael Goldman and others have called “speculative urbanism,” is rendered legible as a series of processes—enclosure, liquidation, and breakdowns—that must be kept at bay. Throughout the music video, AmaG the Black hustles his way from the wetlands and across the Nyabarongo River and into a plot within Kigali’s city limits. He is stopped by infrastructure breakdowns, being pursued by something or someone, and must enter the city via the wetlands. In the end, he sneaks onto the back of a truck, jerry can in hand, and rides across the river to start a
new life in Kigali. But getting into the city, however much a concern for most Rwandans, is not the point of the song. The point comes out when Safi Madiba picks up the chorus: once you cross the Nyabarongo River, you never (ever) go back.

“Nyabarongo’s” popularity is in its uniqueness. It is not a “typical” Kinyarwanda pop song. It is not about love, or hope, or swagger. It is about life as it is actually lived in the city: people hustling for “bread” umugati, (in both the food and the money sense of the term), work, and trying to stay a step ahead of the game. The song’s form is a manifesto of sorts that uses AmaG the Black’s quasi mythical arrival in Kigali to name the single most important tactic for living in Kigali. Every resident from abazunguzayi, caguwa traders, rock-throwing guerilla builders in Karabaye, to people who lug their water up Mount Kigali knows but rarely gets the chance to say. You don’t stay in Kigali or “make it” through cunning creativity, or by “resisting” capital or the state, or because of some neoliberal ethos of “resilience.” You stay by persistently and relentlessly refusing to leave. This refusal is important. It is not just about standing ground, but about defending what has already been built against the destructive processes of world-city building.

During my fieldwork in Kigali, “Nyabarongo” became something of a manifesto. City residents would often half-jokingly refer me to the song as a common frame of reference when I was having trouble understanding how or why they chose one action over another. In the song, AmaG the Black opens by skillfully uses ambiguous phrasing of “them” to avoid overtly criticizing Kigali’s decision makers: “you know that they will
never move (uweziko batimutse). And you uwacu (our people)! You need to refuse to leave![…]” And just for good measure, AmaG the Black throws in a: “Pas de retour! Pas du pardon!” at the end of every chorus—a reference to the French title of the (1986) Jean-Claude Van Damme film No Retreat, No Surrender, which occupies its own space in Kinyarwanda pop culture. Most of the song’s lyrics are in the first person plural (twese, we all of us) and speak of a collective common sense that something or someone wants “us” out of the city, but there is no way we are “going back” (out). The song and video play off of AmaG the Black’s characteristic self-deprecating humor to make a point that is dead serious: “we” are never going to leave, no matter what.

This dissertation has examined the relationship between everyday life and urban design in an aspiring “model” city by exploring the theories and voices of people who listen to songs like “Nyabarongo” and taught me how to hear (kumva) what these proclamations are all about. In arguing that Kigali is a 21st century metropolis that no single interest or process fully controls, I do not wish to only describe urban life in one corner of the world, but to understand the implications of new processes of capital accumulation and urban space making in our century. But this dissertation is also addressed to my own community, the “we” that I know as urban theorists. It is a call to update urban theory for our century.

When I began this research, I had been trained extensively in political, social, and economic theory. I firmly believed that the state, capital, and the ordinary were actual things and processes, out there in the world, and could be pinned down and examined.
An urban anthropologist’s job was straightforward: go to “the field” in Kigali and sort out who represented “the state” who the subalterns, and what the interests of capital was in Kigali. With plenty of models as examples, I would write a respectable urban ethnography that was a snapshot of city life in Africa: a call and response between the state planners and city residents in which the former would try to screw the latter who in turn, would always find a creative way to endure against all odds. This of course was not the dissertation that I wrote.

My own model turned out to be ill-suited for the 21st century metropolis. The theory that I had been trained in conceived of the city, the state, and capital as radically different from the processes I witnessed on Kigali’s streets. But also the scripts for what I was supposed to say about everything from the global secondhand clothing trade to service provision did not match how Rwandans caught up in these processes understood their situations or their relationships to planning processes. I had a lot to say about “collective consumption” the “right to the city,” but nothing about what AmaG the Black identifies as so crucial to life in Kigali: the refusal to leave. I could go on all day on the production of space, but not nomadic space, nor was I aware of the crucial zig-zagged movements throughout the city that made it possible for so many to survive. In addition, decisions in Kigali are not made by a coherent “state” but a series of competing municipal and global interests that involve international finance, transnational consulting firms, parastatal agencies, theories of development, land, and real estate. No single interest or institution controls these processes and they are often in contradiction with
each other. To make matters more complex very few decision-makers in Kigali—the “global talent” that actually writes plans, laws, and informs the state—have the necessary skills to work effectively in the city. During interviews with foreign consultants I was frequently surprised to learn that the “experts” on the other side of the table—many who had lived in Kigali for several years—lacked the language skills to be successful at basic tasks like ordering a beer or taking a bus. How could these technocrats possibly fix the city’s water or housing crises? The employees of multi-national design firms who did agree to speak with me during my fieldwork turned out to be so unaware of how the city worked, that even if they did want to hatch a sinister plot against the urban poor, they would fail at this too. Of course, none of this was the point. The Kigali Model does not work by being successful. It works by breaking down. The Model generates its own demand for “housing” by demolishing entire neighborhoods; it enrolls the bodies of city residents into the city’s infrastructure by capitalizing on service breakdowns; and produces discount economies by ruining markets. Planning in the 21st century metropolis is “creative destruction”—but not in the sense that this term is often used. Surplus in cities like Kigali are produced, not by converting something old into something new through accumulation, but by destroying for destruction’s sake. This dissertation is a first attempt to theorize these processes.

