

RECYCLING CITIZENSHIP: INFRASTRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND ACCESS  
STRUGGLES IN DAKAR'S SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

BY

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THESIS

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## **ABSTRACT**

In transforming the city's waste infrastructure towards mechanized incineration, a pending waste management reform in Dakar stands to dispossess over a thousand recycling workers, whose future access to waste and participation in the city's waste system is in limbo. In the face of an infrastructural reform that compromises their livelihoods, the workers draw on their ties to global civil society actors and a transnational advocacy network as they mobilize to defend their access to waste. This study analyzes the workers' mobilization as a citizenship struggle, given that their claims signify efforts to influence the political economy that shapes their livelihoods. Situated at the intersection of infrastructural violence, transnational activism, and substantive citizenship scholarship, this research draws on qualitative field research and document analysis to show how ties to global civil society actors can erode the practice of citizenship by weakening the capacity of the workers to be politically engaged and to shape the fate of their polity. In this case, the international civil society groups and transnational advocacy networks involved are financially supportive but politically uninvolved in ways that distance the workers from the state and disenable them from influencing government decision making. The emphasis in transnational activism literature on the emancipatory implications of local-global alliances for local struggles thus needs to be further scrutinized with respect to the ways in which these alliances transform local practices and formulations of citizenship.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

In cities around the world, solid waste management systems are being transformed in the direction of corporatization and technocratization. Such transformations are increasingly undertaken in the name of urban development and sustainability, and they embody a sustainability ideal that privileges highly technical solutions to urban waste issues while completely supplanting existing waste management arrangements (Post *et al.* 2003; Nas and Jaffe 2004; Baudouin *et al.* 2010; Sembiring and Nitivattananon 2010). Its close association with notions of dirt and impurity lends waste such symbolic power that waste infrastructures are critical sites for the mediation of the numerous interests and concerns that act in and on the city. Waste, and its management, is for example critical in the state's efforts to establish legitimacy and articulate authority both through the maintenance of cleanliness and through the ordering of urban space (Fredericks 2013). That waste stands as an antithesis to the modern clean city ideal also means that it has a kind of disruptive power (Moore 2009; Fredericks 2013) that citizens can and often do productively deploy in order to express discontent with and contest existing political orders. In addition waste is becoming so central in the quest for profit and in the pursuit of environmental sustainability, particularly in rapidly growing cities, that waste infrastructures are becoming arenas for the mediation of myriad commercial interests and environmental concerns. All of these position waste management infrastructures as critical sites of struggle between various visions of the city and interests over its resources.

This study centers on a pending waste management reform in Dakar that entails the closing of the city's main dumping ground and the shifting of waste disposal and recycling to a sanitary landfill. In drastically transforming the city's waste disposal and recycling system, this reform stands to dispossess over a thousand workers who have for decades handled Dakar's recycling but whose role in the city's future waste infrastructure is almost completely, and blatantly, disregarded in this moment of transformation. In this study, I first juxtapose this moment of exclusionary planning in contemporary Dakar with early-20<sup>th</sup>-century colonial public health projects in the city. What becomes evident from the encounter I stage between these two moments in Dakar's history is how the language of sanitation and appeals to scientific knowledge in the pursuit of a cleaner and healthier city are similarly deployed to produce socio-spatial exclusion in both instances. I interrogate, then, the discourse of environmental degradation and sustainability that accompanies the plans to close Mbeubeuss, with attention to how this discourse is strategically mobilized both by the state and by

various actors as they push forward their interests and visions for the city. While the power of environmental degradation rhetoric and the sense of urgency that it generates by routinely portraying Mbeubeuss as an “ecological bomb” helps to explain why the pursuit of a blatantly exclusionary policy has come this far, some explanation for the current disregard of worker livelihoods is also found in the growing gap between the state and Mbeubeuss recyclers, for whom the state is a distant presence but who are connected to numerous mostly international non-governmental organizations. As I think about Mbeubeuss workers’ mobilization against a reform that severely compromises their livelihoods, then, I interrogate their thriving ties to global civil society groups and transnational advocacy organizations with attention to what these ties mean for the workers’ ability to influence political decision making and to have a voice in the political-economic decisions and practices that shape their livelihoods. The remainder of this section introduces the pending infrastructural transformation in Dakar before stating my thesis. I conclude by outlining the organization of this study.

February 2014 marked the Government of Senegal’s latest announcement that it would close Mbeubeuss, the open-air dumping ground that has serviced the Region of Dakar since 1968. The region’s new landfill, in the village of Sindia, just outside of the city, is not yet in operation. Waste continues to be deposited in Mbeubeuss<sup>1</sup>. The announced reform is the latest development in a long and convoluted process of decision making over the future of Dakar’s waste management system. The process has produced uncertainty in the lives of some 1,800 informal recyclers who work in the dumping ground and constitute the only recycling arm in the city’s waste management system (Cissé and Wone 2013). The pending reform jeopardizes the access to the waste stream for most recyclers, as the jobs created by the new landfill and its three waste sorting centers will only accommodate 350 workers (Cissé and Wone 2013, p. 746). The reform threatens the livelihoods of several hundred workers at the heart of Dakar’s waste system, who currently find themselves on the brink of dispossession.

The waste management reform is couched in rhetoric of environmental degradation that routinely portrays Mbeubeuss as an “ecological bomb” and its workers as impediments to a sustainability best accomplished through sophisticated technological solutions. Since the first announcement, in 2005, of Mbeubeuss’ closing – under pressure from foreign donors and for reasons related not to the environment but rather to a highway construction project – there has also been

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<sup>1</sup> Fieldwork for this study was conducted in July-August 2014. However, in June 2015, the gridlock at which we found Dakar’s waste management system has not been resolved and the situation remains very similar.

foreign interest to privatize the dumping ground and turn it into a landfill gas capture project for alternative energy production and the generation of carbon credits. In the face of such plans, Mbeubeuss workers yet again risk being excluded: a landfill gas capture project, too, would require their eviction from the dumping ground. The workers are thus doubly threatened by the pursuit of an arguably narrow and highly technological urban sustainability ideal. The pending reform in Dakar's waste management system and the plans of foreign private capital to turn methane into profit in Mbeubeuss are symbolic of the precedence given to corporatization of waste management in cities around the world and the privileging of technocratic solutions that completely disregard and supplant existing waste management arrangements<sup>2</sup>. The pending reform, in its disregard of Mbeubeuss workers' livelihoods, fits within a broader tendency to pursue urban sustainability through purely technological prescriptions, and its need to render the worker disposable.

Despite the reform's implications for worker livelihoods, the government has not seriously addressed Mbeubeuss workers' needs or the question of how to fairly incorporate them into the planned waste management system. The workers' future role in the city's waste system is clothed in ambiguity. In the reform process, Mbeubeuss workers are overall excluded from decision making, as the future of Dakar's waste management system and along with it, the fate of the informal recyclers, remains in limbo. In this period of transition, Mbeubeuss recyclers and their association, Bokk Jomm – meaning “Share the Honor” in Wolof – express frustration with the government's disregard of the workers and distrust in the state as an authority to which they can extend their claims for inclusion into the city's new waste management arrangements. In the meantime, Bokk Jomm continues to nurture its connections with numerous, mostly international, NGOs and a transnational advocacy group. These connections have historically enabled the association to secure funding for much-needed improvements in living and working conditions on the dumping ground, as the government has remained distant.

I situate this study at the intersection of three bodies of literature: urban infrastructure and infrastructural violence, transnational activism, and substantive citizenship. In the face of an infrastructural reform that compromises recycling workers' livelihoods, the significant influence of international civil society actors and transnational advocacy networks on everyday life in the dumping ground make Mbeubeuss an ideal site for examining how ties to a global civil society and participation in transnational activist coalitions impact local actors' ability to influence government

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<sup>2</sup> See Assaad (1996); Post *et al.* (2003); Nas and Jaffe (2004); Baudouin *et al.* (2010); Sembiring and Nitivattananon (2010).

as they mobilize around access struggles. That Mbeubeuss workers live at the political margins and that their ongoing exclusion from political decision making disempowers them from influencing the political economy that shapes their livelihoods also means that their resistance and mobilization in the face of infrastructural transition has implications for the meaning and practice of citizenship. This mobilization has the potential not only to secure the recyclers' inclusion in the city's future waste management system, but also to disturb the structures that maintain citizenship as merely a formal category of membership without emancipatory edge.

I will show how the lens of 'infrastructural violence' can be constructively broadened from its main focus on how inequalities and social suffering are produced through exclusionary infrastructural *provision* to interrogations of how moments of reform in urban infrastructures disturb the human architectures behind the city's built environment just as they open up possibilities for more inclusive infrastructural arrangements or generate mobilization that can have transformative implications for formulations of citizenship. Additionally I will show how ties to a global civil society and transnational advocacy groups can have contradictory implications for the capacity of grassroots activism to successfully influence policy making. While such ties may enable local actors to secure valuable resources, in the face of a distant state they can also widen the gap between the government and local actors with detrimental effects on these actors' capacity to influence the exercise of state power to their advantage in a moment of pending reform. I will thus demonstrate that the emphasis of literature on transnational activism on the emancipatory implications of local-global alliances for local struggles needs to be further scrutinized with respect to the ways in which these alliances transform practices and formulations of citizenship.

Chapter II of this thesis explores scholarship on infrastructural violence, transnational activism, and citizenship. I identify several limitations or gray areas within each body of work. These are explored in this study. Chapter III sets the stage for my juxtapositioning of public health interventions in early-1900s colonial Dakar with contemporary waste management policy reforms, as it outlines the theoretical debates and methodological concerns that inform the way I account for historical influence in this study and the way I connect colonial practices to contemporary realities in the postcolonial city. Chapter IV is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the methods and limitations of this research. The second section synthesizes existing historical studies of the public health interventions surrounding the plague outbreak of the early 1900s in colonial Dakar. The third section presents the core of my research. I first chronicle developments in Dakar's waste management system over the past four and a half decades before centering on the current moment of

pending reform. Here, I demonstrate how environmental degradation and sustainability discourse is strategically deployed both by the state, to justify an infrastructural reform that would dispossess several hundred workers, and by Mbeubeuss workers, to resist their looming dispossession by reconstructing themselves as stewards of the environment. Next I interrogate, through the lens of citizenship, the impact of Mbeubeuss workers' strong ties to several civil society and transnational advocacy networks on their capacity to contest their looming dispossession and influence political decision making in this moment of reform. Chapter V offers a discussion of my findings and links this study back to the scholarship by which it is framed.

## CHAPTER II

### Theoretical Framing

This chapter places in dialogue the three main bodies of literature that inform this study: urban infrastructures and infrastructural violence; transnational activism and global civil society; and citizenship. I begin with a review of contemporary research orientations in the area of ‘infrastructural violence’, which position urban physical infrastructures as sites in which to observe the production and reproduction of inequalities and social suffering in the city. ‘Infrastructural violence’ offers a particularly useful lens through which to analyze the (re)production of inequalities because it combines attention to the materiality of how injustice is perpetuated with a commitment to tracing *social* responsibility for the processes of exclusion, marginalization and dispossession that infrastructures can help to enable.

Next, I turn to literature on transnational activism. I juxtapose some positive aspects of transnational solidarities and global civil society to which the literature directs us against work that views transnational activism from a more critical perspective. As I will argue, analyses of transnational activism can be tremendously enriched if we interrogate local ties to a global civil society with an eye on citizenship. In essence, this is because citizenship captures state-society relations in such a way that it can produce more nuanced understandings of the contradictory impacts that transnational activism can have on the ability of marginalized local actors to influence the political economy that shapes their livelihoods.

Thus, citizenship becomes the thread that ties my attention to urban infrastructures to my focus on transnational activism. As such, I lastly turn to the third body of work that anchors this study, as I delve into the development of thought on citizenship since the 1980s. Here, I hone in on contemporary frameworks of substantive citizenship, where I identify two main limitations: their lack of clarity over which struggles are indeed about citizenship and their insufficient engagement with institutional arrangements and state power. I follow with a brief discussion on how frameworks of citizenship that devote more attention to institutional arrangements and the exercise of state power help us overcome some of the limitations of current substantive citizenship approaches while also sharpening our understanding of transnational activism.

## **Infrastructural Violence**

In the past few years, urban infrastructures have garnered keen and renewed attention in the social sciences. Of note here is an orientation toward the political dimensions of infrastructures as well as to what Dennis Rodgers has termed ‘infrastructural violence’ (Rodgers and O’Neill 2012). The concept of ‘infrastructural violence’ emerges at the intersection of Mann’s (1984) articulation of ‘infrastructural power’ as an important channel for social regulation and Graham’s (2010) work on ‘infrastructural warfare’ as an increasingly pursued strategy of war given the contingency of social wellbeing on infrastructures. Central in this renewed focus on urban infrastructures is the notion that infrastructure, because it significantly shapes “how people relate to the city and to each other” (Rodgers and O’Neill 2012, p. 403) and because its workings are so imbricated with the complex cultural, socio-economic and political arrangements of the city, is a constructive site for observing the processes of marginalization and dispossession that produce social suffering. Infrastructure at once embodies and naturalizes, thus making seem inevitable, the stark inequalities that characterize contemporary urban life (Ferguson 2012). As such, analyses of ‘infrastructural violence’ generally draw into conversation discussions of ‘structural violence’<sup>3</sup> (Farmer 2004), positioning urban infrastructure as a locus for observing the material channels through which systemic violence is exerted and reproduced in contemporary cities.

An orientation toward ‘infrastructural violence’ follows from the premise that infrastructures, far from being a neutral backdrop to urban politics and practices (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008), are at once a physical manifestation and a medium for systemic violence and social injustice. Emphasis of the intrinsically political nature of infrastructures is especially important at a time when technocratic prescriptions for what are routinely framed as infrastructural failures are consistently and indiscriminately privileged, with little consideration of the social construction of crises or the social implications of suggested solutions. Such a tendency is uniquely problematic in African cities, where it is nuanced by conceptualizations, within policy and some scholarly circles, of these cities under a strongly colonialist metanarrative of urbanization, modernization, and crisis (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004). Here, then, recognition of the political dimensions of urban infrastructures is necessary not only for challenging the pursuit of urban development through highly technocratic solutions but

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<sup>3</sup> Farmer (2004, p. 307) defines ‘structural violence’ as “violence exerted systematically – that is, indirectly – by everyone who belongs to a certain social order.” For Rodgers and O’Neill (2012), one of the merits of this articulation lies in the fact that it counters the liberal preoccupation with individual responsibility as a pathway to justice by rescaling discussions of violence at a societal level.

also for confronting the types of processes of knowledge production about African cities that feed into the understanding of these cities solely through the rubrics of crisis.

McFarlane and Rutherford (2008) and Rodgers and O'Neill (2012) map out the various research directions and possibilities that a sensitivity to infrastructural violence creates for both understanding and challenging the practices and processes that underpin and reproduce, through physical infrastructure, urban inequalities. For McFarlane and Rutherford (2008), the mutual constitution of infrastructures and cities makes the critical interrogation of infrastructures a productive exercise in generating renewed understandings of the city as well as of social justice. An important theme identified by the authors – one that is strongly evident in Giglioli and Swyngedouw (2008), also in the Issue introduced by McFarlane and Rutherford (2008) – is that of moments of infrastructural collapse or transformation as rendering visible the “underlying urban power geometries” (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008, p. 378) that dictate service provision in the city. Moments of transformation expose the configurations of power that underpin existing infrastructure networks while offering a possibility for a transformation of these power relations. As such, these instances are particularly instructive for those committed to challenging the “processes of fragmentation, inequality and crisis in the urban fabric” (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008, p. 364) that infrastructures help generate and for which infrastructures can be critical sites of struggle.

Rodgers and O'Neill (2012) position ‘infrastructural violence’ as an empirical lens that can enable scholars to trace and unravel *social* responsibility for social suffering in ways that liberal ethics, with their focus on *individual* responsibility, and the dominant frameworks for understanding cities cannot. For ‘infrastructural violence’ scholars, modes of analysis of the urban such as ‘assemblages’, ‘entanglements’, ‘circuits’ and ‘flows’, while productive for capturing the dynamism and complexity of contemporary cities, are often limited in their ability to locate blame and trace social causality, for “how can one raise the question of responsibility for the systematic wrongs that their research uncovers when the identified culprit is neither a person nor a policy but a faceless set of fleeting social connections?” (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012, p. 402). At the same time liberal ethics, in emphasizing individual responsibility and individual improvement as the path to social progress, can distract us from the broader processes that reproduce “systematic wrongs” and thus they can prevent us from envisioning structural-level reform. In many ways, then, ‘infrastructural violence’ constitutes a site for locating the material embodiments and instruments of structural violence in ways that create possibilities for both assigning responsibility and inciting transformation at a societal level. This orientation to possibilities for societal transformation through the lens of

infrastructures is important to note here, as critical engagements with urban infrastructures are primarily rooted in a commitment to the exploration of concrete and material recommendations for moving towards a more just city. In such an endeavor, analyzing infrastructures is particularly constructive given their collectively shared nature. That infrastructures are collectively shared, Rodgers and O’Neill (2012) argue, means that they can be productive sites for thinking about collective responsibility and for actualizing better ways of living together in the city: for enacting a “more positive politics” (Rodgers and O’Neill 2012, p. 402) that can guide us in the direction of realizing more just futures.

How does a focus on urban infrastructure in particular uncover social responsibility, and how does it elucidate pathways for building a more just city? In Rodgers and O’Neill’s (2012) articulation, structural violence is built into and flows in part through physical infrastructures. Subsequently, these offer concrete sites and opportunities for both understanding and challenging structural violence. They enable an understanding of the materiality of how injustice is produced and experienced in the city while directing our attention to the “political economy underlying the socio-spatial production of suffering” (Rodgers and O’Neill 2012, p. 405), and thus pointing to social responsibility and to possibilities for structural reform. However, ‘infrastructural violence’ entails going beyond the notion of infrastructure as instrumental to domination (Rodgers 2012). Thinking about ‘infrastructural violence’ requires that we also engage with the “broader regime of justice” (Rodgers 2012, p. 432) to which the observed patterns of infrastructural development and their socio-spatial implications are integral. Thus, analyses of infrastructures must be rooted in examinations of the political-economic interests that drive projects of urban development, the paradigms that influence how urban development is pursued and processes of knowledge production that inform these paradigms, as well as the broader configurations of power that shape trajectories of urban development.

