Becoming and Coming Undone on the Streets of Dar es Salaam

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Danya Fast and Eileen Moyer

We examine how young men who have spent years living on the streets of downtown Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, have used urban spaces, as well as particular kinds of spatial "flights" and "fixes," to navigate the process of growing into adulthood. We argue that places called maskani have provided them with a powerful sense of forward momentum, engendering more immediate and future-oriented forms of becoming. As time has passed, however, life at these places has also generated a sense of stagnation and engendered forms of coming undone, which have necessitated particular kinds of spatial flights and fixes. Some men have left maskani and the city altogether, despite limited prospects elsewhere.

Introduction

This article draws on fieldwork spanning more than a decade with young men who have spent years living, working, and sleeping on the streets of downtown Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. We examine how these youth have used urban space, as well as particular kinds of spatial "flights" and "fixes," to navigate the process of growing into adulthood. The young men we followed, who call themselves *masela*[1] and *mishemishe*[2]—terms that can be loosely translated as 'street hustlers'—inhabit spaces known as maskani: street corners, abandoned lots, and stretches of roadside that are simultaneously intensely local and highly transient. In these sites, men congregate to seek out and engage in informal work, to socialize, and to sleep. Similar to other kinds of youth-appropriated spaces that have been described in Tanzania and elsewhere in Africa (Geenen 2009; Masquelier 2013; Weiss 2009), maskani are geared toward masculine forms of labor, leisure, and performance, and embedded with economic, social, and affective possibilities oriented toward the immediate and more distant future (Kerr 2015, 2018; Moyer 2005, 2006). They are places of intense self-fashioning, meaning making, and imagination, which can be found in the city's center and its sprawling, densely populated outlying areas (*uswahilini*). Over time in

Dar, particular maskani have become associated with each other via social networks of people who are connected across multiple geographies and scales (local, urban, national, international). While part of a constantly shifting terrain, these sites form key nodes of organization in the city's "people as infrastructure" (Simone 2004).

In this article, we describe a group of young men connected to two maskani known as Amazoni and Lebanoni. Long-term fieldwork at these sites allowed us to come to know these youth, and to follow their lives as they moved through their mid to late teens into their mid to late twenties. Amazoni, a dirt lot so named because of its location on the side of a shady, tree-lined road in the heart of the city's business and diplomatic district, served primarily as a place of work for men ranging in age from their mid-teens to their early twenties when our fieldwork began in 2007. Each day, as many as two dozen men would congregate there to wash cars using cloth rags, individually portioned packets of laundry soap, and plastic drums filled with water—a somewhat scarce commodity locally. Located just behind Amazoni was the British consulate and a handful of other high-rises. Each year, new, higher buildings would go up to house those who were benefiting the most from one of the fastest-growing urban economies on the planet (Arndt, McKay, and Tarp 2016). These buildings served as a reminder of the city's progress and possibilities, so nearby and yet so out of reach for the masses of people who work in the city's informal economy. Nevertheless, many young men at Amazoni dreamed that one day they, too, would be running while sitting (*kukimbia kukumekaa*)—that is, working at desk jobs. Others fantasized about making it big as a Bongo Flava[3] hip-hop star or owning a small shop in the *uswahilini*. For these youth, the forms of labor and sociality found at maskani were a crucial means of fighting for these future lives (*kutafuta maisha*).[4] They also generated a powerful sense of forward momentum in the present.

Lebanoni, named after the war-torn country because of its associations with lawlessness and disorder, was embedded with other kinds of social and affective possibilities, largely centered on pleasure, escape, and immobility. This sloping dirt lot that led down to the ocean was littered with shacks made out of wood, corrugated metal, and plastic tarps, providing shade in the daytime and limited privacy at night. Despite these shelters, the pleasures and perils of drugs, alcohol, and sexual transactions were constantly on display. At all hours of the day and night, loose groupings of men and a small number of women[5] of all ages formed and disbanded amid loud conversations and stumbling gestures. Many individuals who inhabited Lebanoni more permanently were thought to have "gone crazy from confusion" (*wamedata*).[6] Put another way, they had come undone as a result of persistent anxieties about the hardships of life, and given up on fighting for life at more work-oriented maskani like Amazoni.

