Special Section Article

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A lesser human? Utopian registers of urban reconfiguration in Maputo, Mozambique

In the age of climate change, human life's pliability is also re-shaping anthropological debates. For debates centring on the urban domain, questions revolve around flexibility, adaptability and resilience, while in work drawing on the Anthropocene similar ideas of human beings as subsumable to Gaia are emerging. This article reflects on how these perspectives interweave and imply a paradoxical human figure. On the one hand, they convey a being that simultaneously infuses, consumes and transmogrifies the world. Conversely, the human figure is forged by theoretical and analytical orientations that prescribe that one should abandon such a human-centric reading of the world. The latter aspect is particularly evident in so-called 'resilience governance' discourses. These discourses presuppose a form of becoming less through reinventing humanity and human life as more adaptable to post-future horizons of always already collapsed ecologies. Critically tracing this paradox, this article probes the urban Anthropocene and its lesser humans as desirable under the aegis of 'resilience governance' in Mozambique, crucially also mapping and analysing the involvement of utopic registers in defiance of such developments.

Key words   Mozambique, utopia, resilience, enclave, urban governance

Introduction

On a particularly hot late afternoon in January 2019 during fieldwork in Maputo, I was in Bairro Polana Caniço and got into a white, half-derelict Toyota. The driver was Tiago, a member of a so-called *team* – the term for an informally organised group of youths common in poor areas who cruise *bairros* in cars and are known to be rowdy and noisy. Contemporary Mozambican rap by 'Los Promessores' with the song *Falsas Promessas* (False Promises) was blaring through oversized loudspeakers lodged in the rear window. As usual, we drove around slowly, meandering our way on the sandy roads between poor households. Stopping for a refuel of cold beer sold from a makeshift kiosk, Tiago recounted to me his frustration with a recent influx of wealthy people to the area:

> The rich can go screw themselves! They are part of the system of the rich, of development, of resilience. They think they are the only ones that can have a life, that can become big. To them we are lesser humans (*humanos menores*) with no worth. But we refuse to accept this! And with *teams* we create, live, expand, dream!

Tiago's view, however, goes beyond a narrow 'eat the rich' stance. Crucially for my argument below, its critique is directed against what Tiago calls 'a system of resilience'

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and its detrimental effects. In this article I will explore what such a 'system of resilience' entails for urban contexts like Bairro Polana Caniço and people like Tiago, connecting current processes of urban transformation to politics of protest, utopian praxis and life. I will make three arguments:

First, I will argue that in Maputo we can see an instance of a much more widespread urban implementation of notions of resilience – what I, drawing on Gressgård (2019: 12), call 'resilience governance': 'an anticipatory technology of governance for mitigating vulnerabilities and closing gaps in preparedness'. While ideals of preparedness and fighting vulnerabilities are laudable, as Grove (2018) has also argued, the implementation of such resilience governance in urban contexts frequently entails that the poor have their social and physical spaces transmogrified or violently appropriated. Such paradoxical developments, I show, reflect an ideological convergence of sustainability and urban market capitalism crucially casting the poor as subservient (lesser human) beings. This subservience is a particular feature of resilience governance currently popular with development agents, as well as local elites.

Second, ethnographically detailing resilience governance in Maputo, I will argue that Tiago's frustration reflects an experience of being cast as 'lesser humans' and effectively abandoned with the freedom 'to be resilient' in the face of rampant and exclusionary gentrification. For, as I will show, in Maputo resilience governance does entail a general perforation of the urban environment of the poor with the mushrooming of enclaves, large and small. Such enclaves, often in the form of multi-level apartment buildings, comprise islands of wealth and development that are serviced by such lesser humans that, nonetheless, mobilise various registers – that I will designate as utopian – to confront such perforation (see also Nielsen et al. 2020; Nielsen and Jenkins, 2020). An effect of resilience governance as this is being implemented in Maputo is, therefore, the production of tense relations between, in Agamben's parlance (1998 [1995]), the new enclaves and the *bios* and remaining poor areas (*zoe*). *Teams* attack the very dictums of flexibility and adaptability inherent to resilience governance that would relegate them to the position of lesser humans. Further, effectively comprising a volatile form of urban self-governance, *teams* also resuscitate past utopian experimentation within, particularly, the socialist era. By doing so, their actions and presence within the *bairros* become instantiations of forms of utopian imagination that undermine the total ambition of resilience governance through creating openings in the texture of the urban.

Building on these two arguments, I will make a third. The *teams*' repudiation of resilience governance reveals urban orders as comprising key domains for the reconfiguration of the imaginal and the utopic – and especially so with regards to life in the context of climate change-informed urban transformation in the age of the Anthropocene. Both moral and politico-ideological impacts of the Anthropocene seem to have destabilised long-term anthropological positions on inequality, class struggle, development or economic growth (Purdy 2015). Moreover, in line with the Introduction to this special issue (Blanes and Bertelsen 2021), I see the *teams*' engagement with utopian registers here as a 'praxis generative of mobilization; an actual political intervention unto the world', rather than as an aloof form of philosophical speculation. As also expressed by Tiago, wedged between imagination and description, being and becoming (Balasopoulos 2014a), the urban affords both repressive and emancipatory possibilities, the latter exemplified by his *team* refusing to be relegated to positions as lesser humans.