Rodgers and O’Neill (2012) distinguish between *active* and *passive* ‘infrastructural violence’ on the basis of intentionality behind the production of socio-spatial inequalities. However, such a distinction is not critical if it is a commitment to social justice that drives our intellectual pursuit. Furthermore, such a distinction risks obscuring the economies of power behind infrastructural decisions: infrastructural limitations or omissions – calculated or not – are often fundamental to the maintenance of the circuits of privilege and exploitation that serve to perpetuate certain urban orders. “Passive” infrastructural violence is very often instrumental, and such an observation is key if our attention is on social responsibility and justice. There is perhaps value in invoking the active-passive

distinction when we think about the types of channels and politics necessary for social redress of infrastructural violence. These channels and politics may be different in the two cases. However, we must not allow this distinction to obscure the instrumentality of “passive” infrastructural violence.

The sensitivity to the materiality of how structural violence is (re)produced and experienced that is inherent in frameworks of ‘infrastructural violence’ is not meant to distract from the task of assigning social responsibility. It marks not a turn to nonhuman agency, which would in many ways hinder the process of tackling or redressing social injustices by ensuring that Rodgers and O’Neill’s (2012) “culprit[s]” for “systematic wrongs” remain faceless. Rather, interrogating material structures seeks to dismantle the anonymity of processes of exclusion and marginalization that physical infrastructures sometimes secure by masking, naturalizing or depoliticizing structural violence (Ferguson 2012). Thus, a focus on material structures entails not a return to “naïve empirical realism” (Ferguson 2012, p. 558) and certainly not an evasion of the question of social responsibility. Rather, as Ferguson comments, it turns to issues of societal responsibility and obligation to redress injustices embedded in and realized through infrastructures. Society is the site that bears responsibility and must remain the locus for interrogating causality. For Ferguson, however, thinking about this social responsibility with respect to physical infrastructures in the age of globalization and neoliberal reform necessitates that we reconsider what the ‘social’ entails and also offers possibilities for how we can rethink “the social.” McFarlane and Rutherford’s (2008) reflections on the political dimensions of infrastructures also point to this importance of broadening the scale at which we think of the ‘social’, as they demonstrate how interests from abroad and negotiations outside of the city are critical in decisions over urban infrastructures. For them, attention to the politics of urban infrastructures thus destabilizes the notion of the city as a coherent and bounded entity (McFarlane and Rutherford 2008). Similarly, for Ferguson (2012), current work on ‘infrastructural violence’ shows that social responsibility permeates the borders of the nation-state. Our inquiries into the ‘social’ then cannot remain “captive to the nation-state” (Ferguson 2012, p. 562). In this sense, Ferguson concludes, ‘infrastructural violence’ puts before us the challenging, yet extremely productive and critical task of developing new ways of “linking sociality and responsibility” and of “bringing the material and the moral into a more satisfactory alignment” (Ferguson 2012, p. 562).

If the commitment to *social* causality and redress of systemic injustice that guides interrogations of ‘infrastructural violence’ requires that we rescale spatially the frames through which we conceptualize the ‘social’, tracing social responsibility also necessitates a temporal rescaling. What kinds of engagements with historical influence are necessary for understanding how structures

of the past spill into the present and continue to condition the workings of the city – particularly the postcolonial city – and the production of social suffering? How do we historicize contemporary injustice in the city so that we may better understand and more effectively challenge its roots and nodes of reproduction? Just as attention to infrastructural violence demands reconsideration of the spatial scales through which to conceptualize the ‘social’ and interrogate ‘social responsibility’, it also makes evident that we cannot remain captive to the so-called neoliberal present. Tracing social responsibility demands sensitivity to historical influence, but the task of tracing historical causality is far from straightforward. In this study, my approach of staging encounters between two distinct instances of exclusionary planning in colonial and contemporary Dakar rests on a methodological leaning towards multidirectional frameworks of historical influence and an ideological commitment to a “postcolonial theory of cities” as Roy (2011) envisions it. In Chapter III, I elaborate on the debates and bodies of work that inform how I think about historical influence, and explain how an approach like the one I take can lead to both sharper understandings of contemporary phenomena and renewed processes of knowledge production about the urban, where the postcolonial city is repositioned as a site from which to write theory. For now, I turn to the second body of literature that informs this study.

### **Transnational Activism**

Multi-scale civil society movements are challenging processes of capital accumulation that are becoming increasingly transnational. Transnational activism – bridging local and global social movements – is changing the way that social change is pursued and theorized (Glassman 2006). Literature on transnational activism tends to show that local action alone may be insufficient for challenging local conditions, given that these are nested within broader transnational processes. Here, the concept of a global civil society links the global level at which problems originate and are perpetuated to the local level at which they are experienced and reproduced. As Castells (2008) elaborates, “global civil society” finds expression in the rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a global or international frame of reference in their action and goals (see also Kaldor 2003).

One commonly cited argument for the potential of transnational activism to strengthen local struggles is ‘boomerang effects’. Keck and Sikkink (1999) propose this concept in their work on transnational advocacy networks, where they argue that transnational networks create new linkages between the state, local civil society organizations and international organizations while using their

influence and assets to provide important resources for actors at the local level. This blurs the boundaries between the state and citizens, and it expands and reorients “the recourse both citizens and states have to the international system” (Keck and Sikkink 1999, p. 89). In effect, this blurring of boundaries serves to transform the practice of national sovereignty.

Malseed (2008) supports the significance of ‘boomerang effects’ for Karen villagers’ resistance in Burma, where local ties to transnational networks, he argues, are the reason that the villagers’ concerns have gone from being ignored to being central in discussions of human rights in the country. Mansfield and Macleod (2002) show that ties with global civil society groups have strengthened local actors’ capacity to contest local and global processes in Cambodia. There, they remark on a growing recognition by international donors and transnational advocacy networks that empowerment of citizens at the local level is necessary for sustainable advocacy. This has fed into donor pressure on international NGOs not to advocate on behalf of local communities but rather to build the capacity of local community leaders so that they may become advocates themselves. What is evident in much of the literature that supports the positive aspects of transnational activism is the premise that local actors may have weak infrastructure for collective action at the local or national level and that ties with transnational actors may bolster these structures and “lend voice” to local actors (Kaldor 2003; see also Smith 1998).

There are, however, many serious challenges associated with transnational activism. Kamat (2002) shows that technical assistance from global civil society organizations often disciplines and “NGO-izes” local associations rather than truly empower them. Glassman (2006) cautions that maintaining transnational solidarities and participating in global civil society requires resources that the marginalized poor often do not have. This magnifies the risk that their demands will yet again be left out of the social vision and political priorities of transnational movements. Subsequently, these movements may continue to be fashioned around the interests and lived experiences of a more-privileged elite within the transnational network. Fox (2000) questions more directly the effectiveness of ‘boomerang effects’ as he argues that although transnational activist networks have generally raised public expectations and standards of horizontal accountability at the local level, international actors lack the capacity to sanction and thus their ability to substantively influence local politics and state power is often limited. Similarly, Ribot’s (2004) reflections on international actors’ and civil society groups’ lack of accountability to local communities or the state and the subsequent erosion of local democracy challenge the positive stories of local empowerment found in studies of ‘boomerang effects’. Gandy (2008) offers a similar word of caution as he argues that NGOs are often

characterized by weak accountability, given that they cannot be removed by electoral means if they do not fulfill their mandates. Thus, the extension of their activities into the provision of services that were formerly administered by the municipality often weakens constituents' ability to have a say in matters of urban service provision.

Taken together, these three critiques about the influence of international actors on local (dis)empowerment caution against overestimating the power of 'boomerang effects' to influence the exercise of state power or to boost local actors' capacity to influence this power. The kind of local disempowerment that Ribot (2004), Fox (2000) and, less directly, Gandy (2008) highlight suggests that an area in need of more attention is how local-global coalitions influence local actors' ability to shape the broader political economy in which they are embedded. By this, I do not mean to dismiss the validity of arguments about the impact of 'boomerang effects' on the practice of national sovereignty, although there is room to critique or reconsider these arguments. The transformation of national sovereignty in the context of globalization and the increasingly transnational forms of association that this produces are well established in the literature. Although these findings can be critiqued, my primary concern here is with something that literature on "boomerang effects" leaves completely uninterrogated. Studies of the transformation of national sovereignty in the age of globalization and of the strengths of transnational activism, by taking for granted the robustness and actual political capacities of local-global ties, tend to elide the various forms of local disempowerment that such ties also produce. It becomes evident, then, that putting literatures on transnational activism in dialogue with work on institutional accountability can produce more nuanced and accurate understandings of the ways in which local actors' power over the policies and practices that influence their lives is transformed by increasingly transnational networks of both governance and activism in the age of globalization – perhaps in ways that undermine citizenship. Citizenship, because of its focus on relations between the state, civil society and the individual (Brodie 2000) offers a productive way of bringing these literatures together. Examining transnational activism with an eye on citizenship can enhance both how we understand transnational solidarities and how we conceptualize citizenship in the context of globalization. It is to citizenship that I turn in the following section, where I explore the development of scholarship on citizenship since the emergence of renewed and critical engagements with the topic in the 1980s.

### **Conceptualizing Citizenship**

In response to the erosion of the principles of public welfare and the global economic

restructuring that ensued with the emergence of Thatcherism and the New Right, the 1980s brought renewed attention to issues of distributive justice and equality as the basis of social reform (Turner 1990). As these concerns assumed a more central position in the research agenda, citizenship received attention particularly as scholars returned to the work of T.H. Marshall (1950, 1965, 1981) for guidance on how to theorize the tensions that they were observing between citizenship entitlements and the social inequalities inherent in late industrial capitalism (Turner 1990). During this period, Marshall's work was fundamental to the renewed conceptualizations of citizenship that emerged; critiques of Marshall were central in determining the directions that work on citizenship followed from the early 1990s. In this section, I trace the development of conceptualizations of citizenship, from the renewed scholarly engagements with Marshall's work in the 1980s to recent frameworks of substantive citizenship. My intent is to identify some of the dominant research directions and some of the significant changes in how citizenship is theorized that have emerged from ensuing debates.

First, I outline the fundamental tenets of Marshall's model of citizenship before delving into some of the limitations of his formulation, which the global social restructuring of the 1980s made evident. I devote attention to Marshall's work and its critiques because these significantly shaped theoretical debates on citizenship in the 1980s and impacted the directions that citizenship studies took in the 1990s. Next, I hone in on the early 1990s, when citizenship studies established itself as a field in the humanities and social sciences (Isin and Turner 2002), and highlight the conceptual shift from *formal* to *substantive* citizenship. Here, I elaborate on a framework that strongly embodies this conceptual shift: Holston's "insurgent citizenship". I delve into some of the vast scholarship that grew out of Holston's framework, and which constitutes contemporary theoretical approaches to substantive citizenship. I follow with some of the limitations of these approaches, particularly with respect to: 1) their lack of clarity regarding which struggles are in fact about citizenship and indeed have repercussions for the meaning and practice of citizenship; and 2) their tendency to disregard the importance of formal institutions and state power for citizenship practice. I then consider approaches to citizenship that center on institutional arrangements and the exercise of state power, positioning these as a counter-point to the theoretical distance from the state at which we find ourselves with current work on substantive citizenship. Finally, I argue that putting substantive citizenship frameworks in dialogue with these more institution-centered approaches fills some of the gaps in substantive citizenship frameworks while also problematizing transnational activism in novel and constructive ways.

Marshall (1950, 1965, 1981) centers his theory of citizenship on the contradiction he observed between the formal existence of political equality and persisting socio-economic inequality in the history of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. He positions citizenship as a political tool through which the state reconciles the tensions inherent in this contradiction (Turner 1990). Marshall (1950) defines citizenship as a “status bestowed on those who are full members of a community.” Marshall (1965, 1981) thus conceptualizes citizenship as a status that grants rights and duties based on membership to a nation-state. Focusing his analysis on Britain, he argues that citizenship rights span across three dimensions: the civil, the political and the social. Marshall arrives at this triadic model of citizenship by historically tracing the development of citizenship in Britain through an evolutionary perspective as such: the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a period of significant developments in terms of civil rights (freedom of speech, right to property, freedom of faith, etc.); the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a period of sustained working-class struggles for access to political institutions/resources that brought about growth in political rights (expansion of the political franchise); and, after the establishment of civil and political rights, the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a period marked by expansion of social rights, which became the basis for entitlements to social security (Turner 1990).

The political and socio-economic transformations of the 1980s, which brought about renewed theoretical engagement with Marshall’s work, elucidated several limitations of Marshall’s model and thus highlighted new research directions for the study of citizenship. Critiques of Marshall’s model of citizenship have spanned along several lines: from the fallacy of understanding citizenship rights as developing progressively (Giddens 1982; Mann 1987; Friedmann 2002); to the problematic of jumping from the particularities of 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain to a universal model of citizenship (Mann 1987); to Marshall’s under-developed theory of the state (Turner 1990); to the fact that his analysis remains decontextualized from the international political economy and the nation-state’s role within it (Brodie 2000). I focus mainly on the last two critiques, as these were particularly instructive for the new orientations that emerged in citizenship studies in the 1990s.

Turner (1990) argues that a comprehensive theory of citizenship must produce a comprehensive theory of the state. In Marshall’s model, however, the nature and role of the state remains underdeveloped. It is implicit that the state is the primary instrument through which groups extend and legitimize their claims, and the entity that grants social rights. Still, the fact that the state remains one-dimensional, along with the fact that the role of the state is not contextualized with respect to the international political economy in which it is embedded (Brodie 2000), means that the potential for using Marshall’s model to understand citizenship in the context of increasing

transnationalization and abating principles of public welfare, which were some of the key drivers of the renewed interest in citizenship in the 1980s, is limited. In the context of flexible capitalism, Turner (1990) argues, the autonomy of the nation-state that Marshall's model assumes is irrelevant. The state's autonomy in how it mediates social conflicts and what policies it enacts – and its role altogether – is constrained by its obligations to supranational institutions and its embeddedness in increasingly global economic networks. Overall, Marshall's lack of theorization of the state makes it difficult to adapt his theory to different global conditions without changing it substantially.

Mann (1987) offers what Turner (1990) considers to be one of the strongest and most comprehensive critiques of Marshall. He puts forward a substantially different formulation. Driven by the limitations of Marshall's Anglo-centric model for producing more universal understandings of citizenship, Mann's (1987) comparative analysis traces citizenship formation historically in five distinct political contexts. For Mann, citizenship is chiefly a strategy for advancing class interests, and the state hands down citizenship rights as an effort to alleviate social conflict. Mann thus conceptualizes citizenship struggles mainly in terms of class conflict and through the Marxist categories of class and capitalism as a mode of production (Turner 1990). An important issue arises from such a conceptualization that makes Mann's framework rather narrow, in Turner's (1990) view. Mann's perspective on citizenship as handed down from the state – his framing of citizenship as passive<sup>4</sup> – cannot account for struggles that are not primarily about class but still influence the development and practice of citizenship. This limitation in Mann's Marxist theory of citizenship becomes glaring, to Turner (1990), in the face of the new social movements of the post-industrial period and their contributions to the expansion of social rights.

The changed socio-political and economic realities of the 1980s thus revealed the shortcomings of existing theories of citizenship and generated new research orientations in the 1990s. Specifically, new struggles for recognition and redistribution and the new practices of claim-making that came with these struggles revealed that frameworks of modern citizenship, which had already begun to be more systematically challenged in the 1980s, were theoretically paralyzing. Isin (2000)

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<sup>4</sup> Turner (1990) distinguishes between *passive* and *active* citizenship as follows. Conceptualizations of citizenship as passive frame citizenship as something that is handed from above by the state; the citizen is a passive bearer of rights and does not actively make claims against society via the state. Conceptualizations of citizenship as active frame citizenship as something that is pursued and formed from below, via local civil institutions and through local forms of association (Turner gives the example of trade unions) and the claims that groups advance to the state as they try to defend their interests. Turner (1990) explains that his distinction between active and passive citizenship is derived largely from Lash and Urry's (1987) distinction between the organization of capitalism as a system from above, as in Germany, and capitalism from below, as in Britain. Thus, Turner argues that just as one may speak about the structuring of capitalism from above or below, one may speak about the historical structuring of polities as from above or below.

synthesizes the theoretical turn that emerged in citizenship studies in the 1990s as a result of changing social contexts. He highlights that post-modernization<sup>5</sup> brought about new struggles for recognition by historically marginalized groups. These struggles necessitated that the nation-state expand its capacity to accommodate and recognize different and often conflicting demands, just as they elucidated the need for formulations of citizenship that are not based on an assumed homogeneous polity. Additionally, processes of globalization<sup>6</sup> began to introduce new sources of authority, such as supranational organizations, on citizenship rights and obligations while eroding the capacity of the nation-state to act as an autonomous authority over citizenship.

Consequently, a major conceptual shift within citizenship studies in the 1990s was that towards understanding citizenship not merely as a status granted by an autonomous and monolithic state through legal rights, but rather as a *social process* through which “individuals and groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights” (Isin 2000, p. 5). Furthermore, the contradiction between the global spread of the pursuit of democracy after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the deepening inequalities within and between nations as well as new or persisting forms of political and economic exclusion elucidated that there were gaps between the formal possession of rights and the ability to exercise these rights, and this is where the study of citizenship needed to focus. The recognition of “the disjunctions between the form and substance of citizenship” (Miraftab and Wills 2005, p. 202) thus drove an analytical shift within citizenship studies from *formal* to *substantive* citizenship, and so the focus moved from citizenship as a state-granted status to citizenship as a process of claiming, contesting and practicing rights. The turn to substantive citizenship and the work that emerged from it also served to accommodate an important postcolonial critique of modern theories of citizenship: their inadequacy for capturing the dynamics of citizenship in formerly colonized nations, where the relations between population and state have followed drastically different trajectories than in the Western states on whose histories these formulations are largely based (Mamdani 1996; Gaventa 2002). Thus, *substantive* citizenship is defined as “the possession of a body of civil, political and especially social rights” (Bottomore 2006). Holston explains substantive citizenship as the “ability that citizens have in reality to claim rights they possess formally” (see Lazar 2012). This notion of citizenship contrasts the concept of *formal* citizenship, which is broadly

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<sup>5</sup> Isin’s (2000) “processes of post-modernization” here encompass the following: 1) “processes of fragmentation through which various groups have been formed”; and 2) “discourses through which ‘difference’ has become a dominant strategy” (p. 1).