Over ten years of fieldwork, the individuals we followed spent significant amounts of time at both Amazoni and Lebanoni, although, as we describe below, both maskani eventually moved locations and were

renamed. These places anchored their daily lives and movements through the city, providing spaces where they could collectively navigate a precarious present and struggle toward particular kinds of futures. Previous work has examined maskani as discrete spaces of youthful sociality and recognition (Kerr 2015, 2018), but our focus here is on how places like Amazoni and Lebanoni became meaningful for young men in tension with other places (Gordillo 2004; Massey 1994). These included other urban sites in Dar, as well as remembered childhood places and imagined future elsewheres—both their own, and those of others who had already moved on. Conceptualizing maskani as constellations of spatial and temporal connections allows us to understand how the meanings and affective intensities embedded in these places could shift significantly for men across their lives. As they got older, a small number of men were able to leave maskani and move on to the imagined elsewheres of "responsible manhood."[7] But for those who found themselves unable to leave, these once powerful sites of forward momentum and youthful becoming could turn into sites of stagnation and coming undone, which was sometimes embodied in the form of psychic crises ("going crazy from confusion") and addictions to drugs like heroin and cocaine.

Entering into conversation with the work of spatial theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Harvey (2001), in this article we argue that the shifting meanings and affective experiences of maskani necessitated particular kinds of spatial "flights" or "fixes" for some individuals (Mains 2007). Some individuals eventually left Amazoni and Lebanoni, or even the city of Dar altogether, even in the face of limited prospects elsewhere. A large body of literature has discussed the migration of African young people from rural to urban settings, and explored what happens when these youth get to places like Dar (Durham 2004; Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Newell 2012; Scheld 2007; Sommers 2012). Much less work has explored how young people make the decision to move from large, sprawling urban centers to more rural settings, or to smaller cities. Researchers who have theorized these kinds of moves have highlighted how the promise of a steadier agrarian existence and dreams of striking it rich in mines can pull people away from cities when economic survival becomes untenable there (De Boeck and Plissart 2006; Potts 2009). Others have noted that urban dwellers may return home when ill or near death, to access care via networks of kin (Moyer and Igonya 2014). In this article, we suggest that, over time, the emergence of particular kinds of stagnation in youth-appropriated urban spaces can push young people to leave. Some of the men who left Dar did so not in an attempt to seek out a better life elsewhere, or to access care, but as a means of regaining a sense of forward momentum in their lives.

In making these arguments, we extend a large body of research that has theorized the reconfiguration and respatialization of youth and masculinities in urban Africa over the last quarter-century (Diouf 2003; Durham 2004; Gondola 1999; Hansen 2005; Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Masquelier 2013; Pype 2007; Sommers 2012; Weiss 2009). The story, by now, is a

familiar one: in recent history, many African cities have experienced rapid economic and population growth, together with increasing social, spatial, economic, and political precarity. Dar is no exception (Myers 2011). The trajectories we trace can be interpreted as illustrative of continent-wide crises of masculinity, youth, and urban inequality, which have emerged as a result of processes of neoliberal globalization over the past several decades. Following previous work by Kerr (2015, 2018) and Weiss (2009) in Tanzania, they can also be interpreted as examples of how young people fashion themselves and create meaningful social spatial worlds out of struggle, pain, and exclusion. However, our goal is not to reproduce these "well documented coordinates of suffering" and resilience (Bessire 2017:201). Rather than focusing on these young people's agency as "makers and breakers" operating within circumstances constrained by political economy and power (Honwana and De Boeck 2005), we foreground the more contingent and affective forms of becoming and coming undone that are crafted out of marginality and the margins of urban space, in circumstances where precarity is both a kind of structural violence and a mobilizing force (Biehl and Locke 2017b).