While this article undoubtedly comprises merely a provisional anthropological starting point to probe the confluences of urban utopian politics, the Anthropocene and life, I will do so drawing on material from Maputo. Not only being where I have undertaken long-term fieldwork, Maputo's spatial transformation also reflects broader patterns of the global south's urban revolution (Simone 2019; Morton 2019). A broader aim of the article is therefore to juxtapose the utopian postcolonial politics expressed by groups like Tiago's with the impact of new forms of urban reconfiguration informed by notions of resilience and sustainability (Croese et al. 2021).

From the utopian idea of *polis* to resilience governance

'The city is no longer. We can leave the theatre now', Rem Kolhaas declared in 1995 (quoted in Shepard 2011: 18). Despite his hyperbole, it seems Kolhaas is right on one account: the longstanding *idea* of the centric *polis* inhabited by urban citizens imbued with rights to the city (Lefebvre 2003 [1970]) seems to have evaporated completely. Global multitudes are nonetheless generating new urban configurations – multiplex and hyperdiverse theatres where urbanites intensely experiment with its material, symbolic and social forms (Chiodelli and Mazzolini 2019). Yet, the city, the theatre formation we now may be leaving for more amorphous urban configurations, is intimately tied to both politics and life – as both *bios* and *zoe* (Wakefield and Braun 2014): *bios* as an urban form of life recognised as political beings, *zoe* as an urban life external to such recognition and protection (Agamben 1998 [1995]). Referencing also the distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, Grosz outlines how, as a container of life, the *polis* is a longstanding feature of Western intellectual thought:

> Like the orderly body, the city-state functions most ably under the rule of reason, the regime of wisdom, for the well-ordered *polis*, like the well-ordered body, operates most harmoniously only in accordance with the dictates of pure reason and the contemplation of the eternal. (2001: 131)

Exemplified by the perfectly ordered Amaurote, the capital of Thomas More's 1516 seminal work *Utopia*, the city (*polis*) has persistently been a locus of egalitarian imaginaries, as well as a site of social, religious and ideological experimentation – integrating politics and philosophy, theology and art, economy and social transformation (Balasopoulos 2014a, 2014b; see also Detienne 2008 [2000]).

While the idealised purity of the *polis* may seem far removed from contemporary complex cities, the notion nonetheless continues to inspire contemporary political anthropologists and geographers, such as Sian Lazar (2014), who explores this classic Greek idea for understandings of citizenship or Carrie Mott (2016), who sees in the notion of the *polis* a potential for open-source activist-oriented governing bodies. Another example is David Graeber, who, in one analysis, takes *polis* to reflect (universal) ideals of small-town New England in constituting a collective political drive, stating that 'the point is that democratic assemblies can be attested in all times and places' (2013: 139).

However, the universalising and politically prescriptive assumptions made by Graeber, Lazar, Mott and others are problematic, both as what constitutes a political community and an ideal urban order – i.e. what constitutes the ideational machinery of

the utopian as a collective political form with a temporal horizon – vary greatly across time and political context. One should be careful projecting Western constructions of *polis* as universally applicable in political critique (and action, for that matter) and as we shall see, Maputo is a case in point here. Being the locus for multiple temporal presences of the utopian and political, it comprises a site of an urban order to come – not a political ideal to be instantiated here and now (see also Pieterse and Simone 2013).

For these reasons, in Africa and elsewhere in the postcolonial world, we see the contours of a right-less *post-polis* urban context (see also Swyngedouw 2018) oriented towards controlling *bios* and *zoe* and towards precluding the emergence of alternative potential trajectories of development, enrichment, emancipation. Such a neoliberal prefiguration, what Stein (2019) has termed the 'rise of the real estate state', also has a temporal aspect related to global resources and ecology: Resilience governance focuses *not* on future trajectories but on the present – *a particular present* – which assumes hegemony over an imagined future in the form of development which is called off as *always already* collapsed and crisis-ridden due to climate change in the Anthropocene.

Now, as Grove (2018) has established, the term 'resilience' straddles both the normative and the descriptive and is currently in use within disciplines as disparate as engineering, ecosystem management, psychology, disaster studies and, indeed, urban development. While its usage from around the year 2000 onwards shows some diversity, all nevertheless reflects a 'will to design', including to 'intervene in *and* adapt to a complex world from a position of necessarily partial knowledge' (Grove 2018: 5). This generic starting point has entailed that it has become key to urban management blueprints also for cities in the global South – for instance, both through the US$160 million '100 resilient cities' initiative by the Rockefeller Foundation starting in 2013 and the implementation of the term as central to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and the forms of governance needing to be implemented in such cities (Borie et al. 2019). Both adaptive *and* anticipatory, urban 'resilience governance' comprises a politico-temporal configuration with global impact (Ghertner et al. 2020) where notions of adaptation, flexibility and security arrangements – predatory and non-predatory alike – are central to its instrumentalisation across highly varied urban spaces.

And it is here that developments within political anthropology become problematically relevant. While a critical political anthropology has emphasised the devastating global impacts of neoliberalism across domains of life – including a focus on the precariat (see, e.g. Kalb 2012) – such analysis is usually accompanied by prescriptive political action; building resistance, challenging hegemonic discourses, providing in-depth critique of the-powers-that-be, deploying activist tactics (see, e.g., Graeber 2011). However, now a novel configuration of political thought seems to be increasingly influential – one that conjures up a vision of reconstituting the political subject as non-confrontational, adaptive, future-less and, indeed, resilient: a being made to be adaptable to a complex world. Below I trace such a shift in Mozambique through detailing the development from a postliberation and utopian urban context. This involved moving from reconstituting the human as a new revolutionary subject in the postliberation era, to becoming a space for urban politics and capitalist reconfiguration in the current – a development that has spawned the category of what I, following Tiago, call lesser humans.