<sup>6</sup> Isin’s (2000) “processes of globalization” here encompass both: 1) “[processes] by which the increasing interconnectedness of places becomes the defining moment”; and 2) “a discourse through which ‘globalism’ becomes a dominant strategy” (p. 2).

understood in terms of membership to a nation-state and the possession of rights (Bottomore 2006).

The departure from more static conceptualizations of citizenship as membership in a polity or nation-state thus generated a body of work that began to examine how citizenship is differentiated and how those who in practice are excluded from its project struggle to claim it. A significant portion of this work located the city as a domain for the expansion of citizenship. This work turned to the potential of struggles over collective consumption in the city, and over the “right to the city” (Lefebvre 1996), to set off broader social transformations. These studies explored and continue to explore citizenship in the spatial, political and associational practices of marginalized urban groups as they claim and articulate their rights through the appropriation of urban space. An important contribution of this work has been to direct attention to both the spatiality of how citizenship is gradated and the ways in which citizenship is claimed through the deployment of space.

James Holston’s work has been formative within this research orientation. Holston (1998; 2008) explores how citizenship is established outside of formal, state-sanctioned spaces of participation in his study of struggles over land ownership and legality of residence in São Paulo’s autoconstructed peripheries. He traces the political mobilization around these struggles to the politicization of politically marginalized populations and the emergence, from their activism, of new articulations of participation and citizenship in Brazil. The new articulations of citizenship that Holston (1998; 2008) outlines are ‘insurgent’ in that they are essentially offshoots of existing formulations of citizenship, which are exclusionary and differentiated<sup>7</sup>. They erupt not from marginalized groups’ conscious efforts to accomplish structural reform, but rather from their activism as they attempt to include themselves in the entrenched formulations of citizenship and participation, exclusionary though they may be, in order to defend and pursue their interests. In São Paulo, residents of the autoconstructed periphery, as they strove to legalize their neighborhoods, saw that their problems could be “redressed in terms of the rights and dignity of democratic citizenship” (Holston 2008, p. 230). Thus they framed their struggles with the language of citizen rights, and they appropriated the very mechanisms that had been used to sustain their exclusion – misrule of law and

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<sup>7</sup> Holston’s (2008) study is particular to Brazil although his concept of “insurgent citizenship” has informed a large body of work and has been adapted in many different contexts. In order to better understand “insurgent citizenship”, it is important to explain what Holston means when he writes about the hegemonic formulation of citizenship in Brazil as being differentiated. I emphasize that Holston’s “differentiated citizenship” is particular to Brazil and is informed from years of ethnographic work in the country and is complemented by thorough historical analysis. However, he writes that this is still among the most common formulations of citizenship globally. Holston characterizes the hegemonic formulation of citizenship in Brazil as expansive, in its formal inclusion of all Brazilians, but in practice inegalitarian and differentiated along historically cemented social differences – “certain kinds of citizens” (p. 7). It is a citizenship that “manages social differences by legalizing them in ways that legitimate and reproduce inequality” (p. 1-2).

legal irresolution – in order to defend their interests. Their struggles were not consciously directed at the exclusionary formulations of citizenship that enabled and accommodated their dispossession. However, their strategies resulted in a politicization of those historically alienated from the political sphere. What emerged were new forms of civic participation in places typically considered marginal. These gave rise to new articulations of citizenship in São Paulo that disturbed, although they continued to exist alongside with, the entrenched formulations. It is thus that we can think of the new formulations of citizenship that Holston (1998; 2008) outlines as ‘insurgent’.

Holston’s (1998; 2008) ‘insurgent citizenship’ has inspired a large body of work within citizenship studies since the mid-1990s. An important theoretical contribution of this work has been to direct attention to struggles that occur outside of “‘invited’ spaces of citizenship”<sup>8</sup> (Cornwall 2002) and to highlight the potential of such struggles for disturbing exclusionary formulations of citizenship and the exclusionary sociopolitical structures within which these are embedded. Thus, Miraftab (2004) and Miraftab and Wills (2005) write of “‘invented’ spaces of citizenship”, which encapsulate the various practices and forms of association that fall outside of the formal, state-created or state-sanctioned channels for participation and claim-making. These ‘invented’ spaces include a variety of innovative practices through which citizens, usually the urban poor, challenge the status quo by asserting their rights and by confronting state power from outside of the ‘invited’ spaces that are insufficient for representing them or that exclude them.

Work on substantive citizenship effectively captures the distinction between the formal possession of rights and the realization of these rights, and the millions of lives caught within this distinction. However, it leaves unanswered several important questions. Why are the ‘invited’ spaces for participation insufficient (for some)? Whom do they serve and whom do they fail? Why do these ‘invited spaces’ fail to represent the interests of certain groups despite sustained efforts towards the decentralization of political decision making and towards participatory governance around the world over the past few decades? The emphasis that literature on substantive citizenship places on “being politically engaged” (Turner 1990) and “becoming political”<sup>9</sup> (Isin 2002, p. 276) is constructive for broadening the lens through which we analyze political struggle so as to capture the variety of

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Invited’ spaces of citizenship are ones occupied by local actors and their allied NGOs, and they “are legitimized by donors and government interventions” (Cornwall 2002; Miraftab 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Isin (2002, p. 296) defines “becoming political” as “that moment when one constitutes oneself as a being capable of judgment about just and unjust, takes responsibility for that judgment and associates oneself with or against others in fulfilling that responsibility.” For Isin (2002), “becoming political” occurs when those excluded from the dominant formulation of citizenship challenge and disrupt the entrenched formulation, and reconstitute themselves differently from the dominant images given to them.

innovative strategies by which those in the margins challenge exclusionary structures. Indeed these strategies deserve attention, as they have often been shown to have transformative potential. However, over-emphasis of instances of “becoming political” also runs the risk of painting all forms of mobilization as citizenship struggles. What “elements or aspects of social practice are involved in developing *citizenship claims* as opposed to various other aspects of social life” (Urry 2000, p. 67; emphasis added)? If struggles in ‘invented’ spaces, to invoke Miraftab’s (2004) useful distinction, do not transform the ‘invited’ spaces of participation to give politically marginalized groups access to the state, is it formulations of citizenship that these transform? Or does the fragmentation of governance and proliferation of “new authorities on citizenship” (Isin 2000) over the past decades suggest that citizenship can be transformed without confronting the state or democratizing ‘invited spaces’? But also, can we really consider the new and proliferating actors, for example NGOs at various scales, authorities *on citizenship* if their capacity to sanction is often insignificant and their accountability uncertain (Ribot 2004; Fox 2000; Gandy 2008)?

These are questions that current work on substantive citizenship alone cannot fully answer. We can extract, from these questions, two main limitations of current frameworks of substantive citizenship. The first relates to the confusion and lack of clarity concerning which struggles are about citizenship claims and which are about the pursuit of other interests. If we conceptualize citizenship as a social practice, we can see that struggles around access to resources or better living conditions, for example, often give rise to new forms of political engagement and new forms of citizenship practice. However, we must not lose sight of what these transformed practices mean for the dominant formulations of citizenship. Some of these struggles may transform the dominant formulations of citizenship, producing more inclusive channels for citizen participation and giving marginalized groups access to decision-making processes. Others may result in subordinated groups accomplishing the goals around which they mobilized, but they may not necessarily transform, challenge, or even disrupt, hegemonic formulations of citizenship. They may not transform people’s capacity and ability to make claims – over belonging, rights, service provision, and so on – on the state. They may thus not be about or have implications for citizenship. The work that has grown out of Holston’s “insurgent citizenship” has indeed expanded the lexicon with which to theorize subaltern agency and struggles at the margins. However, it has also diverted from Holston’s ultimate concern with citizenship, as it has tended to enclose all kinds of struggles under the umbrella of citizenship without very rigorous analysis into if and how these struggles actually influence dominant formulations of citizenship.

The mobilizations that Holston (1998; 2008) describes are citizenship struggles because they entail both transformed practices and transformed dominant formulations of citizenship. First, these mobilizations constitute new and substantive forms of political engagement by those marginalized from political decision making; they entail the meaningful politicization of politically disempowered populations. Second, they constitute a significant and disruptive force as they transform (although not fully, as Holston notes) the meaning and practice of citizenship in Brazil<sup>10</sup>. They create new spaces of civic participation and new ways of practicing and claiming formal rights. In the process, they reinvent relations between state and citizen. It is in this way that the mobilizations that Holston documents are about citizenship. The work informed by Holston's insurgent citizenship framework has produced rich and complex analyses of social struggle. However, it has often stopped at that first point: showing the new forms of political engagement unfolding through mobilizations at the political margins without addressing whether these new forms of engagement have transformed citizen-state relations and the formulations of citizenship that prevail, and whether they have strengthened citizens' ability to influence those who govern them.

For example, 'insurgence', which Ranganathan (2013) adopts from Holston's 'insurgent citizenship' (1998; 2008) to capture the complexity of agency in marginalized spaces<sup>11</sup>, is useful for explaining the compliance of middle-class residents with neoliberal water-pricing reforms in the illegal settlements of Bangalore's outskirts as a strategy through which these residents legitimize their presence and establish their belonging to the city. 'Insurgence' in this case captures the meaning that these residents ascribe to payment for water, whereby compliance with the cost-recovery water schemes of a system that subordinates these groups becomes a strategy through which they bargain with, and reinforce, hegemony but for the ulterior motives of creating political possibilities for themselves in other arenas, through their upstanding payment behavior. 'Insurgence' thus shows how payment for water is a strategic maneuver through which groups comply with certain aspects of an exclusionary system in order to make other aspects of this system work for them. However, this application of 'insurgence' remains concerned solely with the complexities of subaltern agency, which it indeed captures beautifully. So, one can understand how the payment practices of

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<sup>10</sup> Holston (2009) returns to São Paulo decades later and shows how citizenship is differently understood and differently performed in citizens' daily lives.

<sup>11</sup> In Ranganathan's (2013, p. 595) words, 'insurgence' "is characterized not by acts of radical resistance to the status quo, but by acts that in some way 'empower, parody, derail, or subvert state agendas'" (citing Holston 1999, p. 167). 'Insurgence' "presents such a complicated picture of agency – as advancing material interests, yet operating within and reinforcing prevailing relations of power – that it provides... a useful vocabulary for understanding the texture of political consciousness or 'common sense' as Antonio Gramsci put it" (Ranganathan 2013, p. 596).

Bangalore's "peripheralized middle class" are 'insurgent', but it is unclear how these practices transform the meaning of citizenship and its overall formulation in Bangalore. Without a doubt, Ranganathan's (2013) use of 'insurgence' for understanding the complex and multilayered political consciousness of residents in Bangalore's illegal settlements advances understandings of subaltern agency and the dynamics of rule, just as it expands Gramsci's "contradictory consciousness" in a very productive way. However, as a concept for sharpening understandings of citizenship, 'insurgence' as it is used here falls within the tendencies, outlined previously, to frame as citizenship all emerging forms of mobilization at the margins without considering how these mobilizations actually transform the forces that dictate citizen-state relations and that limit some citizens' ability to realize the rights that they possess formally.

The second limitation relates to the lack of engagement with state power that can typically be noted in the more recent orientations of substantive citizenship literature. It seems that in the analytical transition from formal to substantive citizenship, there has been a tendency to lose sight of the role that the state plays both in fostering differentiated citizenship and in delimiting the possibilities for struggles at the margins in the pursuit of alternative formulations of citizenship. A transformed state does not mean an absent state. With the expanding array of new authorities at the local level, the state is not vanishing; rather, it is changing as governing is "reconfigured with new regulatory regimes and hybridized transnational state actors" (Goldman 2006, p. 217). A lack of engagement with institutional configurations and state power<sup>12</sup> in studies of substantive citizenship narrows our understanding of both the potential and the limitations of citizenship struggles that unfold in 'invented' spaces (Miraftab 2004; Miraftab and Wills 2005) of participation. Divorcing social struggles from the institutional arrangements in which they are nested and by which they are, at least partially, influenced offers an incomplete understanding of citizenship. Additionally, lack of engagement with institutional arrangements diverts attention away from the forces that produce the unrepresentative and exclusionary 'invited' spaces of participation characteristic of differentiated citizenship to begin with.

Analyses of citizenship that focus more on institutional arrangements can fill some of the gaps within substantive citizenship frameworks – particularly those that arise from a lack of

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<sup>12</sup> Bayat (2000) critiques the underestimation of state power in poststructuralist power/resistance frameworks, which inform much of the literature on substantive citizenship. "This 'decentered' notion of power...underestimates state power, notably its class dimension, since it fails to see that although power circulates, it does so unevenly... *the state does matter and one needs to take that into account when discussing the potentials of urban subaltern activism*" (p. 544; emphasis added).

theoretical engagement the state. Ribot (2007), through his ‘institutional choice and recognition’ framework, highlights how supranational institutions and other global civil society actors fit into and rework existing institutional configurations in ways that transform the meaning of citizenship. Besides offering a counter-point to some of the more recent engagements with substantive citizenship that disregard the state, this approach also challenges some of the conclusions about ‘boomerang effects’ (Keck and Sikkink 1999) that we find in literature on transnational activism. It does this by providing a drastically different view of interactions between local actors and global civil society groups, with an eye on how these interactions influence the meaning of citizenship.

Ribot (2007) captures the interplay between citizen-state and citizen-NGO relations through the concept of “parallel institutions”<sup>13</sup> (see also Manor 2013) and by analyzing how these parallel institutions influence citizenship. The recognition and empowerment of parallel institutions can transform the meaning of citizenship by fragmenting the public domain into competing and conflicting identity and interest groups. In this process, citizenship moves from being rooted in residency-based belonging to being contingent upon identity. Forms of belonging based on lineage and interests, on which affiliations with and membership in parallel institutions are conditioned, strengthen as those of residency, on which democratic citizenship is based, weaken. At the same time, the proliferation and empowerment of parallel institutions renders the state increasingly unresponsive and subsequently illegitimate in the eyes of citizens, as non-state actors are given the lead (through recognition and funding by global civil society actors as well as donors and foreign governments, and at the expense of government institutions) to engage in the types of decision making and service provision typically perceived as the domain of the state. Furthermore, these parallel institutions are not necessarily – and in actuality, rarely are they – democratically accountable to citizens, as Gandy (2008) also argues. They do not necessarily represent citizens democratically. Ribot’s (2007) perspective on citizenship, with its focus on institutional arrangements, thus takes us over some of the limits at which we find ourselves with substantive citizenship frameworks by allowing us to interrogate some of the forces that produce ‘invited’ spaces that are unrepresentative of certain interests, and some of the institutional configurations that produce differentiated or exclusionary citizenship.

Although Ribot’s analysis centers on the pursuit of local democracy that characterizes decentralization programs, ‘institutional choice and recognition’ is a useful frame for examining ties

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<sup>13</sup> Parallel institutions refer to those institutions, other than local and central government, which make decisions and/or deliver services (Ribot 2007; see also Manor 2013). Civil society groups as well as national and international NGOs, for example, fall under this category.

between local and global civil society actors with reference to how these bolster or restrict local actors' capacity to influence the exercise of state power towards a more inclusive formulation of citizenship. It does this in two ways. First, it shows how the proliferation of parallel institutions transforms the meaning of citizenship by fragmenting the public domain. Second, it highlights changing citizen-state relations in the context of such proliferation, as poorly funded state institutions are rendered incapable of responding to the demands of citizens and as citizens' capacity to influence state decisions becomes contingent upon institutions whose accountability and representativeness are questionable, and which may not even have the means to respond to people's needs. State institutions that are rendered, through poor funding, incapable of responding to constituents' demands are for the same reason delegitimized. Their lack of capacity to respond renders them institutions not worth influencing. It is on these grounds, by framing the institutional context in which citizenship struggles unfold, that Ribot pushes us to problematize the concept of global civil society and to question its transformative potential. Ribot's work (2007) thus also shows how by studying citizenship we can better understand, and problematize, transnational activism and the proliferation of transnational authorities on rights and entitlements.

Bayat (2000), too, objects to the taking for granted of this transformative influence of a global civil society on local activism when he argues that the professionalization of NGOs – both local and international – weakens the “mobilizational feature of grassroots activism, at the same time it establishes new forms of clientelism” (Bayat 2000, p. 535). Additionally, Bayat (1997) characterizes existing conceptualizations of ‘civil society’ as myopic both in their insistence on defining ‘civil society’ around a very narrow type of institutionalized associational life and in their privileging of the actions of this ‘civil society’ over other forms of social expression. And while Bayat's work converges with Ribot's ‘institutional choice and recognition’ in its engagement with state power and skepticism of global civil society, Bayat leads us to a territory with which Ribot's framework is not directly concerned – that of social expression that unfolds beyond the purview of institutions and state. Bayat's critique thus offers a way of bringing together Ribot's focus on institutions and procedural macro politics with substantive citizenship frameworks' attention to micro politics and mobilization outside of formal political channels. It is with an eye on how these frameworks can speak to each other that I go into my analysis of struggles at Mbeubeuss. It is also by putting these approaches in dialogue with each other that I decide on the definition of citizenship that informs this study – a definition that I adopt from Isin and Turner (2002): citizenship as the ability to influence the political economy that shapes one's entitlements; as the capacity to be politically

engaged and to shape the fate of the polity in which one is involved. As I analyze citizenship, thus, I combine a focus on the social and political expression that unfolds beyond the purview of formal institutions with an attention to how these forms of expression influence the exercise of state power and transform state-society relations, as well as what they mean for people's capacity to shape the political economy that influences their well-being. Before delving into that analysis, however, I take a brief detour into the theoretical-methodological frameworks and debates that motivate me to juxtapose two moments of exclusionary planning in an effort to better understand and historically contextualize the current processes of dispossession and struggles against them in Dakar.