For Biehl and Locke (2017b), an anthropology of becoming draws on the work of Delueze and Guattari to emphasize the plasticity and unfinishedness of selves and worlds that are always an unstable assemblage of biological, social, structural, and affective forces and "lines of flight" (Deleuze 2006; Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Deleuze defines *becoming* as individual and collective strivings to "carve out life chances from things too big, strong and suffocating" (1997:3). In this article, we underscore how young men use urban space, as well as spatial flights and fixes, to "untangle themselves from the known and establish new relations (or not), negotiate threatening detours and the newly uncertain, and make use of these realities to craft viable forms of life and project themselves into a future—or simply remain in suspension" (Biehl and Locke 2017a:4). Attending to forms of becoming and coming undone emphasizes that the plasticity of selves and worlds carries destructive potentials. Our notion of coming undone is distinct from Bessire's (2017) notion of negative becoming, but it similarly highlights the risky, unsettling vital experiments that can emerge out of marginality, such as the intensive consumption of drugs and alcohol in places like Lebanoni.

In highlighting contingent and affective forms of becoming and coming undone among the young men we followed, our research resonates with previous work elucidating the improvisational and shape-shifting qualities of contemporary African urban youth (Durham 2004), and how they challenge tradition and the authority of the postcolonial state by locating themselves—physically (in cities) and imaginatively—in relation to globally circulating repertoires and desires (Burgess 2005; Gondola 1999; Honwana and De Boeck 2005; Newell 2012; Scheld 2007). However, we also emphasize the continued importance of age-grades and age-sets (Aguilar 1998; Baxter and Almagor 1978; Fortes 1984) for young men living and working in contemporary

African urban contexts. For those frequenting maskani, generational groups were a means of engaging with and attempting to resolve some of the ambiguities of growing into adulthood; there, they "learned from each other" how to become—and how to come undone—on the streets. These groups also provided a critical context for doing gender (Fenstermaker and West 2002; McKittrick 2002). While previous work has focused on how gendered expectations and aspirations are negotiated between men and women, and between differently positioned men (Connell 2005), our research demonstrates how masculinities may be assembled among men of approximately the same age and inhabiting the same strata of society. Moreover, we illustrate that these masculinities—as situated, embodied social processes, which bring bodies into history in particular ways—are inseparable from the making of particular kinds of health effects, namely, periods of psychic crisis and addiction (Connell 2012; Courtenay 2001; Siu, Seeley, and Wight 2013; Wyrod 2016).

Methods

Our analysis draws on numerous four-to-twelve-week fieldtrips conducted by the first author from 2007 to 2018, and ongoing fieldwork carried out by the second author since 1999. Our fieldwork has involved encounters with a large number of individuals across numerous maskani in Dar, but this analysis draws primarily on close relationships developed by the first author with twenty-five young men who worked on the streets of the downtown core, all of whom were initially sleeping on the streets as well. In 2007, a group of twenty individuals was recruited to participate in the research through a Tanzanian research assistant who was well-known to the second author, and who had himself spent many years living and working on the streets of the city center. At that time, these men ranged in age from their mid-teens to early twenties. All of them worked or spent time at Amazoni and spent significant periods of time at Lebanoni. Across the study period, it was possible to maintain contact with fifteen of these individuals. As additional young men formed relationships with Amazoni over time, five of them became incorporated into the research, for a total of twenty-five participants.