Maputo: From revolutionary utopian laboratory to production site of lesser humans

The liberation movement FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* – Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) was established in exile in Tanzania in 1962. There, it gradually consolidated itself to struggle militarily for a country liberated from the violence of Portuguese colonialism from 1964 onwards until the negotiated end to the war in 1974 – with full independence granted in 1975 (Cabaço 2010). During this formative period, 'similar to other African revolutionary groups that formed in the 1950s and early 1960s, FRELIMO embraced a vision of modernity and a 'New Man' that eschewed both traditional and colonial paradigms' (Panzer 2013: 91).[1] Consequently, the post-independence years were concerned with the rise of the Afro-socialist People's Republic of Mozambique and the utopian aspiration of creating such a New Man was sought implemented both in rural and urban areas (Sumich 2018). As the capital and exemplary urban space of this nation of New Men and Women, Maputo was central. Here, as political, social and even cosmological experimentation abounded and novel, revolutionary political subjectivities were forged, the semiotics of the city (in terms of street names, for instance) were altered and the uses of its spaces dramatically changed (Nielsen 2011). It was also for this reason that Samora Machel, the legendary president of Mozambique (1975–1986), attacked the historical suffering embedded within the very built environment of Maputo in a speech already in 1976 – clearly gesturing to an emancipated future (quoted in Morton 2019: 164):

> [the city is] built atop our bones, and the cement, sand, and water in those buildings is none other than the blood of the workers, the sweat of the worker, the blood of the Mozambican people! They are the highest forms of exploitation of our people.

Approaching the urban environment of Maputo itself as reflecting Portuguese colonialism resonate with reading the very African cityscape as comprising sedimentations of exploitative violence and, more generally, being palimpsests of historical eras (Sarr 2020 [2016]: 103–10). The vision, therefore, of achieving another form of the urban or *polis* under the guise of the FRELIMO party was key to the implementation of Afro-socialist politics after 1975. Centrally, this involved extending urban citizenship rights to all Mozambicans and effectively dissolving the racialised enclaves on which Portuguese colonial urban politics was built. Furthermore, as most (if not all) revolutionary movements, it also meant purging the city of those who were deemed unproductive or counter-revolutionary, effectively widely distributing the utopian vision of a socialist, Mozambican city (Machava 2011). Morton therefore notes that Maputo's inhabitants were 'acting as if the government were intervening in their lives – executing housing policy and urbanising neighbourhoods – even as the attention of the authorities was absorbed elsewhere' (2019: 17).

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[1] The aspiration for a New Man to replace the downtrodden African colonial subject is identifiable within FRELIMO as early as in the resolutions from their first congress in 1962 in Dar es Salaam: 'Liquidation of the colonial and imperial culture and education. … Development of instruction, education and culture in the service of liberation and peaceful development of the Mozambican People' (quoted in Zawangoni 2007: 36; my translation).

Despite these multidimensional efforts, from the 1990s onwards and due to a range of reasons – including a devastating civil war (1977–1992), an end to Eastern Bloc support following the end of the Cold War and the rise of neoliberal influence mediated through Western donors (see also Obarrio 2014) – Mozambique and Maputo lacked much of its concerted revolutionary thrust. Poverty levels skyrocketed, socio-economic inequality levels intensified and Maputo's urban expansion reflected market modalities of primitive and violent accumulation rather than state-centred modernist, revolutionary utopian orientations (Sumich and Nielsen 2020).

Two types of dynamics in Maputo's precarious impoverished *bairros* are relevant to these shifts. For one, *bairro* spaces are experienced as imbued with danger, including violent crime perpetrated by armed groups (various forms of policing included), sanitary problems fomenting illness and death, and endemic insecurity (see, e.g., Bertelsen 2016a). Such forms of violent crime comprise predatory and radically open modes of accumulation, integral to national and transnational assemblages of criminal networks, police agents, politicians, businessmen and youths (Folio et al. 2017). In addition, transmogrified forms of state violence also assume the shape of, for instance, community policing groups which have supplanted ordinary policing activities in many *bairros* (Bertelsen 2009, 2016b).

Second, in addition to such a seemingly familiar trajectory from Afro-socialist emancipation to postcolonial disintegration, there is also a relatively novel form of predation emerging, namely the horizon of eviction under shifting regimes for 'urban renewal' or 'urban requalification'. Recently, such urban reconfiguration has taken on new meaning as the very physical space of one of the targeted areas, Bairro Polana Caniço, is not only being challenged from its spatial margins in a cadastral sense. Rather, its space is being shot through by fortified enclaved apartment buildings (see also Nielsen et al. 2020).

Perhaps contra-intuitively, in conversations with professionals affiliated with the Maputo municipality, as well as the personnel of development agencies and international NGOs, such perforation is regarded as beneficial, indicating urban development and economic growth. For, in line with the rise of the prominence of the notions of 'resilience' and being integral to the pervasive discourse of the Sustainable Development Goals (implemented systematically by development agents and donors since 2015 also in Mozambique), a common argument by this sector is that there is a need to create a more robust, 'resilient' and 'sustainable' urban environment. For instance, in a recent World Bank report from 2020 on Mozambique, we learn that 'Over the past years there has been a growing consensus that countries worldwide should follow a development route and policy agenda that simultaneously builds resilience, improves mitigation, and encourages sustainable development'.[2] Furthermore, and reflecting the anticipatory nature of 'resilience governance' as detailed above, a recent UN Habitat report on Maputo states 'Building resilience should empower urban residents to know what they can do to reduce risk, prepare for shocks and support city-wide recovery efforts'.[3]

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[2] For details on this report, please see the World Bank's document site http://documents1.worldbank. org/curated/en/401611585291379085/pdf/Upscaling-Nature-Based-Flood-Protection-in-Mozam bique-s-Cities-Knowledge-Note.pdf (accessed 20 November 2020).