### CHAPTER III

#### **Towards a Postcolonial Theory of Cities: Multidirectional Frameworks of Historical Influence**

This chapter grows out of Ferguson's (2012) reflections on the ways in which scholarship on infrastructural violence, with its attention to how infrastructures produce and embody social suffering and with its commitment to unraveling social responsibility for the reproduction of inequalities through the city's built environment, pushes us to reconsider what we mean by 'the social'. In Chapter II, I expanded on Ferguson's (2012) comments by arguing that if the insistence at the core of infrastructural violence scholarship on *social* causality for infrastructurally produced suffering elucidates that we must reconsider the spatial scales at which we interrogate 'the social', it also pushes us to reconsider the temporal frames in which we situate contemporary phenomena. Here, I explore how scholarship from indigenous critical theory, memory studies, colonial studies, and critical engagements with the postcolonial can inform theoretical engagements with the postcolonial present that produce both nuanced understandings of the contemporary and intellectually liberating representations of postcolonial cities.

Simone (2004) argues that the "present emphases on decentralization, local management, the exigencies of poverty alleviation, and regionally articulated local economic development [in African cities] are all a reformulation of familiar instruments" (p. 143). They are a reformulation of past efforts to "remake African identities and practices" so as to orient African cities to "non-African worlds" and enforce specific forms of engagement with these worlds. Similarly, McFarlane (2008) states that many new urban practices and policies are only seemingly new. He suggests that a historical perspective enables better understandings of seemingly new practices while allowing us to use historical conditions to better understand and theorize the contemporary city (see also McFarlane and Rutherford 2008). However, the task of historicization is not straightforward. In analyzing postcolonial cities, how much and what kind of agency do we grant to colonialism? Do we think of colonialism in terms of legacies or do we frame it as a force that persists and actively shapes the present? How do we situate the emergence of global neoliberal capitalism, and the processes of exploitation and uneven development on which it is contingent, within longer histories of colonial or other modes of exploitation?

Much is at stake in how we choose to frame historical causality because what is included and excluded from the analysis not only impacts our understandings of the contemporary city but also has

implications for its representations – a particularly delicate concern in the case of postcolonial cities. The way I account for historical influence in this study is informed by multidirectional frameworks of historical causality suggested by work from memory studies, indigenous critical theory, colonial studies and critical engagements with the postcolonial<sup>14</sup>. These multidirectional frameworks support the concern with social causality that we find in scholarship on ‘infrastructural violence’ while they also align with efforts within urban theory to move towards what Roy (2011) has called a postcolonial theory of cities. New scholarship in the disciplines that inform my approach provides insight for how to situate the postcolonial city within a broader history of socio-spatial control, urban (mis)management, and resistance in such a way that we can begin to identify the matrices of power that make possible the production, reproduction and repetition of social injustices, as well as the forces that can destabilize these matrices.

In many ways, this task is one of unraveling the constellations of power and instruments through which, repetitively, urban dispossession has strategically been produced in the service of broader interests. Such a task is not only productive intellectually and in terms of informing social action; it is also about taking a stance on how we can constructively engage with histories of colonization so that we produce both better understandings and more ethical representations of postcolonial cities. It is about historicizing in ways that allow us to read the postcolonial present beyond the scripts of colonialism, and beyond the logics of planetary capitalism or rubrics of subaltern agency alone<sup>15</sup> by taking up a balanced recognition of the influence exerted by the (often intertwined) logics of colonial domination, reach of capital, and tenacity of local resistance on the contemporary postcolonial city.

Aihwa Ong reminds us that the “vagaries of urban fate cannot be reduced to the workings of universal laws established by capitalism or colonial history” (Ong 2011, p. 1). Simone (2004) makes a similar intervention when he writes that cities “cannot be accounted for only on the basis of

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<sup>14</sup> Here, I refer primarily to Jodi Byrd’s excellent scholarship in indigenous critical theory and Michael Rothberg’s work on multidirectional memory. Reflecting on issues of trans-generational responsibility, Byrd (2010) asks what it means to “take responsibility for a historical present dependent upon Middle Passages, indentured labor, and the violences of conquest in which the explicit goal was not just to rupture in the name of enforced labor, but to chart the direct transit from life to death for certain peoples and not for others” (p. 83). For Byrd, these questions point to the importance of memory for making grievable lives that have historically been rendered un-grievable. Rothberg (2009) also addresses questions of historical complicity and trans-generational responsibility for historical violences. He brings these questions together in his arguments for *postmemory* (Hirsch 2008) as a version of what he terms *multidirectional memory*, and he argues that *postmemory* can contribute to ethical reckonings with past violences that remain unprocessed or, more importantly, unseen in plain sight. Such reckonings require “a *multidirectional* excavation of intersecting histories” (p. 279; emphasis added).

<sup>15</sup> See Roy and Ong (2011) for a detailed critique of the limitations of these approaches. I delve into some, but not all, of Roy and Ong’s arguments in this chapter.

pinpointing structural relationships” and “nor can urban life be accounted for only in terms of relative industrialization” (p. 138). What Ong and Simone are referring to here is the crucial task of reading the postcolonial city beyond the often-homogenizing lens of planetary capitalism (Ong 2011) and beyond the confines of “subaltern space” or “*subject* of history” (Roy 2011, p. 312; emphasis added). This task marks an effort to move beyond what Robinson (2004) has argued to be the primacy of the “First World City” as an analytical focus for urban theory and model of what cities are or should be. It marks a turn towards postcolonial and African cities as more than “radical alterity” (Mbembe 2001) and, rather, sources of knowledge production about the urban. Such an intervention is particularly productive at a time when processes of socio-spatial polarization in the Global North are consistently reverberating those historically observed in the Global South<sup>16</sup> (Mbembe and Nuttall 2005). The task that Roy and Ong (2011) put forward, thus, is that of analyzing postcolonial cities and cities of the Global South for their potential to produce understandings of the urban that can be written as theory. It represents an effort to bring to the center the concerns and forms of urbanity so often pushed to the periphery of urban theory, in line with Jacobs’ (1996; cited in Roy 2011) calls for moving the discipline of geography “from its historical positioning of colonial complicity towards productively postcolonial spatial narratives” (Jacobs 1996, p. 15). And to produce postcolonial spatial narratives means that we cannot stay solely within the registers of Western urban theory.

Ong (2011) categorizes dominant social science approaches for analyzing contemporary cities in the age of globalization as such: 1) frameworks that focus on the political economy of globalization; and 2) postcolonial frameworks that focus on subaltern agency. She goes on to critique both. The first, in seeing the city exclusively as a site of capital accumulation, grants a totalizing agency to a capitalism largely conceived as monolithic. The second lumps all postcolonial cities into the dialectic of domination and subaltern resistance while granting a totalizing agency to colonialism. In effect, what is lost in both approaches as they fit distinct urban experiences into a singular trajectory of globalization is the particularity of distinct engagements with the global in different cities and the knowledge about the urban that these can produce. Ong’s critique of most scholarship on postcolonial globalization also extends to its tendency to position all cities outside the West as “inescapably postcolonial” (p. 8), subject to generalizable forces of an unnuanced colonialism, and generative of highly similar responses and repertoires of resistance. Ultimately, then, these

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<sup>16</sup> See Mbembe and Nuttall (2004), Watts (2004) and Mbembe and Nuttall (2005) for a debate on theoretical frameworks and lexicons for analyzing and representing African cities.

approaches fail to challenge the still-Eurocentric categories of ‘modernity’, ‘civilization’, or “metropolitan greatness” (p. 8) through which contemporary cities are examined. They thus fail to set forth a decolonization of knowledge about the urban, often reinscribing postcolonial cities into the lexicons of alterity.

Ananya Roy (2011) shares Ong’s critique of dominant theoretical approaches to postcolonial urbanism. She adds that postcolonial theory, in often remaining captive to the “colonial wound” (Mignolo 2005, cited in Roy 2011), is limited in its ability to capture urban formations that transcend the templates of colonial domination or neoliberal capitalism. This is not to suggest that a project of postcolonial urbanism is impossible. On the contrary, Roy remains confident in the possibilities that postcolonial theory creates for renewed and enriched understandings of cities. What she suggests is an analytical shift from the ‘postcolonial’ as an urban condition to the ‘postcolonial’ as a deconstructive tool in urban studies that enables us to transform the categories through which we analyze the urban while locating postcolonial cities as sites from which to write urban theory. Roy thus envisions a postcolonial theory of cities that is committed to a shifting of the “geographies of authoritative knowledge” (Roy 2011, p. 308) about the urban and concerned with articulations of subject-power. For Roy, the contributions of postcolonial studies to urban theory lie partly in its ability to exceed the “vocabulary of alternatives” (Mitchell 2000; cited in Roy 2011) through which postcolonial urbanisms are still predominantly understood. Its merit is in its potential to position postcolonial cities as subjects of universal knowledge about the urban, at once provincializing and enriching understandings of the dominant templates through which cities are interrogated: ‘globalization’, ‘neoliberal capitalism’, ‘subaltern agency’ and so on.

Comaroff and Comaroff (2011) begin to do just this in *Theory from the South*, although they are not solely concerned with the urban. By arguing that modernity has always been a North-South collaboration and emphasizing the transformation of core-periphery relations in what they broadly characterize as the age of neoliberal globalization, Comaroff and Comaroff (2011) set forth to challenge the notion, by now cemented into the master narrative, of Africa as perpetually catching up to what they call “Euro-America”<sup>17</sup>. They show how shifts in the global political economy are giving rise to new assemblages of labor and capital, new understandings of work, time and value, and new forms of the social first in Africa and later elsewhere. Thus they call for a repositioning of Africa in

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<sup>17</sup> Comaroff and Comaroff (2011)’s category “Euro-America” denotes what is generally called the “West.” I find the category of “Euro-America” to be a problematic indicator of the “non-Other” because, in its homogeneity, it elides continuing colonial domination and Indigenous suffering in the Americas. Although the more common categories of “the West” or “the Global North” are themselves problematic, if I must use them, I prefer to use these in this study.

the geographies of knowledge production, given that the Global South in general and Africa in particular are running, not behind, but ahead of “Euro-America.” While it is not my intention here to critique the entirety of Comaroff and Comaroff’s (2011) project – the power of their undertaking is indeed enormous – *Theory from the South* makes evident a number of challenges that are important to consider as we try to move towards what Roy characterizes as a postcolonial theory of cities.

Two challenges that Comaroff and Comaroff (2011) ultimately do not overcome become important cautions to take into consideration in this study. The first concerns ways of situating the postcolonial city within histories of colonialism, capitalism and local resistance such that we do not, in a reductionist move and by privileging one over the others, lose sight of the multiple forces acting in the postcolonial city from within and without, and the forms of urbanity to which these give rise. Comaroff and Comaroff’s arguments for why Africa constitutes a frontier in terms of social change revolve closely around what in the book is taken to be the fact of neoliberalism. ‘Neoliberalism’, however, remains a monolithic phenomenon. It is an uninterrogated and unpacked category. By not considering how neoliberalism, which is not an overdetermined process completely out of our hands, is continuously transformed and reproduced through myriad policies, interactions, and relations, the authors do not capture the variability, shown by Peck et al. (2009), that exists in forms and geographies of neoliberalism. Furthermore, in investigating the postcolonial almost solely through the logics of neoliberal capitalism, Comaroff and Comaroff’s analysis remains embedded within the types of limiting and homogenizing lines of analysis that Roy and Ong (2011) so strongly critique. For us, what this first challenge highlights is the issue of too readily assuming: be it the totalizing influence of an all-powerful but uninterrogated capitalism, the forms in which colonial pasts actually bear on the present (Stoler 2013), or the varied nature, objectives, limitations and potential of local resistance. The second challenge that *Theory from the South* highlights relates to ways of engaging with temporality and historical causality so that we may disrupt progressivist historical narratives, which, in their adherence to ideas of origins and linear evolutions, often keep the postcolonial world a subject of history. Although Comaroff and Comaroff (2011) are committed to an epistemological intervention, by simply turning the received historical narrative on its head and suggesting that, on the contrary, “Euro-America” is evolving towards Africa, the authors perpetuate the evolutionary narrative. What this demonstrates is the importance of moving beyond colonialist narratives as we think about the temporal links that connect the “Global North” to the “Global South.” Here, multidirectional frameworks of historical causality offer valuable insight.

In this study, I shy away from continuous and coherent linear narratives. My project is not one of identifying origins or establishing linear causalities, which would in many ways favor a progressivist historical narrative so often found in colonialist discourse. Rather, I stage encounters in an effort informed primarily by Rothberg's (2009) framework of *multidirectional memory* – itself largely influenced by Benjaminian fragmentary historiography and also mirrored by the work of Hunt (2013), to which I will turn shortly. Rothberg's work centers on memories of violence and trauma, but his framework informs a significant body of work within postcolonial studies and has influenced debates within this field regarding how to frame historical influence in studies of colonialism. For Rothberg (2009), thinking about historical causality involves exploring the *multidirectional* transmission of ideas and practices across time and space. Ethical reckonings with histories of violence and trauma “require a multidirectional excavation of intersecting histories” (Rothberg 2009, p. 279) that appear distinct. If ethical and constructive engagements with past violences require a multidirectional framing, then “coming to terms with the past always happens in comparative contexts and via the circulation of memories linked to what are *only apparently* separate histories and ethnic/national constituencies” (p. 272; emphasis added). For Rothberg, staging juxtapositions of seemingly unrelated histories of violence across space and time is how we may begin to get at the matrices of power and domination that produce seemingly distinct but closely connected and similarly constituted instances of violence.

Rothberg's multidirectional approach is very much in line with Salaita's (2006) critiques of isolated analyses of instances of oppression – critiques that guide Salaita's own comparative approach. Not only are these isolated analyses intellectually paralyzing, Salaita argues, but they also curtail, by situating instances of oppression in a vacuum, the possibility for translocal solidarities against oppression. Rothberg (2009) positions multidirectional interrogations of historical causality as an intervention that, by enfolding spatially and temporally dispersed instances of violence within the same analytical lens, elucidates truths about oppression that otherwise remain unseen in plain sight. So long as this systematic “non-seeing” continues, the disavowal of violence so critical to the colonialist project (Césaire 1955) thrives; colonial histories remain unmastered; and “postcolonial attempts to address unmastered colonial history find themselves perforce tied to various contemporary reassertions of empire” (Rothberg 2009, p. 284). In this respect, postcolonial theory is still limited in its approach to colonial histories that are “unmastered” via the kind of “non-seeing” that multidirectional frameworks confront, and it will remain imbricated in the imperatives of empire

as long as these histories remain “unseen.” Multidirectional frameworks become a diagnostic tool, then, for “seeing” these histories.

Hunt’s (2013) work on repetitions of gendered sexual violence in Leopold’s Congo and present-day eastern DRC rests on a similar imperative to move beyond linear narratives and to understand historical influence in terms of the same kinds of “repetitions, reverse shocks, and returns of the repressed” (Rothberg 2009, p. 107) that guide Rothberg’s approach. Hunt calls for locating and seizing repetitions, for “producing history in a mode of repetition” (p. 59). For Hunt, strategically reappropriating bits of the past and carrying them into the everyday present sets the stage for a productive interrogation of contemporary violence and of its modes of reproduction across space and time. Such an engagement with history is political in that its principal aim is to generate discussions sensitive to the historical repetitions of violence and trauma so as to identify and overturn the configurations of power through which these are produced, reproduced and repeated.

“Seizing hold of repetitions,” also produces “questions about what has not been reproduced – about what is novel and different in today’s present” (Hunt 2013, p. 59). This search for what is novel in the present resonates with Stoler’s (2013) cautions that capitalism and empire must not “all be folded into an imperial genealogy”, and – as can be deduced from this statement – that the histories of capitalism and empire should not all be folded into a genealogy of capitalism. Stoler’s caution here resounds one of the limitations I identified in Comaroff and Comaroff’s *Theory from the South* (2011): in their over-reliance on “neoliberalism” as an explanatory variable that remains unpacked, the authors do not think beyond capitalism even as they concern themselves with histories of colonialism and devote their project to a decolonization of knowledge production. Additionally, Stoler’s caution informs my concern with how to recognize the continuing influences of colonialism without granting totalizing agency to colonial histories or taking for granted the overcoming of colonial relations in the historically postcolonial moment.

Stoler (2013) is careful to disentangle capitalism and empire from one another as she draws our attention to the “other appellations and other, more available contemporary terms” (p. 23) that obscure empire. The scripts of globalization, thus, or of modernity, or capitalism, are not sufficient. They do not fully account for the “how” and “why” of violence or dispossession. “Globalization,” Stoler writes, “may account for the dumping of toxic waste on the Ivory Coast but not for the trajectory of its movement and the history that made West Africa a suitable and available site” (p. 24). Staging encounters, then, and locating repetitions multidirectionally in time and space becomes a method for unraveling the forces that produce disparities in the postcolonial present. Stoler’s

argument echoes a common critique to postcolonial studies: the “misleading suggestion that colonialism is over” (Rothberg and Byrd 2011, p. 4) implied by the ‘post’, and the importance of considering that colonialism continues to condition the “postcolonial” present. Through juxtapositions, we can begin to identify and understand the ways in which colonial relations, so often relegated to a past supposedly overcome at independence, continue to produce disparities in the present.

To recognize that colonial forces continue to produce disparities in the present, however, is not to imply that contemporary dispossessions can be explained through the rubrics of colonialism alone. Rather, to recognize that colonial forces continue to shape people’s lives is to grant consideration to Stoler’s (2013) argument that imperial forms are durable and that the fact that they manifest themselves in different guises in the contemporary period should not render their study obsolete. To take Stoler’s argument seriously, then, is to consider the possibility that the interests of capital draw on persisting colonial logics; that they reinforce and rearticulate these logics to produce related forms of exclusion and dispossession. It is to understand the forces of capitalism and colonialism in light of each other and to disentangle them from one another so that we may better understand postcolonial cities. It is also to be mindful that the ties that connect colonial histories to postcolonial realities are neither straightforward nor self-evident, but demand careful investigation. Methods for locating historical influence, in such a project, are extremely important. Staging encounters and locating repetitions multidirectionally through time becomes a method for unraveling the forces that produce disparities in the postcolonial present. It is by staging encounters between two temporal extremes of Dakar’s urban history that I begin to interrogate these processes.