During fieldwork, both authors visited maskani daily. We also spent extensive periods of time accompanying young men as they moved through the city at various times of the day and night, allowing us to observe situated encounters and performances in different maskani and other urban sites such as bars, nightclubs, beaches, and the homes of friends and family members. In 2007, young men were provided with disposable cameras and asked to take photographs that documented or evoked key aspects of their everyday lives. They were provided with copies of all of these images, which they subsequently showed off to friends and acquaintances as proof of their involvement in our project. This provided us with an unanticipated

and rich opportunity to discuss particular images as research progressed. Certain images became symbolic of particular ideas that we wanted to pursue further, such as going crazy from confusion (see fig. 3), and we found ourselves returning to those images repeatedly for discussion. Also in 2007, interested young men were provided with supplies to create drawings that documented or evoked aspects of their everyday lives and the places that they inhabited. This resulted in graffiti and cartoon drawings (see figs. 2 and 4), which provided additional points of departure for discussion. Finally, in 2007 and again in 2009, we recorded and translated several hip-hop songs composed and performed by those who were working and spending time at Amazoni. These lyrics provided further insights into the themes we were studying.

When not in Tanzania, the first author remained in regular contact with approximately twelve of the twenty-five young men via Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. As we describe in detail below, most of these individuals eventually stopped spending time at Amazoni and Lebanoni, and several moved out of or spent long periods of time away from Dar altogether. The long duration and episodic nature of our fieldwork has inevitably meant that we have had to contend with different kinds of "shadows and disappearances" (Meyers 2013:15) among the men we continue to follow. However, this methodology has provided an understanding—however partial and incomplete—of how forms of becoming and coming undone have unfolded for this group of men across time and place, and underscored the unfinishedness of selves and worlds. The ethnography we present below jumps across time and place, illuminating key moments in these men's stories so far.

Big City Dreams

All the men we followed were from cities and towns outside of Dar. As in other parts of Africa, their decision to relocate to Tanzania's largest city was shaped by the legacies of structural adjustment and the pulls of neoliberal globalization (Sommers 2010). In the mid-1980s, Tanzania signed its first agreement with the International Monetary Fund, and was rapidly incorporated into novel forms of global integration and compression. The country was significantly transformed as it was opened up to new flows of labor and capital, mass communications and an electronic economy, and the instantaneous circulation of signs and images (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). However, after a brief period of economic flourishing, the decline of state services and subsidies led to a collapse of salaried, long-term employment for most Tanzanians. This collapse on the heels of exhilarating possibilities shaped subsequent generations of young Tanzanians, including those we met at Amazoni and Lebanoni, who desire the signs and styles of a globalized world, but find ever-narrower means by which to realize these desires (Weiss 2009). In Dar, a vast informal economy has emerged to fill the gap left by

the shrinking state and high unemployment. Today, even as the city's formal economy grows rapidly, the distribution of wealth remains highly unequal. In fact, this growth and the expanding middle classes are highly dependent on the informal labor of those who continue to be locked in the margins of Dar's fractured urban landscape.

Recalling the places of their childhoods, young men often described a sense of sitting around and having nothing to do, even as they also described being busy with various tasks for most of the day (Hansen 2005). Some of them grew up in circumstances marked by severe material hardship and family tragedy, and most faced limited educational opportunities. Some viewed the more traditional forms of employment available at home—farming, for example—as largely undesirable. They were drawn to Dar by an alternative horizon of possibility, signaled by its burgeoning informal economy, and by the promise of greater proximity to the flows of people, goods, images, and ideas that have ignited imaginations everywhere (Cole and Durham 2008). Like so many other young people who have grown up global, the young men we knew embraced—and felt embraced by—big-city dreams, despite their experiences growing up poor (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Katz 2004; Koselleck 1985). Long before they had arrived in Dar, they had imagined what their lives might look like there.

Sometime after arriving in the city, several of the men we came to know stayed at Dogodogo Center, a shelter for street children, where some of the men who worked together at Amazoni originally met. One young man, Kindo, managed to enroll in school while living at the center. During the early years of our fieldwork, he would show up at Amazoni each afternoon wearing his school uniform, and complete his homework on the hoods of parked cars waiting to be washed. He was the only young person we encountered who maintained a regular presence at Amazoni and was able to complete high school—which he eventually did in 2009, thanks largely to regular small financial contributions from the rest of the men at Amazoni to cover his annual school fees.