[3] The quote is taken from the report 'Case study: defining actions for resilience in Maputo, Mozambique' by UN Habitat, dated 19 February 2020, available at: https://urbanresiliencehub. org/2020/02/19/case-study-defining-actions-for-resilience-in-maputo-mozambique/ (accessed 20 November 2020).

Crucially, these visions of the need to transform the urban to become more resilient are, in development practice, linked to also viewing market mechanisms and entrepreneurial energy as key to transform the urban space of, for instance, Bairro Polana Caniço. In the words of a development worker from a large international NGO in September 2017:

> Bairro Polana Caniço is becoming stronger and more resilient with people with wealth coming in. With some houses becoming better, the whole *bairro* becomes upgraded. For the poor this is good. They learn from the rich to take care of themselves, to take responsibility for their own spaces. They [the poor] can no longer wait on NGOs or the Municipality – they have to learn to create strong and smart communities themselves and they have to learn to negotiate directly with businessmen and entrepreneurs. FRELIMO [the government] cannot help them anymore. Only in this way can Maputo become resilient and smart.

As evident here, in this 'sprouting' of gentrification in poor areas, two forces are operating in tandem. For one, the powerful idea that the poor can (and should) successfully negotiate directly with capitalist developers (or their seedy agents) to sell their plots of land. Second, the fact that FRELIMO's one-party-state is formally receding because its cadres at the local and national level profit greatly from such business development.

In Maputo alone, 80 gated communities have sprung up in the last decade – some also, spectacularly, in quite destitute, high-density areas such as Bairro Polana Caniço (Nielsen and Jenkins 2020) (see Figures 1-6). Functioning as virtual corporate

Figure 1   Bairro Polana Caniço, Maputo, January 2016. A new condominium shooting up through its midst. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

city-states, these enclaves torpedo the fiction of a centric city with a *polis* inhabited by rights-bearing urban citizens. However, their wealthy inhabitants also establish (often exploitative) relations with their poorer neighbours, enlisting many in extremely poorly paid jobs as security guards for men or as *empregadas* (domestic workers) for women.

In such developments towards a post-*polis* urban order – where long-standing politics of and for the city has largely been exchanged with visions of securitised and resilient urban environments – predation and notions of security are key dynamics. These work to create a meshwork that is antithetical to exiting the reproduction of the present *and*, simultaneously, forge poorer urbanites that are no longer political subjects of a formalised political setting, a forum, a *polis* – neither in the sense of Graeber's universal vision nor reflecting the Mozambican Afro-socialist legacy. Rather, such urbanites are reconstituted as constitutive parts of an emerging urban framework where technical solutions are increasingly self-repairing and comprise intrinsic parts of a governing infrastructure of life (Shepard 2011). As agents also in the transactions of weapons, of licences to predate, of engagements in the penumbra of legality and illegality, the lesser humans of Maputo's *bairros* emerge, at one level, as integral to policing their own state of submission to such an order.

Needless to say, the sense of benefit coming from the perforation of the *bairro* by the wealthy and the (alleged) production of resilience this entails – as expressed by

Figure 2   Bairro Polana Caniço, Maputo, January 2016. 'The solution to all your problems is here: We have lunch, small dishes, soup and more …' with new apartment building towering in the background. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 3 Bairro Polana Caniço. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

the NGO worker above – was not readily shared by Bairro Polana Caniço residents. Critical comments often revolved around complaints of the state having abandoned them to speculators, agents and urban developers, that many of the wealthy regarded them merely as servants and that their possibilities for developing their houses, plots and, thus, their lives were curtailed or eclipsed. One resident, a woman in her forties who worked as an informal trader, commented in January 2016:

Ah, the rich are becoming bigger and bigger and the government want this! They want our space to become small, to keep us in our houses so that we can work for them – the rich, the foreigners, those with money. They want the rich to rule here and we are like prisoners in our own lives – the suffering continues and development is gone. We cannot grow but they say we ourselves have to organise roads – everything.

A crucial character of such changes to the *bairro*, then, is couched in terms of flexibility and of sharing spaces and resources – a somewhat absurd appeal to marginalised urban poor who have previously hardly had access to either. These now experience being instructed – by development workers or by real estate agents – to service the rich and their own spaces – with the vistas of both Afro-socialist and neoliberal development vacated from the temporal and political horizon.

Several important features relevant to the ideological and political impact of resilience governance emerge here. For one, the incursion of the wealthy into the erstwhile domains of the poor indicates that adaptability and resilience do not occur in a political or economic vacuum. Rather than imbuing a new era of Gaia-esque sensibility of eschatological or utopian qualities (e.g. the production of future-oriented and ideologically sound Afro-urban formations), the mantra of humans needing to become less, means the deployment of an additional ideological feature in such urban formation: one that is oriented towards keeping the urban poor on their feet and flexible (as security guards, cleaners of cars and houses, nannies, errand runners) – for their own and the planet's good. Further, the interweaving of capitalism and resilience governance naturalises politics of exploitation and urban renewal. Put differently, flexibilisation

Figure 4   Bairro Polana Caniço, January 2016. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

– that compass of neoliberal restructuring – is now expanded to encapsulate not only labour and work in a limited sense but also *life itself*. This context also exposes a general problematic aspect of the resilience thinking appropriated by elites with interests in postcolonial urban spaces: that the call for a lesser human in the sense of an urban, poor subject who consumes and impacts to a limited degree – and should continue to do so – is now relegated to certain resource-less positions within a socio-economic and spatial hierarchy. In such a position of subordinated life, this being's primary task is to service and support an elite that, in uninhibited fashion, may become more, not less.