## CHAPTER IV

### **From Medina to Mbeubeuss: Public Health in the Colonial City and the Pursuit of Urban Sustainability in Contemporary Dakar**

In this chapter, I begin by juxtaposing two moments in the planning of the colonial and then postcolonial city: early 20<sup>th</sup> century urban public health projects of the colonial state that relied on rhetoric of sanitation and medical concerns to produce segregation and differentiated citizenship; and solid waste management efforts in the postcolonial state that deploy the language of environmental sustainability to organize urban space in ways that serve broader interests and that produce spatial, social and economic dispossession in Dakar. My exploration of the public health projects in colonial Dakar is intended to contextualize the current deployment of environmental degradation and sustainability discourse in debates around Mbeubeuss.

In the contemporary moment, I analyze a pending reform in Senegal's waste management program that stands to dispossess the majority of the 1,800 or so informal workers who handle the region's recycling in the dumping ground of Mbeubeuss. The closing of Mbeubeuss has been discussed since 2005. The decision-making process has been characterized by paralyzing irresolution over the future of Dakar's waste management system and sustained disregard of the recycling workers' livelihoods, which are severely jeopardized in the face of reform. As I reflect on the ways that such a continued disregard is legitimated, my focus splinters into two related areas of analysis: 1) the strategic deployment of narratives of environmental degradation and sustainability by both the government and the workers, as each strives to advance their claims; and 2) Mbeubeuss workers' resistance and mobilization in the face of an exclusionary policy and the implications of their struggles for the meaning and practice of citizenship in Dakar. I delve into both of these analyses after describing exclusionary socio-spatial practices at the onset of the 1914 plague outbreak in Dakar.

#### **Methods and Limitations**

The data for this study was collected over the course of about four weeks, in the period 4 July 2014 through 5 August 2014. During this period, I commuted from Dakar to "the mountain" – as the community around Mbeubeuss refers to the dumping ground – in Malika, in the Pikine commune of the Region of Dakar. Most of the information used in this study was gathered through structured and unstructured interviews with Mbeubeuss workers. These include: 1) four interviews with workers

who are unaffiliated with the Mbeubeuss workers' association, Bokk Jomm; 2) ten interviews with workers who are members of Bokk Jomm; 3) three interviews with the current President of Bokk Jomm – two conducted in person at the Mbeubeuss community center and one brief follow-up interview conducted by telephone; and 4) one interview with Bokk Jomm's spokesperson. The interviews with Board members of Bokk Jomm were detailed and lengthy. This is because the President of Bokk Jomm does not do the work of manual waste recuperation and recycling, and devotes a significant portion of his schedule to meeting with researchers, NGO staff, visitors, and so on. The Bokk Jomm spokesperson works more actively in the dumping ground but was recovering from a foot injury at the time of this fieldwork and thus was less restricted in his availability. All interviews were conducted mostly in Wolof with some parts in French. A French to Wolof interpreter – a local student of philosophy at the Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar – was present in all of the interviews, considering that I spoke French, but not Wolof, at the time of this fieldwork.

The rest of the data that informs this research was collected through document analysis of the following: 1) articles since 2005, accessed online primarily from the two reputed Senegalese newspapers, *Le Soleil* and *Le Quotidien*; 2) publications of NGOs that have conducted projects in Mbeubeuss since 2006; and 3) project documents for two landfill gas capture projects proposed in Mbeubeuss. The section on colonial segregationist planning is a synthesis of academic literature on colonial urban planning mostly in Dakar and French West Africa but also in other colonial cities. The section on the history of Dakar's waste management over the past four and a half decades is compiled from a review of academic literature – I am particularly indebted to the work of Oumar Cissé and Rosalind Fredericks – complemented by informal interviews and discussions with residents of Dakar.

I emphasize that the findings documented in this thesis, and the arguments that ensue, are preliminary. My intent in this thesis has been to highlight areas in need of interrogation and to establish a strong foundation for future research. The limited time for conducting fieldwork for this study made ethnography, which would have been an especially productive method, impossible. Also notable in this thesis is the fact that the voice of policymakers comes from document analysis, and thus I offer a narrow account of policymakers' perspectives on the closing of Mbeubeuss and the future of Dakar's waste management system. It is also important to note the difficulties of gaining access to the dumping ground of Mbeubeuss and to establish connections with the workers, considering that there does exist a general sense of distrust towards new outsiders who are unaffiliated with the NGOs operating in the area. This sense of distrust can be explained by the

complex politics behind Mbeubeuss, the contested nature of the dumping ground, and a history of reporters documenting things that the workers consider to be false or damaging to their reputation. Lastly, I acknowledge that some of the interviews with members of Bokk Jomm were conducted upon referral from Bokk Jomm's President. I recognize the bias that this may have introduced in this study, considering that it is likely that the President of Bokk Jomm chose to refer the researcher only to workers who support his work or share his views.

### **Disease, Sanitation and Segregationist Planning: The Plague Outbreak of 1914**

Zoning practices backed by rhetoric of sanitation and public health were central in colonial city planning (Curtin 1985; Bigon 2012). These practices rested on 19<sup>th</sup> century European models of the “bacteriological city” (Gandy 2008) and European urban reformism that framed urban issues as “diseases of the social body” that could be cured by constructing urban societies as knowable and by rendering them legible and governable (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004). Certainly, these zoning practices, which were often segregationist, emerged from different rationales and took different forms across colonies. In the British colonies of West Africa, urban racial segregation was at various occasions encoded in legislation. Lord Lugard's Township Ordinance of 1917, for example, in the spirit of creating social and physical distance between colonialists and “natives”, effectively enacted spatial segregation in the towns of British Nigeria (Njoh 2007). Residential segregation was not as overt in most French colonies – at least not until the shift to a colonial ideology of *association*. This is because the French colonial doctrine of *assimilation* at the heart of French colonialism for most of its duration upheld an ideological commitment to universal equality (Diouf 1998) and thus left little room for discussions of racial difference. Under the doctrine of *assimilation*, France's “civilizing mission” posited the colonies as “inseparable parts of the Republic”: “the bigger France” (*la plus grande France*) (Bigon 2012). Despite the rhetoric of equality behind the French colonialist project, French colonial city planning did enact spatial segregation. However, this segregation was not articulated in overtly racial/racist terms. In French Indochina, for example, the colonial planner Ernest Hébrard insisted on zoning practices that engendered separation of French and “native” residents of Saigon. His segregationist zoning plans, however, were justified with rhetoric of “class difference” or “different lifestyles” – never in purely racist terms. For Hébrard, zoning could organize, sanitize and rationalize interracial contact, which was inevitable in colonial towns but manageable through spatial organization (Wright 1991).

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, residential segregation in Dakar was accomplished mainly via

the deployment of “scientific” and “medical” arguments that sought to prevent the spread of disease. Even before the founding of the city in 1857, the Senegalese region was conceived in the colonizers’ imagination as a health threat; the French in the 1800s referred to the region as a “land of disease and barbarism” (*terre des fièvres et de la barbarie*) (Bigon 2012). In the Dakar of the early 1900s, residential segregation on medical grounds culminated with the establishment of the neighborhood of Medina, for Africans, in response to the 1914 bubonic plague outbreak – a move that Betts (1971) considers “the most decisive and significant action taken by the French authorities in the history of [Dakar]” (p. 143). However, segregationist practices rooted in medical or sanitation rationales were enacted in Dakar from the time of the city’s founding. Although taken up under the greater aspiration towards public health improvement for all, these practices fell disproportionately upon the backs of native residents. As Echenberg (2002) writes of the public health policies of colonial Dakar, the health of Europeans was the primary objective.

In the 1880s, the French colonial government established a committee of hygiene and sanitation that initiated a program of burning straw huts, which were deemed unhygienic (Bigon 2012). This initiative, however, was not strictly enforced until the early 1900s, when successive outbreaks of yellow fever and bubonic plague across the colony created in the eyes of colonial officials a sense of emergency that served to reinforce earlier beliefs of the importance of racial segregation. Indeed, ideas for residential separation on the basis of race had circulated in Dakar since before 1914. These tended to follow similar scripts, highlighting the inability of French officials to decontaminate the “poorly constructed African housing” or the “squalor which Africans tolerated”, particularly their keeping of animals in and around the home (Betts 1971). This notion of public health as a core component of modern urban planning, one that necessitated the separation of populations, was prevalent in many other French colonial cities at the time<sup>18</sup> and was fundamental to the creation of the “dual city”<sup>19</sup>.

In Dakar, calls for residential segregation were alternatively justified on the basis of fundamental differences in the cultures and ways of life of Africans and Europeans. Interestingly the same justification, though peppered with other statements about different levels of education, was used by the colonial state after 1905 to explain the economic disparities between African and

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<sup>18</sup> See Wright 1991 for an example of Tananarive, Madagascar – present-day Antananarivo.

<sup>19</sup> Fanon (1963) describes the dual structure of the colonial city as a space divided into confronting but disparate environments: the “European” town and the “Native” settlement. The term “dual city” is also used by neo-Marxist urban theorists to describe the inscription of social and economic polarizations across urban space in the age of neoliberal capitalism.

European neighborhoods in Dakar. This reasoning sounded better than acknowledging that the restricted economic possibilities in African quarters sprang from colonial economic policies that directed investment only to majority-European areas (Bigon 2012). Similar justifications about fundamental differences between colonizers and the colonized were employed in colonial Bombay in the 1880s, when the failures of technical modernization of water systems and urban sanitation were attributed to differences in sanitary practices among Indian and British residents (Gandy 2008), rather than to the injustices cemented into the systems of colonial urban service provision from their very inception and the fact that unsanitary conditions were imposed on native residents by the imperatives of colonialism.

After the 1901 and 1905 outbreaks of yellow fever in Dakar, colonial officials and medical observers began to more actively push forward the vision of the segregated city. Alexandre Kermorgant, in his *Colonial Hygiene* manual of 1911, portrayed African neighborhoods as health threats to Dakar's French residents because of the "numerous transmissible illnesses which [*sic*] their inhabitants frequently suffer from" (Echenberg 2002, p. 27). It was around the same time that attention was routinely drawn to the pollution in the beaches in Saint Louis, the offensive odors and filth of Dakar, and the garbage in the streets of Goree Island. Africans were always singled out as the polluters; their removal from Dakar was framed as the solution (Echenberg 2002). Accusations of native residents as unclean, carriers of disease, and polluters, were essential elements within colonialist discourse. In the case of Dakar, these accusations did not just reflect colonial anxieties about public health and concerns about the challenges that unsanitary conditions posed to the creation of a major city fit for Europeans. They also served as a guise for colonial interests in expropriating land from the Lebu, the original inhabitants of Cap Vert<sup>20</sup> who still owned much land in and around Dakar and deployed significant resistance to the colonial government's vision for the city. Furthermore, the portrayal of the colonized as unclean was strategic in conferring legitimacy upon the "civilizing mission" so central to the colonial project. Such a portrayal, often accompanied by images of the colonized as children in need of guidance, was common across different empires. In Dakar, medical and public health concerns were strongly tied to the "civilizing mission" that sought to legitimize France's presence in the colonies: especially so after the 1902 appointment of Ernest Roume as Governor-General of French West Africa. This idea of Western sanitation as a humanitarian act was rooted in the Enlightenment ideas with which the French colonial project consistently legitimized itself (Echenberg 2002).

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<sup>20</sup> The peninsula on which Dakar is located.

The 1914 bubonic plague outbreak in Dakar only accelerated, strengthened, and built on segregationist practices that had been around since the late 1800s to early 1900s. As early as 1901, a sanitary commission investigating a recent yellow fever outbreak had proposed the creation of a hygienic village, where construction would be only from permanent materials (Betts 1971). If the intentions behind such a proposal do not appear overtly racist, let us consider that African construction in Dakar at the time was mostly from straw and other “substandard” materials, while European construction was mostly from bricks and other “permanent” materials. Surely, the segregationist effects of regulations around building materials – even if not always for racist motivations – were known to colonial officials. Other calls for separation of the races in the city had been circulating for years before the 1914 plague outbreak, and I have outlined some of those in the discussions above. The proposal of 1901 regarding construction regulations had gone into effect in 1905, when a new building code had begun to require that all new construction projects in Senegalese towns acquire building permits. At this point, building permits were made contingent upon the materials used: only projects that used durable materials such as bricks were granted permits. Thus, straw, wood, or other “perishable” materials, with which African residents tended to build, were outlawed within Dakar but were allowed in the surrounding villages that were meant to soak up those excluded from the city and that would eventually become the “native villages” (Bigon 2012). The building code of 1905 thus initiated a process of residential segregation by essentially restricting the ability of Africans to move into the European neighborhoods of Dakar, given the prohibitive cost of bricks and other “durable” materials.

The sanitary debates in Dakar and the policies and practices to which these debates gave rise were quickly infused into all aspects of urban development. Bigon (2012) describes the French colonial policy of *assainissement*, which conceived most urban development in terms of health standards. Under this doctrine, most urban construction projects were conducted with the motive of “development according to health standards.” Sanitation was thus an important discursive strategy through which the French colonial government organized urban space to exclusionary ends and attempted to practice social control. From the early 1900s and in the years leading to the 1914 plague outbreak and the creation of Medina, French officials in Senegal enacted a series of policies – all rooted in public health concerns – that restricted Africans’ access to the city or affected their livelihoods in drastically disproportional ways. For example, African homes made of straw or wood were burned throughout the early 1900s allegedly for decontamination purposes. In 1904, city officials ordered the destruction of around 1,060 dwellings in response to an *anticipated* yellow fever

outbreak in Dakar; only 43 of these dwellings were built with brick (read: European). In the same year, smallpox vaccination was made mandatory for all Africans, but not Europeans (Echenberg 2002). School principals also were required to report on the diseases of their students. Echenberg (2002) characterizes this as an attempt at social control, as it linked something that Africans wanted – education – to something that they did not (or were suspicious of) – vaccination. When a European man in Thiès, a city near Dakar, died of yellow fever in 1912, officials burned and disinfected African homes around his house but refrained from burning European dwellings (Echenberg 2002). As is evident here, the policies that emerged from the sanitation and health concerns of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Dakar exhibit a general tendency, on the part of the colonial government, to tackle health anxieties and emergencies not through improved medicine but through spatial and public health policies that impacted African residents disproportionately, severely restricted their lives and livelihoods, and excluded them from the central areas of the city.

With the bubonic plague outbreak of 1914, colonial officials introduced a series of harsher measures. That the plague was associated – not on medical grounds – with Dakar’s African population should come as no surprise. Curtin (1985) has shown that the myth of the “diseased native” was central in the colonial imagination and was often deployed as a means of justifying segregationist policies. Swanson (1977), in his work on the *sanitary syndrome*, shows how a plague outbreak in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Cape Colony was blamed on the city’s Black population and how the city’s Black population came to be associated with the disease. Similarly, Americans attributed to Filipinos a 1909 typhoid outbreak at Ludlow Barracks in the Philippines that was later found to have been caused by contaminated water (Anderson 1995). It is not surprising, when we consider the repetition across space and time of these histories of strategic vilification on an unfounded medical basis, that the media immediately attributed a 2007 tuberculosis outbreak in Keur Massar<sup>21</sup> to the dumping ground of Mbeubeuss, with no empirical basis to support these statements<sup>22</sup>.

The plague epidemic in Dakar was first declared on 11 May 1914 (Echenberg 2002). Whereas in the years leading to the epidemic, the burning of contaminated homes was not as common as decontamination, after the outbreak, health officials began burning African dwellings by the hundreds (Betts 1971; Echenberg 2002). European dwellings, as Echenberg (2002) writes, were largely exempted from burning campaigns even if they were clearly of materials deemed

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<sup>21</sup> The *commune* of Keur Massar neighbors the *commune* of Malika, where Mbeubeuss is located. Both *communes* are part of the municipality of Pikine, which is one of the four municipalities of the Region of Dakar.

<sup>22</sup> Personal interview with El Hadj Malik Diallo, President of *Association Bokk Jomm des Récupérateurs et Recycleurs de Mbeubeuss* (July 2015 in Malika, Dakar)

“substandard.” Additionally, the government built quarantine camps for sick residents and reinforced vaccination, which again was voluntary for Europeans but mandatory for Africans (Echenberg 2002). Two “sanitary belts” (*cordons sanitaires*) were established following the declaration of a bubonic plague epidemic. The first was placed to the west of the Dakar city center, which had a majority European population, in order to restrict movement between central Dakar and its neighboring “native village.” Echenberg (2002) shows how the way in which the sanitary belt was established conveys racist anxieties and preferential treatment of Europeans. For example, the cordon sanitaire did not include areas east of the Vincens neighborhood of the Dakar city center, even though some of the first plague cases were located there, because these areas were home to many European residents. Since prohibiting Africans from crossing to the other side of the sanitary belt into the city center would be debilitating for the city’s economy, Africans were required to carry passes with which they could enter the city center during working hours if they were vaccinated (Echenberg 2002). While the first sanitary belt was repealed shortly after its establishment, on the basis of its economic inexpediency, the second was longer lasting. It consisted of a 900-meter-wide belt where no buildings or movement were allowed. Incidentally, this vacant belt – although no longer a sanitary belt after the plague – would serve as a “natural” barrier between the city center and what would become Medina for decades after the epidemic (Bigon 2012).

African, particularly Lebu, resistance to the health measures following the plague outbreak and later the establishment of Medina was notable. Many of the city’s African residents saw the health measures and building policies enacted upon the declaration of the epidemic as the colonial government’s attempts to support French merchants who sold “durable” building materials in Dakar. Additionally, many read the government’s actions – particularly the requirement that all straw housing be burned and its inhabitants relocated if they could not rebuild with “durable” materials, as well as the talks about creating Medina – as efforts to continue seizing the land of Lebu residents (Betts 1971). Nine days after the declaration of the plague epidemic and the sanitation measures that quickly ensued, about 1,500 Lebu residents carrying canes and clubs protested in front of City Hall. The following day, African residents organized a four-day market strike, refusing to sell to Europeans or their servants (Betts 1971; Johnson 1971). The resistance subsided only when the Governor-General of Senegal met with and told Lebu chiefs that the government would help them with rebuilding their destroyed homes. Resistance from the city’s African residents, along with pressure from the newly elected deputy of Senegal to the French Chamber of Deputies, Blaise

Diagne<sup>23</sup>, succeeded in forcing the colonial government to temporarily relax its health measures by June of 1914.