When they were still young and childlike in appearance, young men skillfully manipulated street child identities to elicit charity from NGOs, tourists, and others. As they grew into physical maturity, however, most found it increasingly difficult to attract charity. Just as society's perception of them changed over time, their own perceptions of where and how they belonged in the city shifted as they grew into mid-adolescence on the streets. Rather than resenting their heightened exclusion from places like Dogodogo Center, we observed that, in most moments, they embraced and celebrated their full incorporation into the spaces that were left to them. In fact, this was a group of youth who skillfully avoided being drawn into public health and other kinds of interventions, even when these were made available to them. Rather, they strongly believed that life and work at maskani would allow them to successfully grow into adulthood in Tanzania. In the meantime, these places generated a powerful, affective sense of forward momentum in their everyday lives.

Figure 1. Amazoni. Photograph by Baraka, 2007.

Belonging and Becoming on the Streets

> Hey party yeah!
> And cheer me up
> I will still get my money
> You said we would never rise up
> But now we have respect
> You tried to block our success
> Still we became winners
> We're still marching forward
> We're still marching forward
>
> Today is my time
> Watch me on TV
> Listen to me on CD
> I am a simple MC
> I hurt my head composing tracks that are for real
> Everyday my audience is growing
> I don't like to be jobless
> Composing rhymes is my favorite work
> I handle the microphone like Jay Z
> I use any way I can to achieve
> I'm well known not only in Bongoland[8]
> But also in the USA, UK, and South Africa up to Somalia
> *—Shavu (Amazoni, 2008)*

In contrast to popular, public health, and political understandings that view young, unemployed men as perpetually risky, at risk, and out of place in the modernizing city (Burgess 2005; Lugalla and Mbwambo 1999),

we observed that, during adolescence in particular, young men celebrated a powerful sense of belonging and being in place on the streets. Well aware that public and political opinion held that they were a blemish on the city's attempts to cultivate a more modern image and should return home, they frequently articulated a refusal to leave, even in the face of police violence, arrest, and imprisonment, and various other forms of physical, psychological, and economic injury. They felt that as *young* men they possessed the kinds of intelligence, flexibility, and physical and psychological strength that were required to fight for life through informal labor in the crevices of the city (Callaci 2018).

"A youth[9] is someone who is always fighting for money, fighting to build a future," Ninja explained in 2007, as several of us were sitting around on overturned plastic drums at Amazoni late one afternoon. Along adjacent fencing, just-washed items of *mitumba* clothing—Western brand-name jeans, oversized T-shirts, and hats that had originally been donated in Canada, the United States, and Europe—were hanging up to dry, to be changed into once the workday was over. Ninja continued, "He's always working hard and comes quickly when called [by a potential customer or employer]: he's *mishemishe*! A youth is strong, can work anywhere, and do any kind of work that comes up. That's *mishemishe*: that's being a youth."

Later in the conversation, Dotto elaborated, "A youth can find a good life here. He can go places that he won't go when he is married. To maskani. He goes to these places to know another kind of life—the life of *masela*, of *mishemishe*."

"So you won't come to Amazoni when you're married?" Danya asked.

"No!" Dotto and Ema replied in unison, laughing.

"Now, we must know the life of the street," Mwinyi said more seriously. "We must come to Amazoni, we must fight for life every day. We learn from each other. Sometimes we enjoy ourselves too much, we drink alcohol, we smoke marijuana. One day, though, I would like to be running while sitting [working in an office job]. That's what I want."

At maskani, young men inhabited multiple temporalities and spatialities, as they recalled the places of their childhoods and thought toward the elsewheres of their futures. Their desire to know another kind of life at maskani referred to both the one they had left behind and the one they imagined inhabiting once they were older, far removed from places like Amazoni and especially Lebanoni. In this context, it was necessary to continually overturn the idea that they were—"stuck"—or in a perpetual state of—"waithood"—on the streets (Hansen 2005; Honwana 2014; Sommers 2012).