This aggressive reformatting and 're-purposing' of Maputo's urban poor does not unfold without opposition, of course. Previously, I have written about recurring violent protest that took place across Maputo in the shape of a series of crippling uprisings that were, interestingly, politically acephalous and unfolded rhizomatically (Bertelsen 2016a; see also Brito et al. 2015). However, while the spectre of large-scale protests remain – its emancipatory potential, for instance, being suspended in time in WhatsApp messages recalling those heady events – there are other dynamics that may be described as comprising counter-movements which emerge as equally important, namely what in Maputo are called *teams*, also in Mozambican Portuguese. Such *teams* are fluid and open organisational bodies that organise mostly young men (and some women) and exhibit a strong, audible and visible presence in urban areas: defiantly cruising the *bairros* in their cars, often pooling money to acquire the vehicle and sometimes also sleeping in them. As we saw with Tiago above, they commonly refuse to be co-opted by shifting politics of violent appropriation by aggressive buyers of land or to be immobilised by predatory forces of policing. Instead, the youths assertively and sometimes aggressively auto-generate presences and subjectivities that are tangible, noisy and sometimes upsetting of the general order. Sporting names like *Team Suicido* (Team Suicide), *Team Guerrerro* (Team Guerrilla), *Team Arma do Crime* (Team Weapon of Crime) or *Team All Eyes on Me*, they demand attention and embody provocation. *Teams* thus provide a posture of revolt and outsiderness that seeks to thwart the machinations of urban politics producing resilience-oriented, poor, lesser humans.

Such a posture was also effectively communicated in January 2016 by a 19-year-old member of *Team Bolada 1 Million* – the term *bolada* meaning a negotiation that is dirty or illegal and that would very often involve a form of sham. The young man, whom I will name Paulo, replied to my question of why there were now, seemingly, so many teams around in Maputo – team names being written on walls and cars everywhere:

> People are fed up! Poor are being pushed around – like before, like always. But now there is change; the poor is now useful as a poor person. He is now useful as a guard [*guarda*] to secure the rich while protecting the big chiefs. They say it is good that he is poor as he is not using resources, as not being bad to nature. This is a lie – it is an enormous sham [*É mentira, isso – uma bolada big*]! We do not accept it. We do not want to not having anything – to not be human, to be subhuman working for the big chiefs – to be a slave of nature. This has no value. For this we drive around, for this we do not care about rules, about the party [The ruling FRELIMO party], about politics. They want to take away our life. For this we have to make our life ourselves.

Several others I hung around with made similar comments against what they saw as the instrumental use of the poor within a politics of poverty that was now, all agreed,

couched within a discourse of an environmentally sound system of urban development. As Paulo's ambulatory defiance exemplifies, the *teams* comprise a particular form of counter-movement, albeit one that is irreducible to a conventional politics of resistance to marginalisation – or as a response to what Sassen (2014) has identified as a global 'expulsion of the poor'.

Working with *teams* in, especially, Bairro Polana Caniço, it seems clear that these are often organised around a loosely defined area, a *zona*, which may be expanded, reduced or transferred according to shifting notions of space. The tags that established *teams* (as well as those aspiring to become one) inscribed onto walls must be seen as experimentation with a politics of visibility – rather than the demarcation of something akin to gang territory. Typically centred on young men with limited or no connections to sources of salaried income (except for *boladas*), *zonas* and tags not only reflect existing utopian political imaginaries but are experiments in potential futures. As another man, João, also from Polana Caniço, said when I shared a lunch beer with him during fieldwork in January 2019, having asked him what *teams* were trying to accomplish:

> You remember the time of Samora [Machel], no? He had seen something there … He had vision. Now that development has left, we need to remember the spirit of Samora for the future. He told us blacks that we are human. We … For me *teams* are this; to show a light into the future. FRELIMO has forgotten that. And we are now told we should give up – just work for the rich. But we remember. Life is what we want to accomplish and we show it by being in a *team*. This is why drive, drink and laugh.

In this sense, *teams* might be understood as comprising a particular postcolonial form of life-affirming politics that redirects also the possibilities and temporalities of the Mozambican Afro-socialist period spearheaded by the iconic figure of Samora Machel (see also Rantala 2016). Sometimes also mobilising and resuscitating aspects of Mozambican utopian politics nominally past – aspects that are readily available in both popular discourse and memory – *teams* comprise a multiplex subversive engagement with the production of the poor as flexible operators of an emergent urban regime of resilience, adaptation and self-reliance (see also Groes-Green 2010).