I do not mention this instance of Lebu resistance as a simple acknowledgment of local agency against colonial policies. Rather, I write about it here because we would not be able to understand the failures and accomplishments of the health measures surrounding the plague outbreak if we do not acknowledge that African residents resisted the burdening measures to which they were disproportionately subjected. In fact, it was this resistance that ensured that these measures were not completely successful. As we will see with Medina, local resistance played a major role in ensuring that the segregationist project this neighborhood entailed was not complete.

In July 1914, colonial officials' anxieties about the spread of the plague culminated with the release of a decree that called for the segregation of the native population far from the European part of the city and the demolition of all buildings that could not be disinfected – those with perishable materials (Betts 1971). The sense of emergency around the plague thus permitted (or supposedly justified) practices that the French could not otherwise have enacted in Dakar, due in part to the ideology of *assimilation* but mostly because the four communes of Dakar made up the capital of French West Africa and residents who had lived there for over five years held, on paper, French citizen status. Thus began preparations for the creation of a new native village outside of the Dakar city center. Regarding the destruction of “substandard” buildings, the colonial government planned to relocate to this village all those who were unwilling or unable to build with bricks after having had their houses demolished. That the Lebu residents were particularly outraged by this decree is no surprise: not only did many face forced relocation, but they also feared losing their lands, as the government planned to expropriate landowners with compensation if it could not build the village on land that it owned<sup>24</sup>.

Medina, originally named “segregation village” (*village de segregation*), was built quickly and haphazardly in August 1914. As Echenberg (2002) shows, the efforts to move African residents to Medina were closely connected with the issue of real estate. The relocation initiative enabled the colonial government to continue processes of social and physical engineering that it had conducted in central Dakar since the late 1800s mainly through the private purchase, expropriation and annexation

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<sup>23</sup> Blaise Diagne was the first Black African deputy to the French Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>24</sup> The land that the government “owned” was also disputed. A series of land statutes had been enacted since the mid-1800s, the Guy Convention of 1905 being still fresh in Lebu memory (Betts 1971). The colonial state had undertaken processes of social and physical engineering in central Dakar for decades leading up to the plague, and especially in the early 1900s. The fairness of compensation for a recently appropriated tract of land, called the Tound, was still being disputed by some Lebu groups (Betts 1971; Echenberg 2002).

of Lebu land. The relocation initiative would create opportunities for continuing the transfer of old Lebu villages away from the port and city center, thus enabling residential development in central Dakar that would resonate with the colonial vision for the city as well as respond to a housing shortage that had been brewing since the early 1900s. Plots within Medina, which had no sewage system, electricity or clean water for several years after the neighborhood was built, were provided for Africans who refused to or could not rebuild with permanent materials after their “substandard” houses in the central neighborhoods were demolished. For all the concerns about the sanitary qualities of building materials that had shaped health regulations in the years leading to the plague, it is ironic that the colonial state enacted lax building regulations within Medina, allowing construction in straw or wood, and even tolerating the recycling of materials that were taken from areas that had been infected and then disinfected in central Dakar (Echenberg 2002). Such an irony elucidates that whether or not Medina was created for health concerns, its origins cannot be divorced from the colonial state’s interest in Lebu land and from intentions to enact segregation, which the colonial ideology around French presence in Senegal would otherwise not allow. Meanwhile, the colonial state continued to insist that a medical rationale was behind Medina.

*[The establishment of Medina] was not a question of race but of health, pure and simple. There is a danger and a mutual annoyance in letting two groupings who have their ways of living that are so completely distinct cohabit...*

- (Acting Governor of Senegal, Raphaël Antonetti, in a public address two months after the creation of Medina; cited in Echenberg 2002)

The city’s Lebu residents generally read these comments, and the actions that they embellished, for what they were. They heard the sanitation rhetoric as efforts on the part of the colonial government to remove them from their lands in Dakar proper. By October 1914, most of the Bambara and Toucouleur residents of Dakar had been essentially forced into Medina (Betts 1971). It is likely that these were migrants who had not resided in Dakar long enough to be considered *originaires*<sup>25</sup>. Lebu resistance to Medina was strong, perhaps because the risk of losing land meant that there was arguably more at stake for the Lebu in the relocation initiatives of 1914. Lebu

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<sup>25</sup> *Originaires* were African inhabitants of the four communes of Dakar, who had been born or had resided in the communes for at least five years. Since the French abolition of slavery in 1848, *originaires* held some citizen rights, including the right to vote, although the rights and freedoms of citizenship were not always granted to them in practice. Despite the emphasis of equality and universality in French republicanism, *originaires* kept their family and personal affairs under local jurisdiction. This arrangement was known as *citoyenneté dans le statut*. In 1916, *originaires* were legally granted all of the rights of citizenship. African inhabitants outside of the four communes of Dakar remained *sujets* (subjects) (Diouf 1998; Cooper 2014).

residents deployed physical resistance against government efforts to burn their homes on several occasions in October and November 1914. Besides Lebu resistance, a number of political and economic factors ensured that the project of active forced relocation of African residents to Medina was not completely successful<sup>26</sup>. Betts (1971) offers an interesting discussion on these factors. First, the Senegalese Deputy to the French Chamber of Deputies, Blaise Diagne, who was strongly against the establishment of Medina, exerted significant political pressure on colonial officials. Second, Lebu resistance made violent confrontation a real possibility in the eyes of the colonial government. The French Minister of Colonies feared that, considering that World War I had just begun, Germany or the Ottomans would turn this situation against the French by stirring up the Lebu population against colonial officials. Third, the reliance of the colonial economy upon African manual laborers at the Dakar port must not be understated. There was colonial economic interest in maintaining some African residents in Dakar. Lastly, the economic means of the colonial government were restricted because of the war, and thus the image it had longed for, of Dakar as an “imperial city”, quickly became untenable. Racial segregation was no longer as urgent of a concern.

### **Spilling into the Present: Dispossession through Waste Management in Mbeubeuss, 2014**

One hundred years after the plague epidemic, similar processes of exclusion and dispossession unfold in a dumping ground about 25 kilometers northeast of central Dakar, in a rapidly urbanizing commune of the Dakar region. Mbeubeuss is an open-air dumping ground in Malika, in the Pikine commune of the Region of Dakar. At roughly six square kilometers, Mbeubeuss is one of the biggest and oldest informal landfills in Africa. It has been the primary solid waste disposal site in metropolitan Dakar since 1968. The constancy of Mbeubeuss’ presence in the history of Dakar’s waste management system, at least until the turn of the century, initially comes as a surprise considering that this history is a turbulent one marked by a succession of volatile public-private arrangements and consistent institutional reconfigurations. In the past few decades, waste has been at the heart of heated political battles and the grounds for a vibrant labor movement in Dakar, just as it has constituted a powerful instrument for the expression of popular discontent with urban and national politics.<sup>27</sup> A closer look into the history of Dakar’s waste management system over the

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<sup>26</sup> By the end of the 1920s, for example, the population of Medina was only 8,000. Around 20,000 Africans still lived in central Dakar. Many of these were in “substandard” housing, which elucidates that the relocation project, which was grounded on efforts to move people out of “substandard” housing, was not completely successful.

<sup>27</sup> See Fredericks (2013) for an excellent and detailed analysis of waste as an arena for political battles for authority and as an instrument for the expression of popular discontent.

past 45 years, however, reveals that amidst all the twists and turns, a few features have remained fairly constant: institutional imbroglio has been the order of the day; debates have centered on garbage collection, with little attention on disposal and recycling; and waste management has almost consistently been pursued through partnerships with private multinational companies. In the numerous transitions from one arrangement to another, what is notable is a tendency to completely supplant existing actors and systems – a tendency that has largely precluded the possibility to learn from mistakes or to build on existing capacities (Cissé 2007). Also notable is the sustained disregard of the informal actors who play such a central role in Dakar’s waste management system but whose capacities and concerns have been overshadowed by the fact that debates about waste management have generally centered on which multinational company to partner with and what kinds of power-sharing arrangements to establish. It is thus that Mbeubeuss remained fairly peripheral in discussions over waste management in Dakar until the early 2000s. The dumping ground only truly entered the spotlight in 2005, in a series of events that I outline later in this section. Before delving into the discussions around Mbeubeuss’ closure, however, I present an overview of some of the major shifts in waste management arrangements in Dakar since the early 1970s. Through this overview, I hope to situate the proposed closure of Mbeubeuss within the recent history of changing waste management systems so that we may better understand the logics and interests that have driven the pursuit of a clean city in Dakar in the years leading to the current debates.

#### *A Turbulent History: Waste Management in Dakar since 1970*

Cissé (2007) and Fredericks (2013) offer detailed accounts of developments in Dakar’s waste management during the period in question. It is mainly to these accounts, coupled with information gathered from conversations with residents of Dakar, that I owe this overview of the history of Dakar’s waste sector over the past four and a half decades. Cissé (2007) characterizes the history of Dakar’s waste sector since the 1970s as one of chronic vacillations between centralization, privatization, and decentralization. Waste began to be deposited in the dried lakebed of Mbeubeuss in 1968, only a few years before the closure – due to over-saturation – of Dakar’s main disposal site in the neighborhood of Hann. By 1971, Mbeubeuss had become the main dumping ground in the region. It was at this time that waste collection and disposal in parts of Dakar, as well as the communes of Rufisque and Pikine, were placed under the responsibility of a private Senegalese company, SOADIP (*La Société Africaine de Diffusion et de Promotion*). In the 1970s, then, waste management in the region was divided between SOADIP and the autonomous garbage collection

arrangements set up in some of the city's planned neighborhoods<sup>28</sup>. This shared system functioned without major complications until the 1980s.

In the early 1980s, SOADIP found itself unable to cover operation costs, mainly due to municipalities' inability to pay for its services. By 1984, SOADIP could not pay its employees. What followed were months of accumulating garbage and a proliferation of spontaneous waste deposit sites across the SOADIP collection areas. Waste management in all but the neighborhoods that had retained their own systems was left first to private collectors and then to the national Directorate of Technical Services (Cissé 2007). The newly elected Mayor Mamadou Diop created SIAS (*la Société Industrielle d'Aménagement Urbain du Senegal*), a public entity, in April 1985 and placed it under the supervision of the municipality of Dakar – CUD (*La Communauté Urbaine de Dakar*)<sup>29</sup> (Fredericks 2013). SIAS' responsibilities covered the entire Region of Dakar. The entity thus replaced the autonomous waste management systems of some of Dakar's neighborhoods, but it was obligated to hire most of the waste workers who had previously worked there. Significant deficiencies in garbage collection and disposal persisted and waste quickly piled up across the city, ultimately exploding into what Fredericks (2013, p. 440) has called a “dramatic waste crisis.” The waste crisis of 1988 exacerbated an already growing popular discontent with the strained social and economic conditions of the Structural Adjustment era – a discontent that, after the 1988 presidential election, spilled onto the city streets in the form of massive demonstrations (Fredericks 2013).

Despite the persistence of debilitating shortcomings in Dakar's waste management into the 1990s, SIAS' contract was renewed in 1991. It was around this time that city residents took matters into their own hands. Neighborhood associations and youth groups organized “days of cleanliness” (*journées de la propreté*), where they set out to clean public spaces in Dakar – an initiative that grew into a broader and very influential youth movement known as *Set-Setal* (Wolof for “be clean-make clean”). The Mayor institutionalized these youth associations into what became a highly participatory – out of necessity – waste management system. Meanwhile, the central government considered privatizing the waste sector. Between 1992 and the official dissolution of SIAS in 1995, a series of private companies along with the neighborhood associations took charge of garbage collection,

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<sup>28</sup> Dakar's OHLM and SICAP neighborhoods, as well as the Port Autonome de Dakar, retained their own waste collection and transport arrangements in the 1970s (Cissé 2007).

<sup>29</sup> La Communauté Urbaine de Dakar (CUD) was created with the administrative reorganization of 1983. This reorganization broke the Commune of Dakar, which had been territorially delimited in 1964, into three communes: Dakar, Pikine and Rufisque-Bargny. CUD was administered by ten representatives from the three communes and was headed by a Secretary-General appointed by decree of the Ministry of the Interior. At the time of its establishment, CUD's mission included cleaning streets and public spaces, managing the municipal hospital, managing the cemeteries, etc. (Jaglin and Dubresson 1993).

transport and disposal. Between 1995 and 2000, the city's waste sector comprised a wide array of local and foreign actors under the oversight of CUD and the public works agency AGETIP (*Agence d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public*). Although deficiencies in waste management persisted, the next turnover was primarily instigated by the major political and institutional transformations brought by the election of the Wade administration in 2000.

One of the key changes in 2000 was the creation of a new autonomous agency within the central government that was charged with overseeing matters of waste management in Dakar, and the dissolution, shortly thereafter, of CUD (see Fall 2001). This new agency, which went through two names before being called APRODAK (*Agence pour la Propreté de Dakar*) in May 2001, contracted small local enterprises to handle garbage collection and transport in Dakar. In 2002, the Ministry of Youth, Environment and Public Hygiene signed a contract with the Swiss multinational company Alcyon. Alcyon, under the oversight of APRODAK, took over the responsibilities of cleaning public spaces, collecting and treating urban solid waste, managing the waste disposed in Mbeubeuss, and constructing new waste treatment facilities in the form of a BOOT project – a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer project based on a public-private partnership whereby the private partner builds and initially owns the project, and begins operations to recover its costs before transferring ownership to the state. From solid waste, these planned waste treatment facilities were to produce biogas, compost, electricity and heat, among other things. Given that the new waste treatment facilities would entail transformed waste disposal practices, it was here that Mbeubeuss was first taken into consideration – though without any resolutions regarding its closure.

In November 2003, with approval from the Minister of the Environment, the contract with Alcyon was sold to one of Alcyon's three sub-contractors<sup>30</sup>: AMA International. However, the degraded state of AMA's collection equipment and the irregularity with which it paid its local sub-contractors meant that Dakar quickly found itself in another waste crisis, the consequences of which were made painfully evident by cholera outbreaks in 2005 (Cissé 2007). The contract with AMA was broken in October of that year but reinstated shortly after, on the grounds that APRODAK had not conducted sufficient studies of AMA's deficiencies prior to the dissolution of the contract. Meanwhile, APRODAK was replaced by APROSEN, which was then replaced by CADAK/CAR (*Communautés des Agglomérations de Rufisque et Dakar*) as the agency in charge of overseeing waste management. CADAK/CAR is an inter-municipal organization in the Region of Dakar, headed

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<sup>30</sup> Alcyon's three subcontractors were: 1) the Rome-based multinational AMA; 2) the Dakar-based Senegalese company ERECO; and 3) the French engineering company, SOFRESID.

by the Mayor, and formally responsible for household waste management, street lighting and the road network (Fredericks 2013).

The creation of CADAQ/CAR and its placement in charge of waste management in Dakar necessitated that the contract with AMA be amended. The negotiations between CADAQ/CAR and AMA were lengthy due to negotiating parties' irreconcilable positions on certain issues. One such issue related to the question of delegating responsibilities for street cleaning to local municipalities. The local municipalities that made up CADAQ/CAR pushed for CADAQ/CAR to be in charge of street cleaning because the cleaning segment of the city's waste management system comprised the largest population of workers in the waste sector (Cissé 2007). Therefore, control of jobs in this sector presented a possibility for local authorities to amass significant political support at the eve of the 2007 elections. The future of Mbeubeuss also entered into the negotiations over the new contract. The negotiating parties agreed upon an amendment specifying that no waste would be deposited in Mbeubeuss after its official closure. Still, no formal decision was made to close the site down (Cissé 2007). At this point, however, the dumping ground had entered the spotlight due to a highway construction megaproject that necessitated the resettlement of some households to an area near Mbeubeuss. I will return to that project shortly. Irresoluble disagreements between CADAQ/CAR and AMA resulted in a long negotiation process, while AMA's deficiencies persisted. The public grew restless, as did the waste workers union (which does not include Mbeubeuss recyclers)<sup>31</sup>, which staged a series of strikes and sit-ins in Dakar (Fredericks 2013). President Wade ended the contract between AMA and the state in July 2006.

What followed was a power-sharing arrangement between the Ministry of the Environment and CADAQ/CAR, where the Ministry would oversee the work of the private contractors hired to collect and deposit waste and CADAQ/CAR would handle the funds coming from the central government. Although waste management in the Region of Dakar was in CADAQ/CAR's mandate, the entity did not have autonomy over the waste sector. This is because a 2002 addendum to the

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<sup>31</sup> This waste workers union does not include the workers at Mbeubeuss. The workers at Mbeubeuss are informal. Their work comprises recuperating, recycling and selling the waste deposited in the dumping ground. They are locally known as and they refer to themselves as *recycleurs* (recyclers) and/or *récupérateurs* (dealers – of metals, plastic and other materials recuperated from waste). In most NGO publications and some scholarly literature, dumping ground workers such as those in Mbeubeuss are called “waste pickers” or “scavengers.” I do not use these terms because I find them to be derogatory or to detract from the important service that these men and women provide for the city, and the work that they do. I use the terms “waste workers” or “workers.” Street cleaners or waste collectors in the city are also called “waste workers”, but the type of work that they do is different from that which Mbeubeuss workers do. In all instances other than this particular one, “waste workers” in this thesis refers to Mbeubeuss workers. In this particular instance, I am referring to the union of those who clean public spaces and collect waste in the city.

decentralization laws of 1996 had recentralized decision-making power over waste management in the capital city, making the central government the deciding authority over Dakar's waste (Fredericks 2013). The waste sector would become grounds for other heated battles for power between the central state and the city government in the period 2009 through 2012<sup>32</sup>. Between Mayor Khalifa Sall's efforts to shift waste management fully under the purview of CADAK/CAR and President Wade's initial steps towards creating a central government agency – SOPROSEN (*La Société pour la Propreté du Sénégal*) – that would oversee waste management, Dakar's waste sector continued to be marked by instability. In a move that violated the nation's 1998 decentralization laws, President Wade transferred the waste budget to the Ministry of Culture, Gender and the Living Environment, thus rendering CADAK/CAR virtually obsolete with regard to waste management. However, upon Macky Sall's rise to the presidency in 2012 the contract with AMA's successor, the multinational company Veolia, was broken; the creation of SOPROSEN was interrupted, and waste management was re-transferred to the Ministry of Local Governments. Local private contractors now handle waste collection and disposal in the Region of Dakar. The institutional battles outlined here highlight that Dakar's waste sector has been in a state of “perpetual ‘transition’” (Fredericks 2013, p. 450) – more markedly so in recent years. The centrality of the sector in political battles has meant that decision making over Mbeubeuss, and Dakar's waste management in general, has been characterized by an instability that can partially explain why the future of Mbeubeuss, as I show next, is currently wrapped in such ambiguity.