In his ethnography of underground rappers in the *uswahilini* of Dar, Kerr (2018) draws on work by Honwana (2014) and others (Dhillon and Yousef 2009) to describe how young men's struggles to accrue the financial and social capital necessary to mark their entry into adulthood relegates them to a state of waithood in places like maskani, where they

nevertheless create meaningful selves and social spatial worlds. While the young men we followed similarly inhabited a social position defined by its relation to (yet-to-be achieved) markers of adulthood, describing them as stuck or in a state of waithood on the streets overlooks the affective intensities that animated the meantime of everyday life at Amazoni. There, a powerful sense of forward (if not upward) mobility was accomplished through the cultivation of particular kinds of youthful masculinities and an elaborate prestige economy (Fuh 2012) that revolved around the skill, savvy, and style with which men were able to navigate street life in the present. Amazoni was a space of happenings (Masquelier 2013) and fragile successes, which opened up immediate economic, social, and affective possibilities in addition to particular kinds of futures. At Amazoni, this more immediate sense of becoming was engendered by particular kinds of gendered encounters and performances that included the demonstration of cunning and quick-wittedness in finding ways to make money, keeping one's body strong in spite of the ever-present threat of illness, and dressing in the latest fashion at night and on the weekends despite limited financial resources (Scheld 2007). A more immediate sense of becoming was engendered through mastering the subtleties of Dar street slang and demonstrating that mastery through hip-hop freestyling, storytelling, commiserating about life's hardships (Kerr 2015, 2018; Weiss 2009), and indulging in various pleasures—namely, alcohol, marijuana, and temporary girlfriends—without allowing these to distract from the "mission" of fighting for life in Dar.

Life at maskani could engender a more immediate sense of becoming in a much wider world, powerfully symbolized by downtown Dar's emergent spaces of local and international wealth, which included the Range Rover SUVs washed at Amazoni (Masquelier 2013; Weiss 2009). There, the global was imagined and engaged with through music, fashion, and slang, and through conversations with vehicle owners, many of whom worked in the city's global spaces. In the maskani of downtown Dar, young men picked up some English and phrases in other languages spoken by backpackers, development workers, and researchers, and memorized the lyrics of the latest American and East African music as it blared out of open-air bars. The mediation of the global into the local is reflected in Shavu's hip-hop lyrics above, which were recorded at Amazoni in 2008. He had never left Tanzania, but he positioned himself through his music as a global citizen crossing international borders (*Every day my audience is growing /... I handle the microphone like Jay Z / ... I'm well known not only in Bongoland / But also in the USA, UK, and South Africa up to Somalia*). As has been observed elsewhere (Weiss 2009), global imaginations were similarly reflected in how maskani were named: by transposing placenames like Lebanon and the Amazon Jungle onto the streets of Dar, young men demonstrated their grasp of, and situated themselves within, a worldly cartography.

Figure 2. [Left to right] 1. Today on the streets—nothing! Police are everywhere. I don't know how I will keep living like this. 2. This *ugali* [maize porridge] is no joke [because it will provide the body with strength]. We will share each piece with meat between us without interference from others. 3. My friend, everything is okay. This *ugali* has no blood [it has no water, and just a little will satisfy one's hunger]. Here we are serious about getting ahead in this life: we are going places. Cartoon by Evander, 2007.

Coming Undone

Young men articulated a strongly held belief that, with enough hard work in places like Amazoni, they would eventually accrue the financial and social capital that would allow them to leave maskani and enter the spaces of responsible manhood. Their dreams for the future were remarkably ordinary and reflected longstanding narratives about hard work, self-sufficiency, and upward mobility, in Tanzania (Pitcher and Askew 2006), underscoring that maskani are places in which dominant ideologies are both challenged and reproduced. Responsible manhood was defined as the ability to build a home and start a family, and take on all the responsibilities of domestic life. As Kisu reflected in 2007, "A man is someone who fights for the life of his family. He's the head of the family with all of the responsibilities. He has a house, food, money for his family, money for his children—"

Khamisi interrupted, "When I finally have a real job, I'll feel like a man. Then, I'll feel like I have a real future."