As should be clear from both Paulo and João, *teams* react to a composite experience of resilience governance organised around a re-territorialisation of urban domains by gentrifying structures that encapsulate and, crucially, re-purpose rather than eradicate the poor. Such dynamics reveal an ideological plane where sociality, relationality, corporality and reproduction become subjected to modes of governance in which life is downscaled to maintenance work (self-service provision) or to uphold hierarchical structures (e.g. becoming security guards servicing the enclaves of the rich in the *bairros*). In practice in Maputo, resilience governance, then, entails a re-reterritorialisation of vistas for a human being and her urban life. Sought eradicated are Socialist utopian ideals of the egalitarian kind, including rights, equal pay for equal work, freedom to roam (as space has become increasingly privatised to the point of doing away with urban commons), or notions of an expansive (national or urban) society where life will continue to sprout, to grow, to expand and, thereby, bring an impoverished world of African urbanity more on par with life in the global north.

Subject to intense, changing and experimental modes of capitalist extraction and dominance, Maputo's urban poor may be read as prime exemplars of the non-egalitarian, lesser human. They are self-governing in the sense of constantly being rec-reated as repositories of resilience, auto-repair and adaptability (to ecological change and capitalist change – the two forces oftentimes merging into one composite form).
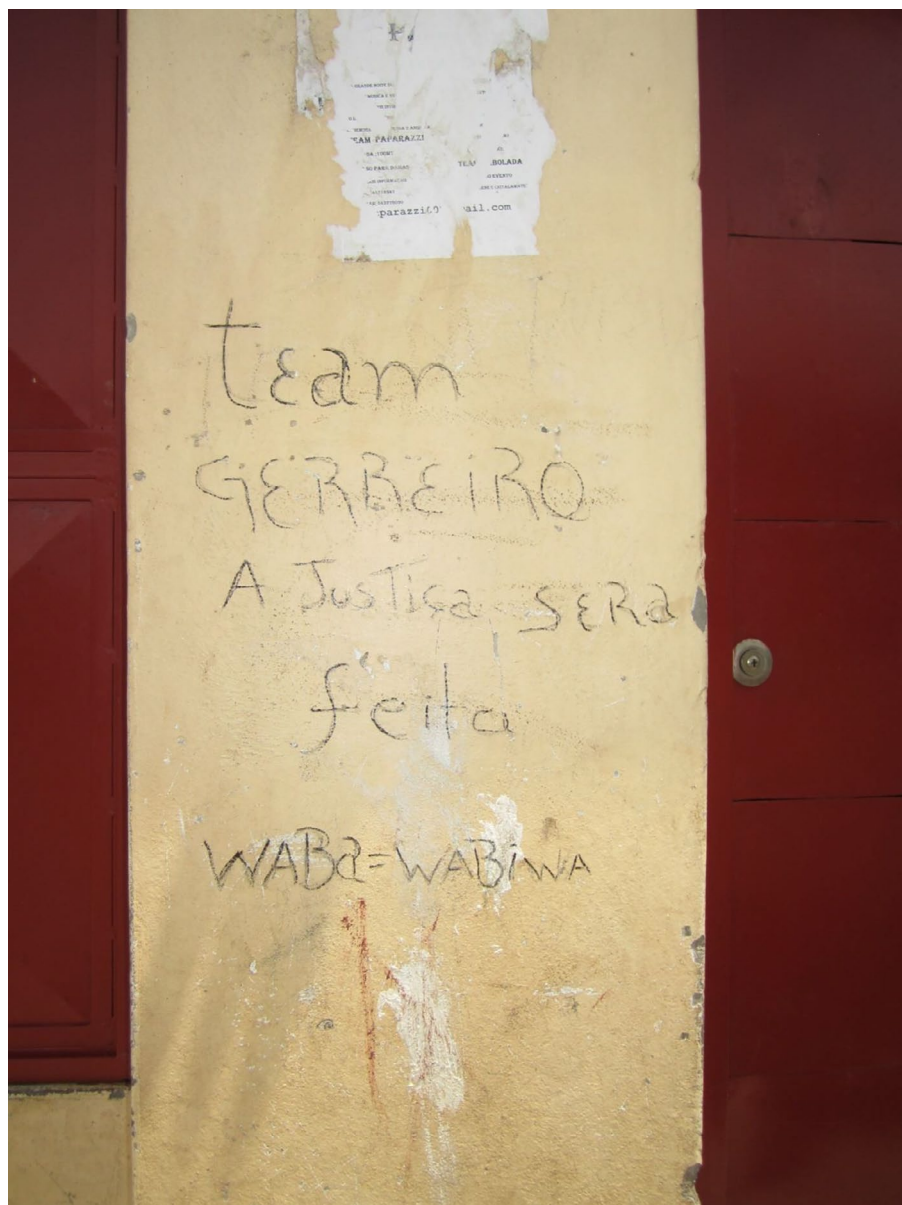

Figure 5   Team tag of *Team Guerrero*, **Polana Caniço, Maputo, 2015, which translated reads 'Justice will be done'. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]**

Figure 6   Poor houses torn down to give way to mushrooming condos. Polana Caniço, 2016. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Further, they are, seemingly, cut off from what was before often referred to as the state: Formations of order-inducing governance that from a unitary and centric point of view surveilled and intervened in generative as well as rupturing ways into the domain of the social. The demise of (also the fiction of) a unitary postcolonial state does not, of course, mean that sovereignty, governance and its violence has, somehow, been vacated from the flow and unfolding of life. Rather, it should be taken to mean that urban formations, especially in the south, are now in this post-*polis* age more susceptible to (and the result of) experimental forms of assemblages.

Is 'destitution' the shape of coming politics?