### *Finding Gold in Garbage: Renewable Energy and Disposable Workers*

The Dakarois often use the term *or dur* (hard gold) in reference to Mbeubeuss. This play on the French word *ordure* (garbage) captures perfectly Mbeubeuss' dichotomous nature: the dump is simultaneously a site of detritus and of life. It sustains the livelihoods of an estimated 1,800 workers, who sort through the waste that is dumped there daily, organize it based on materials, and sell these materials to local and foreign entities – local smelters, industrial and agricultural companies, and exporters of metals. Despite the essential service that the recycling workers have for decades provided for the city in the shadows of informality, the government has mostly remained disengaged with what happens at Mbeubeuss. Even with the continuous and drastic transformations in Dakar's waste management system over the past few decades, Mbeubeuss has remained the primary waste

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<sup>32</sup> Fredericks (2013) describes in detail these political battles, in which the waste sector was central.

disposal site in the region. The closure of the dumping ground did not really enter the public debate until 2005. And when it did, it was for reasons unrelated to waste management.

Mbeubeuss entered the spotlight when the World Bank-funded<sup>33</sup> Dakar-Diamniadio highway megaproject – “The Highway to the Future”<sup>34</sup>– necessitated the resettlement of some 2,000 households to an area near Mbeubeuss (Cissé and Wone 2013). The donors made this move conditional upon the closing of the dumping ground, as the hazardous environmental conditions in the area and polluted water runoff around the site in the rainy season made it an unacceptable location for resettlement. Before Mbeubeuss could be closed, however, an alternative waste deposit and recycling facility had to be constructed. Consequently, the construction of a sanitary landfill in Sindia, a village farther outside of the city in the M’Bour commune of Thiès region, was initiated as a BOOT project in the form of a public-private partnership between the State of Senegal and an Italian corporate group. Besides offering a recycling solution that could replace Mbeubeuss and thus make the highway construction project compliant with donor regulations, the construction of the Sindia landfill also advanced the plans made in the 2002 contract between the State of Senegal and Alcyon, where the construction of new waste treatment facilities was first outlined. However, the transition from Mbeubeuss to Sindia has yet to be realized. The landfill in Sindia is still not in operation and Mbeubeuss has not been closed.

The initial announcement of plans for the construction of the new landfill was followed by years of institutional back-and-forth regarding Dakar’s recycling system, as well as active contestation by local groups in Sindia (Cissé and Wone 2013). Claims that the Sindia landfill would pose hazards for the takeoff and landing of planes at the Blaise Diagne International Airport under construction nearby resulted in suspension of the landfill project until 2009, when the national Agency of Investment Promotion and Major Projects’ new assessments of the low potential aviation risk pressured the government to authorize the resumption of construction activities. In early 2012, when the new landfill was made partially operational, community groups in Sindia rose in protest and destroyed parts of the facility. They feared the impacts that a landfill would have on environmental and human health in the area. The new landfill project was thus put to a halt, and the future of Mbeubeuss and Sindia has been at a gridlock since. In the meantime, Mbeubeuss has entered the radar of private capital, and there is foreign interest in transforming the dumping ground into a landfill gas capture project for alternative energy production and the generation of carbon

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<sup>33</sup> Funding partners include the French Development Agency and the African Development Bank.

<sup>34</sup> See APIX 2014 for more information on this project (<http://investinsenegal.com/Highway-to-the-future-Dakar.html>)

credits. Private capital now sees the *or dur* (hard gold) in *ordures* (waste). But its extraction necessitates the elimination of over a thousand jobs at Mbeubeuss.

Landfill gas capture projects, which typically have a lifespan of 15 years<sup>35</sup>, are not always financially viable because they require high capital investment and because the amount of methane released from the average dumping ground drops drastically 15 years after the landfill is capped – sometimes much earlier (Terraza and Willumsen 2009). However, carbon markets have made these projects increasingly profitable in recent years. As a result, landfill gas capture projects are often pursued as carbon development mechanisms, as the sale of carbon credits on the basis of prevented greenhouse gas emissions renders them more profitable. Since 2006, there have been ongoing plans to privatize Mbeubeuss and turn the methane that it emits into energy through a landfill gas capture plant. I will give two examples of such plans, both of which embody some of the mounting critiques of carbon development mechanisms: namely that their typically large-scale technological approach to emissions reduction does not benefit the local communities that they often adversely affect (Strickland and Bumpus 2007).

Between 2006 and 2008, the Sustainable Cities Initiative of Industry Canada<sup>36</sup> and Quebec-based Econoler International<sup>37</sup> worked with a project team of local and international actors<sup>38</sup> to investigate the methane-extraction potential at Mbeubeuss, and to discern whether the site meets qualifications for carbon credits (IDRC 2006). Also in 2006, the UK company Greentech Eco-Homes Ltd. and the multinational engineering consultancy firm Scott Wilson developed a landfill gas capture project plan, the “M’beubeuss Landfill Methane Recovery Project.” Neither of the two plans materialized because landfill gas capture plants entail that the dumping ground is covered by a layer of earth, and thus they cannot be constructed until Mbeubeuss is formally closed. So in the gridlock at which we currently find Dakar’s waste management system, these gas capture plants have not left the blueprints. What is evident, however, is that in this pursuit of sustainable futures, those who will

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<sup>35</sup> Landfill gas production typically reaches its peak at 3–8 years. It decreases more drastically after 15 years (sometimes a little longer) at which point, its extraction starts to become inviable for energy production (Terraza and Willumsen 2009).

<sup>36</sup> The Sustainable Cities Initiative is a program of Industry Canada, which is a Department of the Government of Canada whose mandate is to improve conditions for investment, improve Canada’s innovation performance, increase Canada’s share of global trade, and so on. (<http://basd.free.fr/initiatives/viewproject.php.152.html>)

<sup>37</sup> Econoler International is a Quebec-based consulting firm that specializes in energy efficiency projects (<http://www.econoler.com/home.aspx>)

<sup>38</sup> The team included The Sustainable Cities Initiative of Industry Canada, Econoler International, the Montreal-based Paul Gerin-Lajoie Foundation, the African Institute of Urban Management, ENDA (an international environmental and development NGO), APROSEN (which was then in charge of waste management), the Pikine municipality, the Senegalese Ministry of the Environment, AMA, and so on.

cash in on Mbeubeuss' methane are ultimately multinationals. Those among the most adversely affected – Mbeubeuss workers – are for the most part left in the dark. In the one occasion where one worker representative was invited to a brief consultation, the workers were offered compensation that they deem insufficient, as I will show shortly.

The government has tended to disregard Mbeubeuss workers even as it talks about cutting off their access to their means of livelihood. This is evident in the many announcements regarding Mbeubeuss' closure over the past several years, where government officials focus on the ecological threats that the dumping ground poses but remain vague or offer misleading statements about the fate of those who for decades have handled the city's recycling. After an inter-ministerial council meeting on solid waste management in February 2014, the central government announced a new national waste management program and repeated the plans for closing “the ecological bomb” that is Mbeubeuss, as it expressed regret over the Sindia community's contestation of the landfill. Still the Minister of Local Government, Oumar Youm, emphasized plans for better communication with Sindia residents, so that the new landfill could eventually become operational<sup>39</sup>. No statement was made on Mbeubeuss workers.

The President of the Mbeubeuss workers' association, Bokk Jomm, recalls only a few instances that a government official has actually visited the dumping ground<sup>40</sup>. One was the well documented visit by then-Minister of Culture, Gender and the Living Environment, Awa Ndiaye, during Dakar's “week of cleanliness” in January 2012. Incidentally, Fredericks (2013) shows how this “week of cleanliness” was one of several highly publicized events through which President Wade deployed “the performance of public cleaning” (Fredericks 2013, p. 450) to amass political support before the March 2012 election and to discredit CADA/CAR's adeptness at waste management. Reflecting on her January 2012 visit, Minister Ndiaye lamented to journalists the deplorable conditions at Mbeubeuss and re-stated plans for Mbeubeuss' closure. She repeated that waste would soon be discarded in Sindia and Mbeubeuss workers would begin to work in the commune of Mbao, near Mbeubeuss, under better conditions, in one of the three new waste sorting centers associated with the Sindia landfill<sup>41</sup>. Minister Ndiaye failed to mention that the new sorting facilities could accommodate but 350 of the 1,800 Mbeubeuss workers (Cissé and Wone 2013). Ultimately, neither the Sindia landfill nor the waste sorting centers would be made operational.

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<sup>39</sup> The Senegalese newspaper *Le Soleil* covered this meeting. See Diatta 2014.

<sup>40</sup> Personal interview with El Hadj Malik Diallo, President of the Bokk Jomm Association of Mbeubeuss Waste Workers (July 2015 in Malika, Dakar)

<sup>41</sup> See Diouf 2012

Minister Ndiaye returned to Mbeubeuss a week after her first visit, with two computers for Bokk Jomm's main office.

Bokk Jomm's spokesperson Pape Ndiaye, one of the oldest recyclers at Mbeubeuss, says that the government has only superficially consulted with the workers regarding plans for their livelihoods after the closure of the dumping ground. Consultations were initiated with three delegates from Bokk Jomm, but they were quickly interrupted because, from the perspective of the workers, the government's offer of 350 jobs was utterly insufficient compensation and the state was unwilling to budge. The government's inflexibility made Pape Ndiaye see the consultation more as a formality than a negotiation. Regarding plans to construct a landfill gas capture plant on the dumping ground, the Clean Development Mechanism Project Design Document filed with the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) for the "M'Beubeuss Landfill Methane Recovery Project" states that a two-hour meeting was held to discuss this project with "local stakeholders" on 28 February 2007 in Dakar, about 15 kilometers from Mbeubeuss. The "local stakeholders" included representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Energy, ENDA Ecopole – an NGO that works closely with Mbeubeuss workers, and one representative from the workers. The workers were concerned that the construction of a methane recovery plant would disrupt their activities and, for those who live on the dumping ground, displace them from their homes. These are worries they still express regarding the possibility of similar projects in the future. The project's solution to this concern, as is also stated in the Project Design Document, was that the gas capture plant would be constructed in stages and thus the disruption would happen gradually until the workers' ultimate eviction.

Mbeubeuss workers find themselves between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, under donor pressure over the Dakar-Diamniadio highway construction project, the government had set out to close Mbeubeuss even before the plans to turn the dumping ground into a landfill gas capture plant began to surface. Given the government's unwillingness to incorporate more than 350 workers into the new waste management system, or to adequately compensate the recyclers, projects such as the "M'Beubeuss Landfill Methane Recovery Project" at least offer a possibility for compensation. On the other hand, such projects also mean that the workers will eventually be removed from Mbeubeuss: at best, gradually. Compensation from these projects usually comes in the form of social programs that, although certainly needed, the workers secure from other sources. Matters are made worse by the fact that although the workers at Mbeubeuss have been a critical node in Dakar's waste management system for nearly five decades, they are informal and thus have limited recourse to

formal channels for representation in decision making over this sector and/or fair compensation.

What happens, then, when waste – the abject of capitalist production – re-enters the circuits of capital? What happens when profiting from waste necessitates that thousands of workers are rendered superfluous? In the case of Mbeubeuss, we note a disregard of the workers that is rather blatant. From the interviews and observations for this study, we can identify two factors that play a role in enabling such a disregard. One is the urgency around “ecological bombs”, with which the government has made sure to associate Mbeubeuss at least over the past decade. This sense of urgency is created through repeated recourse to a narrative of environmental degradation that in turn helps to justify the dispossession of several hundred people, just as the urgency around the spread of plague once justified forced displacement and residential segregation among other forms of violence. The other is that the ties between the workers and the government have become strained, particularly because of the role of international NGOs. Due to NGO interventions, the workers’ ability to influence decision making through their association, Bokk Jomm is limited.

#### *“Ecological Bombs” and the Pursuit of Environmental Sustainability*

In Dakar, rhetoric of environmental sustainability does the work of justifying dispossessions once accomplished through the language of public health and sanitation. The closing of Mbeubeuss is couched in rhetoric of environmental sustainability/degradation, whereby the dumping ground is routinely portrayed as an “ecological bomb.” In 2006, then-Mayor Pape Diop called Mbeubeuss a “danger for the whole country” and a “bomb about to explode” – phrases that have been regularly ascribed to Mbeubeuss in publications of foreign environmental and anti-poverty NGOs as well as by Senegalese government officials and in Senegalese media<sup>42</sup>. The human and environmental health hazards that Mbeubeuss poses are repeated while the closing of the dumping ground is promoted as a move in the direction of sustainable urban waste management.

But what “sustainable” denotes here is “highly technological.” The sanitary landfill in Sindia, if made operational, will rely on mechanized incineration and minimal manual recycling. The sustainability currently being pursued in Dakar’s waste sector – both through the Sindia facility and the ongoing plans for landfill gas capture projects – is thus not one that builds on existing arrangements and draws on existing actors. Rather, it is a sustainability that completely replaces these actors with new technological solutions from abroad. It is a sustainability that uncritically

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<sup>42</sup>See, for example, Thiam 2012 and IDRC 2006 report

advocates the benefits of adopting new and “unknown”, “state-of-the-art” technologies<sup>43</sup>. But the fragmented and tumultuous history of Dakar’s waste sector, with its multiple failings and instabilities, alerts us to the possibility that such a proclivity for constant transformations and completely new technologies can also be debilitating for the city’s waste management. Moreover, the disregard of Mbeubeuss workers’ future in this period of transition demonstrates that “fighting urban poverty with green know-how”<sup>44</sup> rests on a flexibilization of labor that is emblematic of the neoliberal tendency to make the worker disposable. Finally, the centrality of the waste sector to battles for political control over the past fifteen years cautions us to view more critically how the narrative of environmental degradation functions or is strategically deployed at different times, and what work the idea of sustainability does in this sector when it comes to advancing particular political or economic interests.

Informal conversations with Dakar residents and interviews with the workers, as well as reports from foreign NGOs that have worked with Bokk Jomm, show that Mbeubeuss workers are often viewed with contempt or suspicion. In part, this is because of the close association of their work with dirt and impurity. It is also probably because many associate the dumping ground with crime and sometimes, as the President of Bokk Jomm mentioned, drug use. These associations serve to paint the workers as social marginals.<sup>45</sup> Many reports of foreign NGOs since the time that plans to close Mbeubeuss were first announced, however, paint the workers in a different light. They praise their ingenuity and innovation as their focus turns on what kinds of livelihoods these workers can carve for themselves after the dumping ground is closed. Considering that the likelihood of these workers being incorporated into the planned waste management program currently appears dim, a transition to new forms of livelihood may well be necessary. However, this attention to how the workers are currently diversifying and can continue to diversify their livelihoods cuts off the possibility to look into how their work can be made safer – for them and for the environment. It precludes the possibility to look into whether their modes of operation are or can be made sustainable, and whether they can somehow be incorporated into the new waste management system.

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<sup>43</sup>A project proposal document for the landfill gas capture plant highlights this in its “Contributions to Sustainable Development” section (CDM-PDD 2006, p. 3). That such a section is essentially obligatory in any large project, especially a donor-funded one, is evidence of the power that “greening” has had as a discursive strategy through which the World Bank and other institutions advance a particular model of neoliberal development and establish a power/knowledge regime of green neoliberalism that Goldman (2006) so succinctly depicts.

<sup>44</sup>A report by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (now Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development) on the activities of Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) describes the plans to turn Mbeubeuss into a landfill gas capture project as “fighting urban poverty with green know-how” (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2006).

<sup>45</sup>The workers, through Bokk Jomm, have done a great deal to challenge these perceptions – I turn to that later.

More importantly, this focus on the workers' ingenuity in the face of reform also shifts the discussion away from the questions of justice at the heart of this transition. Why is it that workers who have for so long constituted a crucial node in the city's waste management system find themselves so easily disposed of?

The language of sustainability is offered as an antidote to the "detritus" that is Mbeubeuss. In the silences, or misleading declarations (as one can characterize Minister Ndiaye's January 2012 statement), about the fate of Mbeubeuss workers lies an unspoken agreement that the workers' livelihoods are a necessary sacrifice in the pursuit of a greater good – collateral damage in the fight for supposedly greener futures. And this script is not new. From around the globe, in the Indian village of Jetprole in Andhra Pradesh, Rao (2013) highlights the government's sustained disregard of the lives of villagers relocated by the construction of a large dam: the "costs" of a development conceived as a "normative project whose overall benefits are not blunted by the costs borne by some populations" (Rao 2013, p. 309). In Jetprole, the state has initiated an archaeology project as a means of compensation for the relocated villagers. Rao reads this as a necessary move on the part of the state to retain its legitimacy as provider of development; the reproduction of the developmental state is contingent upon the quelling of potential discontent. In Mbeubeuss, however, compensatory opportunities for the workers are meager and little has had to be done to justify their potential removal. In part, this is because discourse of environmental sustainability is mobilized such that the workers are posited as polluters, as impediments to a sustainable ideal better reached through technological prescriptions. They are, like the thatched roof dwellers blamed for yellow fever and the plague in the early 1900s, cast as the cause of the waste problem. Also influential, however, has been the gap between the state and the workers and the role that transnational activist networks and NGOs – some local and most global – play in widening this gap. I turn to this in the following section.

#### *Between Superfluity and Citizenship: Global Civil Society and Substantive Citizenship in Mbeubeuss*

International non-governmental and civil society organizations play an influential role in Mbeubeuss. The workers, through their association Bokk Jomm, nurture their relations with these institutions, as these have and continue to make significant material differences in their lives. Bokk Jomm was created in 1994 with the help of a Belgian NGO. Many workers say that an important motive behind the association's inception was to improve the workers' image and to portray their activities as honorable work. Bokk Jomm has been a registered association since 1995. It currently counts around 1,300 members – the majority of the estimated 1,800 men and women who work in

Mbeubeuss. Membership dues are 5,000 CFA<sup>46</sup> paid annually. Among the most significant material benefits of membership in the association is access to the Mbeubeuss health clinic, which was established with funds secured from the United Nations Development Program through the help of the international NGO based in Dakar – ENDA Tiers Monde (Environment and Development Action in the Third World).