This is what I believe to be the original contribution of my research to urban theory. The Kigali Model is about a form of managing cities by producing crises and breakdowns. Once the source of political insurrection and the end of great careers, it is
the breakdown and failures that make planning in an age of speculative urbanism so profitable. The Model has blocked services rather than facilitating access to water and electricity. It has demolished neighborhoods instead of building housing; and it has dissolved markets, generating informality instead of producing a world-class built environment. More than a case study or an application of urban theory, this dissertation is designed as an intervention into how we (urban theorists) write and use the knowledge we produce. The Kigali Model is a call to think cities differently and to come to terms with radical changes in financing, designing and producing built environments. I do not suggest that we “rewrite” urban theory from the Global South. We need Lefebvre to understand the production of nomadic space. We need Smith to make sense of slum demolition in places like Kiyovu, and we need Marx and Engels to make sense of corporeal infrastructure. However, as Ananya Roy has argued elsewhere, just as classic urban theory is important for all cities everywhere, so too are the theories that are being produced in cities like Kigali, necessary to make sense of changes in urban management and politics in Detroit, Paris, or London. It is not just, however, the processes of model building and managing cities that are changing. How urban residents are political, and the conditions under which they make their own history is also changing.

There is a price to pay for speculative urbanism. Unlike Kigali’s street economy, speculative urbanism is not a coherent system that benefits financial and political elites across the spectrum. Nor has it generated the financial outcomes that it promises. It would be tempting to highlight the “insurgent” (Holston 2008) politics of Kigali’s street
traders and slum-dwellers—to show that “political society” will always endure. But, as I show in chapters 2 and 3, the real brilliance in Kigali’s streets and markets does not come from opposition or resistance, but in leveraging capital against itself. Against what more skeptical thinkers have to say about “informal proletariats” (c.f. Davis 2004), abazunguzayi and Kiyovu residents are doing precisely what Marx always hoped the industrial proletariat would one day figure out. They don’t resist capital, they use the internal contradictions of the system against itself. The politics of Kigali’s street economy, secondhand clothing markets, and housing settlements are certainly messy, and not straightforwardly progressive. At the same time, these tactics, unlike the heavily financed Kigali Model, work.

Ato Quayson makes a similar argument in his recent (2014) book on Accra. Perhaps, he muses, informality will be the locust of the ultimate revolution—the political awakening that Marx, Fanon, and many other thinkers once dreamed of. Quayson has a point. Like it or not, cities like Kigali are, in fact, run by street vendors, informal laborers, and the very people who the municipal government would like to see leave. And, as AmaG the Black argues with clarity, these large numbers of small operators do have the political capacity to make a collective stand and at the very least refuse to leave. Perhaps the question then, is not if informal proletariats will lead us into an “ultimate revolution,” but how far can refusal carry urban politics? As AmaG the Black points out, no matter how much money is invested into creating new real estate markets, turning human bodies into pipes, or liquidating markets, Kigali’s urban poor can nevertheless stand their
ground. *Twese dutahaha? Ni no! no! no!, All of us go back home (out of the city)? No! No! No! [we are not leaving]. And this is my third and final point. It might be messy, and certainly not recognizably Marxist or anti-capitalist. Yet these politics warrant our attention if urban theory is ever going to come up with a coherent understanding of the right to the city. We need to take urban informality seriously. When residents, like those in Karabaye maintain illegal neighborhoods or refuse to abide by zoning codes, like *abazunguzayi*, they are not celebrating neoliberal notions of resilience, but protecting collective resources—however limited these are—against the liquidating processes of world class building.
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Biography

Samuel Shearer was born in 1979 in Longmont, Colorado. Years later, as an older student in NYC, he attended Borough of Manhattan Community College before transferring to City College of New York to complete a BA in International Studies in 2008. In 2009, he completed his MA in Social Sciences at the University of Chicago before pursuing a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. He has been the recipient of grants and scholarships from the Fulbright Institute of International Education, Social Science Research Council, and the National Science Foundation. His publications include “Producing Sustainable Futures in Post-Genocide Kigali, Rwanda” as well as several policy briefs that are co-authored with the Rwanda Initiative for Sustainable Development, a local NGO.