In the account of resilience governance and *teams* in Maputo, the urban is understood as a particular site for utopian emancipation that is, nonetheless and necessarily, unfinished, fleeting and in essence *both* a non-place *and* non-*place*able (see also Grosz 2001: 135). Moreover, what seems to emerge from Polana Caniço is that the politics of resilience, adaptation and environmentalism as it unfolds entails urban reconfigurations that have both sacrificial and utopian elements – beyond the politics of *bios*, *zoe* and *polis* inherent to it. At a surface level, Polana Caniço may be argued to be similar to the peri-capitalist zones that Tsing describes (2015: 63–4) – domains that are simultaneously inside and outside capitalism and where what she calls 'salvage accumulation' of human and nonhuman goods and services provided are amassed by the capitalist

system. In a sense mimicking the words of the development worker above, Tsing recommends that human life should draw inspiration from such zones and, literally, move beyond modernist utopian visions of expansion and development and should rather, in humility, de- and re-tract in kind and relationality – within a capitalist trajectory that will, nevertheless, continue to ruin our planet. The problem with such globally universal visions is that it seems to produce politics as no longer about the systematic analysis of capitalism or exploitation. Nor is it, in the Tsingian analytical optic, entirely clear how her (highly generic) 'zones' are comparable to the particular *zonas* of Maputo where resilience governance confronts various resuscitations of utopian politics of the Afro-socialist era.

Agamben's (2014) work on 'destituent power' – the anti-thesis to constitutive power – explicitly presents itself as an analysis of such types of politics focusing on generating worlds, of deactivating (but not through resistance!) the machineries of governance, of profaning categories of separation inherent to governance (and thereby neutralising them). As Tsing, Agamben also posits an engagement with life, world and politics as retracted and relational, as non-expansive and non-confrontational. In Agamben's notion of 'destituent power' lies an active opposition to orientations of the insurrectional and rebellious kinds celebrated by, for instance, Badiou (2012). In contrast to 'constituent power', destituent power resides specifically in what Agamben calls 'form-of-life'. Such form should not be seen as individualised life – as this would reflect ongoing political formations producing bare life and exceptions. Rather, and to escape the dynamics of law and violence producing life as bare life, form-of-life should be thought of as *inoperative life*:

> It is not a question of thinking a better or more authentic form of life, a superior principle or an elsewhere, which arrives from outside the forms of life and the factical vocations to revoke and render them inoperative. Inoperativity is not another work that appears to works [sic!] from out of nowhere to deactivate and depose them: it coincides completely and constitutively with their destitution, *with living a life*. And this destitution is the coming politics. (2014: 74)

As an argument made specifically in relation to urban politics of opposition, Agamben's position is important for understanding how one may rethink politics in an era of African urban laboratories of the future and resilience governance implemented in poor *bairros*. While Agamben's formulations of a coming politics, perhaps a utopian politics, seems to have an enormous impact, there are clearly problematic aspects to such a vision. For Agamben and Tsing, the rupturing realities of capitalism and the Anthropocene necessitate a form of lesser human who is adaptable, who lives off the world's scraps, who is non-consuming, who is plastic and pliable in their relation to ecology, to other species and, crucially, also to the general domain of politics.

I can think of no better ally for a crisis- and resilience governance-oriented political order than humans who are lesser, who are pliable, who are non-resisting, who are becoming cybernetic operators in a system of continued predation and exploitation of life itself for the good of nature (see also Connolly 2019). If we draw on Maputo, this becomes clearer. The potential of assuming a position of 'destituent power' is a problematic analytical position to defend in a context where predatory wealth accumulation has merged with ideologies of resilience, smartness and adaptability. To me the *bairros* exemplify instead a form of *avant-garde* of the Anthropocene, replete with its

politics of life and characterised by the paradox of new urban configurations being, as political and social formations, both total/totalising and fragmented/open-ended. But more important and *contra* Tsing and Agamben, in a sense the *teams* exemplify how the *zoe* may re-emerge from the domain of resilience governance by drawing on utopian registers and visions of futurity. This also means that the flickering, ambulatory anti-resilience urban governance politics of *teams* salvages a temporal dimension from the Afro-socialist project: a refusal of a confinement to a temporal present imposing limits for human expansion. Such a reading is also in keeping with developments Simone reminds us about in relation to urbanism in the global south. Writing about the waxing and waning of forms of assemblages of urban politics, he points out that '[w]hat is cre-ated does not so much ground or orient [inhabitants], but constitutes a politics of mak-ing home on the run, a form of fugitive graces, where particular operational entities … come to the fore through practices of care' (2019: 28). Furthermore, as Simone also shows more concretely in the case of the noisy *funke* parties – noisy music-oriented street parties in *favelas* in Brazil – these 'became a means of youth in a particular dis-trict to be together and to occupy the streets in order to witness what the district is in a way that circumvents the exigency of individualised itineraries of movement always having to assume defensive positions' (Simone 2020: 30.13).

While the *teams* neither conform fully to the '*funke* parties' nor to the notion of 'making home on the run', their, roving and rowdy mobile presence indexes a similar yet distinct life-affirming utopian register amid the ruins of enclaving and the spectre of the lesser human. Furthermore, while many *teams* that I have spoken to from 2006 to 2019 eventually abandon or pause participation in these, others do, however, for-malise their oppositional stance and eventually enter political or cultural work chal-lenging ongoing urban (and other) issues of marginalisation.[4] While a full-fledged sociological study of *teams* remains to be done, the point remains: oscillating between presence and absence, the spectral nature of *teams* and their explicit practices drawing on constitutive notions of power and human desire demonstrate the limits of both the imposition of certain forms of predatory resilience governance and the shortcomings of some approaches to the political in the age of the Anthropocene (for an incisive critique, see also Nhemachena and Mawere 2020).