Bokk Jomm works closely with ENDA. ENDA has helped the association forge relationships with several international NGOs that have provided funding for various projects in and around the dumping ground. These projects include the aforementioned health clinic, a community center where Bokk Jomm's office is located, and a training center that offers computers, carpentry, sewing and other programs to children and youth at a fee. In addition to helping Bokk Jomm secure funding opportunities from international NGOs, ENDA has periodically organized training programs with Mbeubeuss workers in order to teach safer methods of recuperating toxic waste – for example, dismantling electronics.

Mbeubeuss workers are also connected, through their association, to the transnational network of informal workers, WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing)<sup>47</sup>. Through ties to WIEGO, Bokk Jomm engages in knowledge exchange around collective action and accrues funding for projects that seek to improve working and living conditions in the dumping ground. WIEGO has, on many occasions, sponsored some of the association's members to attend international conferences of waste workers. Such experiences – realized as a result of Bokk Jomm's ties to global civil society groups and transnational advocacy networks – enable Mbeubeuss workers to see that their struggle is shared. Through ties to WIEGO, the recyclers pick up a consciousness of their role as workers in a system that has historically turned a blind eye to them. The exposure to experiences of informal labor organizing from around the world obtained through participation in WIEGO has played an important role in giving the association the language to defend the workers' role in Dakar's waste management system and to reconstruct themselves as agents of sustainable waste management in the face of a discourse that portrays them as polluters.

Thus, many workers talk about the environmentally damaging impacts of landfills and juxtapose these to the environmentally sustainable aspects of manual recycling. We can read this as a co-optation, on the part of Mbeubeuss workers, of the very discourse that is used against them.

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<sup>46</sup> About \$8.30 (in June 2015).

<sup>47</sup> WIEGO is a transnational advocacy network that comprises informal workers' associations, scholars, and advocacy NGOs. The network includes a Global Alliance of Waste Pickers, which brings together thousands of waste workers' associations from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Whereas the discourse of environmental degradation and sustainability posits Mbeubeuss workers as polluters, in interviews the workers repeat this discourse to reconstruct themselves as agents of sustainable waste management: stewards of the environment. Moreover, they allude to the fact that they have done the city's recycling since 1968 and thus know all too well Dakar's waste sector. They allude to the city's unstable waste collection and disposal systems and what they consider to be a largely incompetent waste collection force. This is perhaps an effort to identify another sector of Dakar's waste management system for which Mbeubeuss workers would be well suited – a crucial strategy considering that no role is designated for them in the city's planned recycling system. Through recourse to their relationship with their work and their intimate knowledge of the city's waste sector, they reaffirm their role as workers and tie their identity to the service that they have provided for the city for decades. It is by emphasizing their service to the city that many of the workers affirm their belonging to Mbeubeuss – which they see as theirs – and support claims for something that their informal status and political marginalization will not allow them: a role in the future of Dakar's waste sector.

Although international civil society actors and transnational advocacy networks have and continue to provide invaluable support to Mbeubeuss workers, they also contribute, in the context of a distant and disengaged state, to a widening gap between Mbeubeuss workers and the government that in turn allows for the kind of unrepresentative decision making we currently witness. Bokk Jomm members express trust in global civil society groups, as these have and continue to provide crucial aid and services typically perceived as the government's domain. For the same reasons, the government's legitimacy as an authority or as an actor to which to direct grievances is weak in the eyes of the workers. Most workers display some sort of distrust in the government's intentions for closing the dumping ground and frustration with its disregard of their livelihoods. Many even doubt that the dumping ground will be closed at all. Most workers also do not see the state as an actor to which they can direct their concerns or grievances. The final decision regarding Dakar's recycling system is ultimately up to the local and central government, but the channels through which the workers may influence this decision are weak, as the workers' primary focus over the years has been to foster relations with global civil society groups. These groups have stepped in where the government has remained distant, and they have made material differences in the workers' lives in ways that the government has not. Yet the mandate and objectives of global civil society groups do not extend to political representation of the workers' interests in the face of pending reform. In fact, these groups tend to refrain from meddling with political concerns and policy reform altogether.

Hence, they replace representation with a neutral facilitation role that erodes democratic substantive citizenship.

Additionally, Bokk Jomm's current capacity to push forward Mbeubeuss workers' demands appears weak, as the association has become more of an instrument through which workers secure resources and through which international NGOs channel funds than a politically active entity. In the process of forging and maintaining ties to a transnational network that is financially supportive but politically uninvolved, Bokk Jomm appears to be losing whatever political or radical edge it could potentially have had. Its role has become more about meeting the needs of the workers – a necessary endeavor considering the state's disengagement with Mbeubeuss – than about building capacity to represent these workers' interests in political fora. It is thus – through the influence of NGOs on state-Mbeubeuss workers ties and on Bokk Jomm's objectives and capacities – that the radical edge of an association of informal workers is dulled in Dakar, and that the workers' options for substantive emancipatory engagement with the decision-making processes that dictate their future are restricted.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

#### **On the Connective Tissues<sup>48</sup> that Bind Postcolonial Realities to Colonial Histories**

We see in the case of Mbeubeuss, as I have elaborated in the previous chapter, appeals to a normative understanding of development and environmental sustainability whereby some “costs” are justified in the pursuit of progress “for all.” Yet in Mbeubeuss, the urgency around “ecological bombs” entwines with discourse of environmental sustainability in ways that go further than developmentalist ideologies alone in justifying exclusionary urban policies. One hundred years after Medina, appeals to environmental sustainability know-how and the preference accorded to exclusionary technocratic solutions that remain out of touch with local realities echoes colonial appeals to medical “scientific” knowledge to dictate spatial organization towards exclusionary ends.

Appeals to developmentalist ideology were crucial strategies of the colonial state, which routinely alluded to a notion of “development through European knowledge” (Cooper 1997) as it attempted to legitimize its presence in the colonies and to establish social control. In the Dakar of the early 1900s, discourse of “development through European knowledge” was necessary for legitimizing France’s “civilizing mission” and was deployed to justify both the portrayal of the colonized as polluters and the enactment of segregationist spatial practices that fell disproportionately upon the backs of the city’s African residents. At the brink of the national independence movements, French colonial discourse again relied on a developmentalist ideology: this time, to try to maintain some integrity in its colonial mission when the post-World-War-II rhetoric of self-determination began to threaten the continuing of colonial relations (Cooper 1997). At the time, developmentalism created the illusion – or so the colonial powers thought – of a benevolent rationale for colonial rule, while ensuring that resource extraction in the colonies continued unhindered. Today, we witness similar developmentalist rationales in projects and policies that seek to justify the dispossession of several hundred workers in the name of environmental sustainability and for the profit of a select few, mostly international, corporations. This becomes the thread that links colonial Medina to contemporary Jetprole to present-day Mbeubeuss to post-World-War-II French West Africa.

Yet the developmentalist project has never been complete. In the French African colonies

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<sup>48</sup> I borrow this term from Ann Stoler (2013, p. 7), whose work on imperial debris and ruination inspired me to look for the colonial in Mbeubeuss.

after the Second World War, the very language of universalism and development in which such a project relied contained the seed of its own destruction (Cooper 1997). African labor leaders and those in the struggle for independence seized this discourse to argue that development requires sovereignty as well as to legitimize their claims to a series of entitlements. “They turned a language of social engineering into a language of entitlement,” as Cooper (1997) writes. Chari (2013) demonstrates similar instances of discourse appropriation, for example, by community activists in the polluted Wentworth township of Durban, who dress their claims in the language of environmental justice despite neither having faith in the environmental movement nor seeing the root of their problems as primarily environmental. In present-day Dakar, the government deploys discourse of environmental degradation in such ways that it creates a sense of urgency around Mbeubeuss that, in turn, works to justify the dispossession of several hundred workers. At the same time Mbeubeuss workers, too, appropriate the discourse of environmental degradation and appeal to notions of urban sustainability both to reaffirm their role as workers and to reconstitute themselves as agents of sustainable waste management. It is perhaps in the way that this discourse co-optation disturbs the exclusionary waste management arrangements in the making in Dakar that we can find possibilities for a more inclusive waste sector.

I was inspired to frame this study of Mbeubeuss with reference to public health campaigns and exclusionary urban planning in colonial Dakar for three reasons. Without repeating much of what has already been stated, I was driven by the following. First, as McFarlane (2008) highlights, historical analysis helps us better understand contemporary phenomena. Second, as Roy and Ong (2011) argue, a postcolonial theory of cities that reads postcolonial cities beyond the scripts of capital or rubrics of subaltern agency alone can position these cities as sites from which to produce knowledge about the urban. Third, as Stoler (2013) argues in her framework of imperial debris and ruination, the task of refocusing on “the connective tissue that continues to bind human potentials to degraded environments, and degraded personhoods to the material refuse of imperial projects” (Stoler 2013, p. 7) is critical. Mbeubeuss is a site of imperial debris. But while the imperial debris may initially appear to be in the piles of garbage at Mbeubeuss, we found that it is also located in the exclusionary projects pursued in the name of “development for all” and in the legitimization of such projects through appeals to scientific knowledge and sanitation or sustainability concerns. We see similar appeals to scientific knowledge or sanitation/environmental concerns repeat themselves throughout history and with similar results, and it is perhaps in these appeals – in the discourses

strategically deployed to justify blatant dispossession – that we can begin to look for the ties that bind colonial histories to postcolonial realities.

With respect to identifying these ties, this project is not complete. I realize the importance of taking this study beyond Dakar, to other formerly colonized cities, and to the old metropolises as well. What I hope I have begun to do, however, is see how we can analyze postcolonial urban policies and practices with attention both to the capitalist forces and the imperial arrangements that continue to dictate the organization of urban space or justify its exclusionary effects. I have observed how colonial forces influence postcolonial realities, and also how the interests of capital seize colonial discourse to the kinds of exclusionary effects that we have observed time and again. It is from an awareness of how the discourses of sanitation and sustainability are deployed to similar exclusionary ends in several places at several times that we can begin to view them for what they are. It is perhaps then that we can begin to sever the ties that bind colonial histories to postcolonial realities.

### **Claiming Citizenship in Mbeubeuss**

In the current discussions and actions – or inaction – surrounding Mbeubeuss, I have explored how a pending waste management reform pushes informal waste workers to the brink of superfluity as it deploys narratives of environmental degradation and the language of sustainability to justify urban waste management solutions that are both highly technocratic and highly exclusionary. In this pursuit of greener futures, I note a tendency to completely supplant existing waste management arrangements and to privilege multinational companies at the expense of several hundred informal workers, who live and work at the political margins but who have comprised a significant node in Dakar's waste sector for nearly half a century. A disregard for these workers' livelihoods characterizes not only the pending waste management program but also the way in which plans to privatize the dumping ground of Mbeubeuss have unfolded since international donors for another megaproject pressured the government of Senegal to close Mbeubeuss. In the ongoing plans to construct a landfill gas capture plant that would turn the methane that now fills the lungs of the workers into wealth that will stuff the pockets of international investors, the workers are once again only symbolically consulted. Their dispossession is taken as a *fait accompli* while funding for social programs in Mbeubeuss is extended to distract from the detrimental implications that the privatization of the dumping ground would have for the workers' livelihoods. These social programs are much needed in Mbeubeuss. However, they ultimately do nothing to support Mbeubeuss

workers' primary interest in the face of reform: to be integrated – fairly – into Dakar's new waste sector.

Several factors disenable Mbeubeuss workers from meaningfully influencing the decision-making processes that dictate the fate of their livelihoods so that they may realize their claims. For one, they are informal. What's more, the government's current disengagement with them is but an instance in a longer history of neglect of informal waste workers in Dakar and West African cities in general (Medina 2000). Additionally, the workers' future livelihoods are caught within a cloud of overall ambiguity and paralysis that characterizes the gridlock at which we currently find Dakar's waste sector: no movement is made to shift waste disposal to the new landfill in Sindia, where a partnership with a foreign corporate group was interrupted after the local community's sustained and continuing contestation to the project; and no movement is made to close Mbeubeuss despite recurring announcements of its upcoming closure. As a consideration of the turbulent history of Dakar's waste sector over the past few decades makes evident, the current gridlock should come as no surprise. But as Mbeubeuss workers find their future livelihoods in limbo, their informality, the narratives of environmental degradation that combine with interests of private capital to frame particular exclusionary solutions as "sustainable", and their ties to international NGOs and transnational advocacy networks, produce a very particular form of disempowerment that pushes us to reconsider both how we think of transnational activism and how we conceptualize citizenship and citizenship struggles.

Historically, Mbeubeuss workers' informality has been both advantageous and unfavorable. On the one hand, it has allowed the workers a great deal of autonomy and flexibility, not to mention the possibility to procure earnings at times much higher than the minimum wage (Cissé 2007). On the other hand, it has also meant that the government has been under little formal obligation to provide services and protections for improving living and working conditions at Mbeubeuss. Additionally, Mbeubeuss recyclers' recourse to formal channels for advancing their claims or pursuing their interests as workers has been weak. International NGOs have for decades stepped in with programs and services where the state has remained distant, and so the legitimacy of the state as an authority or as a provider of welfare is rather weak in the eyes of the workers in this critical moment. Their allegiance to proliferating international civil society actors has had significant material impacts on their lives, but it has also transformed their ability to influence the political economy that influences their livelihoods – their practice of citizenship – in ways that become glaring in the face of reform.

Literature that proclaims the benefits of ‘boomerang effects’ argues that ties to transnational advocacy networks or international civil society groups enable local activists to influence the state through recourse to the international system and international actors. This literature shows how such growing local-international linkages have changed the practice of national sovereignty but it offers a less convincing, or at times strikingly incomplete, picture of how these linkages influence the ability of local actors to practice citizenship. The lens of ‘infrastructural violence’ studies can be constructively broadened so that it also considers how moments of infrastructural transformation disturb the human architectures behind existing physical infrastructures, namely labor – formal and informal. This is what I have done in this study. I have adopted the attention to urban infrastructures that is found in scholarship on ‘infrastructural violence’, but I have gone further. I have turned the spotlight to what moments of infrastructural transformation mean for the social arrangements that have ensured service provision in the past, and I have considered how these existing arrangements resist, disturb, co-opt, mediate or comply with the proposed arrangements to produce what in this particular case is a gridlock.

These moments of pending infrastructural transformation are productive instances in which to analyze the practice of citizenship. This is so mainly for two reasons. First, the way that negotiations and struggles around the pending transformations unfold, particularly between the government, private companies, and workers who stake a claim, are telling of existing formulations of citizenship. In Dakar, the dispossession that Mbeubeuss workers confront in the face of transforming waste infrastructures and the disregard they are shown during this period of gridlock reveals that their possibilities for influencing the future of Dakar’s waste management system through participation in formal decision-making processes are limited. Literature on substantive citizenship, however, compels us to look beyond these formal spaces of participation and formal channels for influencing state power. This body of work has shown that struggles for access can produce new forms of association and new ways of mobilizing by those excluded from political circles, and that these can transform citizen-state relations such that they either fundamentally disturb exclusionary citizenship formulations or produce altogether new meanings and practices of citizenship.

In Mbeubeuss, however, see the workers’ current struggles to maintain their role in the city’s waste sector don’t appear to be producing new citizen-state relations or new ways of influencing the exercise of state power from outside of formal spaces of participation – at least not yet. International civil society groups and transnational advocacy networks play a role in the debilitating disconnect

between the state and workers. In the context of an unresponsive city and national government, the association that represents Mbeubeuss workers, Bokk Jomm, has cultivated and continues to nurture strong relations with these international actors while it remains distrusting of the government and, for the most part, estranged from it. Bokk Jomm is thus currently less of a representative body than a channel through which workers secure funds from NGOs for social programs and projects in Mbeubeuss. In the face of reform, what this means for the workers is that their interests remain unrepresented to a state that remains unwilling to listen.

This finding expands Ribot's (2007) work on the changing meaning of citizenship in the context of proliferating parallel institutions by revealing how these parallel institutions also alter the capacities of grassroots activism and other forms of association at the local level for representing themselves in periods of struggle. The NGOs and networks with which the workers are connected cannot represent the workers' interests or offer a platform through which they may indirectly influence government decision making because their mandate does not extend to political representation or labor activism and because they lack the power to sanction the local and central government. In the ambiguity that has surrounded the future of Mbeubeuss, these entities have either remained uninvolved in decision making or they have looked into how the workers can diversify their livelihoods or secure compensation from other sources, namely landfill gas capture projects. This leads us to question the benefits of 'boomerang effects' proclaimed in some literature on transnational activism, as it shows that ties to international actors can sometimes transform citizen-state relations in ways that disempower local actors by further distancing them from the state as they connect them to actors that lack the ability or willingness to sanction state power. This can become debilitating for local actors in instances when their fate is largely contingent upon government decision making. Interrogating the role of international civil society and transnational activist networks from the lens of substantive citizenship, as I have done here, is thus particularly productive.

With regard to citizenship, my critiques of current frameworks of substantive citizenship and my findings in Mbeubeuss demonstrate that care must be shown not to enfold all struggles at the political margins – innovative and groundbreaking though they may be – under the umbrella of citizenship. What is interesting in Mbeubeuss is the way that workers dress their claims in the language of belonging: a belonging that they affirm through emphasis of the service they have provided for the city for decades. It is through this appropriation of space and emphasis of belonging that the workers defend – to themselves and to those who will listen – their claims to Dakar's waste. In the process, they co-opt the narratives of environmental degradation that portray them as polluters

to reconstitute themselves as workers and as stewards of the city and its environment. We may think of these moments as instances in which the workers “become political” (Isin 2002). But there is a distance between “becoming political” and transforming formulations of citizenship from mere official belonging to substantive emancipatory engagement, and this distance cannot be taken for granted. Currently, the possibility of Mbeubeuss workers to be incorporated into the new waste management system appears dim. But it is perhaps in the claims to city space, in the appropriation of discourse to dress their struggle in the language of environmentalism, and in the positioning of this struggle as a workers’ struggle, that something transformative may be in the making. It is perhaps from here that new ways of advancing claims to citizenship and new strategies for influencing the state will surface, or that we might at least find the makings of a more inclusive waste management system in Dakar.

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