Conclusion: Resilience governance and everyday utopias

The global emergence of megapolises comprise sites for competing and conflicting uto-pian visions of freedom, (in)equality, politics, aesthetics, temporality and life itself (e.g. Harvey 2012; Merrifield 2014). As a site of collective protest and utopian engagement (e.g. The Invisible Committee 2015 [2014]) or as the context for experimenting with relationalities and modalities of life (e.g. Corsín-Jiménez 2014; Kuldova and Varghese 2017; Quayson 2014), the urban and its possibilities are constitutive of human exis-tence. Anthropological forays into urban utopian experimentation range widely, from exploring the small-scale spaces of 'everyday utopia' among disaster-stricken and homeless in urban El Salvador (Sliwinski 2016) to the emergence of entire faith-based

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[4]   In terms of age, my main interlocutors were between 15 and 30 years old and mostly men.

urban formations, such as the continuously expanding large-scale Pentecostal cities of God in Nigeria (Ukah 2016). What these indicate, however, is a general need to direct our attention to novel forms of friction and to anthropologically probe urban politics beyond the political parties and after the NGOs who, quite often, serve resident national elites as well as metropolitan, transnational and diasporic groups of wealthy with an interest in sustaining the present and repurposing the poor. Notions of 'resilience' assume importance here as an apt tool to sustain repressive, predatory circumstances and where what we used to think about as 'real politics', also in the guise of collective and comprehensive rights to 'the city', are vacated from any horizon of possibility within postcolonial urban contexts, such as Maputo. It is also a domain in which life – at least life as that which evades bureaucratic state orders or totalising systems of containment and surveillance – is challenged by urban spaces increasingly designed to be riot-free: ring roads circumvent – literally speaking – the riotous event from unfolding and (in Lefebvre's usage) the street is left desolate.

Nonetheless, the proliferation of *teams* also shows us another way life unfolds in the urban Anthropocene. Often drawing implicitly or explicitly on particular Afro-socialist utopian registers, these resist being made docile and having their existences circumscribed by exploitative labour relations. Put differently, rejecting being confined to lesser and lesser human spaces – in the sense of being allocated increasingly fewer possibilities, resources, domains – the *teams* respond by *expanding* and *inflating* life. Celebrating exuberance, excess and transgression, they embody mobile, non-destituent forms of life inimical to capitalist forms of exploitation and predatory state violence, and are, indeed, non-compliant with notions of destituent power as a politically sensible form of being in the world (see also Viveiros de Castro 2019).

Here we should perhaps also be reminded of Fredric Jameson and his cautioning against rose-tinted fantasies about the nature of Utopia, which seems highly relevant also for both the trajectories of the urban Anthropocene and its lesser and fuller human operators: 'It is a mistake to approach Utopias with positive expectations, as though they offered visions of happy worlds, spaces of fulfilment and cooperation, representations which correspond generically to the idyll or the pastoral rather than the utopia' (2007 [2005]: 12). True to Jameson's observation, the form of 'resilience governance' that is experimented with (rather than seamlessly installed) in Maputo's poorer neighbourhoods generates utopia as a *reactive* form of materialisation of desire by *teams* – fuelled by invoking past utopian Mozambican experimentation. Thereby, the *teams*, stubbornly, assume a modality more in line with forms of 'everyday utopias' also documented elsewhere (Cooper 2014; Gastrow 2017; Sliwinski 2016). In the confluence of the strictures of the hierarchical repurposing of the poor, on the one hand, and the non-compliance with such dictates, also drawing on historical memories of Mozambique's revolutionary New Men and Women following independence, on the other, new formations of the utopian are enacted and experimented with. Thus, the figure of the lesser human being is continuously critically engaged in the 'promising spaces' of the *bairros*, informed by the generativity of non-total utopian engagements with the urban order and the possibilities afforded by everyday life. For, as the utopian praxis of *teams* also reveal, life presents itself here as increasingly open and atemporal – as possibility in its physical, compositional, dynamic and ontological sense (see also Helmreich 2016; Green 2020).

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Un être humain inférieur? Des registres utopiques de la reconfiguration urbaine à Maputo, au Mozambique

À l'ère du changement climatique, la souplesse de la vie humaine remodèle également les débats anthropologiques. Pour les débats centrés sur le domaine urbain, les questions tournent autour

de la flexibilité, de l'adaptabilité et de la résilience, tandis que des travaux s'inspirant de l'Anthropocène font apparaître des idées similaires de l'être humain comme subsumé à Gaia. Cet article réfléchit à la manière dont ces perspectives s'entremêlent et impliquent une figure humaine paradoxale. D'une part, elles véhiculent un être qui à la fois infuse, consomme et transmogriffe le monde. D'autre part, la figure humaine est forgée par des orientations théoriques et analytiques qui prescrivent d'abandonner une telle lecture du monde centrée sur l'être humain. L'aspect tardif est particulièrement évident dans les discours dits de « gouvernance de la résilience » qui présupposent une forme de devenir moins en réinventant l'humanité et la vie humaine comme plus adaptable aux horizons post-futurs d'écologies toujours déjà effondrées. Traçant ce paradoxe de manière critique, cet article sonde l'Anthropocène urbain et ses moins humains comme étant désirables sous l'égide de la « gouvernance de résilience » au Mozambique. Surtout, l'article analyse et cartographie l'implication de registres utopiques au mépris de ces développements.

Mots-clés utopie, résilience, enclave, gouvernance urbaine, Mozambique