For at least one of the men who washed cars at Amazoni, everything proceeded according to plan. By demonstrating a strong work ethic and building social relationships with vehicle owners there, Chimo eventually secured a cash loan from one of these owners and regular work in an optometry lab. By 2017, he had opened a shop in the *uswahilini* where he also lived. His success, however, was the exception. Most of the men we followed struggled to translate any social and financial capital accrued at Amazoni into more lucrative employment opportunities. They frequently articulated plans to save part of their earnings each day, which they could eventually invest in a small business—selling *mitumba* clothing or a plethora of other portable goods in high-traffic areas of the city, for example. Indeed, a small number did successfully save money for periods of time (by asking a security guard or shopkeeper to hold onto their profits, for example, or more recently, by using mobile money services like Tigo Pesa) and eventually invest those savings.[10] However, many of the men we followed found themselves accruing only enough money necessary to cover the daily costs of food, cigarettes, marijuana, and a small amount of alcohol, for reasons that we discuss below. For youth who found themselves in this situation month after month and year after year, we observed that the meanings and affective experiences of maskani eventually began to shift, particularly as these individuals reached and then passed the age they had associated with getting a "real job," building a home, getting married, and starting a family.

The youthful masculinities and more immediate forms of becoming embraced at maskani—working tirelessly at any available job, spending money on the latest fashion, and taking pleasure in alcohol, marijuana, and temporary girlfriends—were in many ways the antithesis of the becomings young men imagined for themselves in the future. The worlds of maskani were not easily reconciled with those of responsible manhood, which had serious implications for those who were confronted with failure after years of fighting for life in these places. Particularly for men who were in their early twenties when this research began, we observed that a sense of belonging at Amazoni could shift over time from a positive affirmation of life's immediate and future possibilities to a painful confirmation of social, spatial, and economic marginalization, resulting in a sense of stagnation and, for some, periods of psychic crisis and addiction.

Danya first met Shavu in 2008. He was introduced to her as one of Amazoni's most impressive hip-hop talents; indeed, his skill was undeniable. He quickly became a leader of our project that year, in part because of the respect he commanded from other youth, and in part because of his ability to speak English—enough, at least, to translate street slang for a neophyte Swahili speaker. When Danya returned to the field in 2009, however, Shavu was noticeably withdrawn and wanted little to do with her. It was clear that he no longer commanded respect from the other young men, and was only intermittently in attendance at Amazoni. Dotto was quick to fill Danya in: during the previous year, Shavu had pursued his music career. He had had

some success, being featured on two tracks that had become popular on local radio, but he had been unsuccessful in becoming a full-time artist. The others interpreted his erratic behavior as a sign that he, like others before him, had "gone crazy from confusion" about the problems of life. According to the men who were the focus of our research, a person[11] experiencing this kind of psychic crisis is plagued by persistent and overwhelming bad thoughts and anxieties, echoing previous work demonstrating that *thinking too much* and having *too many thoughts* are common idioms for mental distress in several African contexts (Johnson et al. 2009; Mains 2012; Okello and Ekblad 2006; Patel et al. 1995).

"When you have gone crazy from confusion, like Shavu, you feel so bad, you cannot live," Baraka explained dramatically, lighting three cigarettes and distributing them among the group. Eight of us were sitting around at Amazoni, and this item of gossip was a welcome relief from the lull in business. Regardless of the pace of business on a given day, more men were always hanging around Amazoni than there were cars to wash. Those who weren't working passed the time by sleeping and smoking cigarettes and small packets of marijuana while hidden from sight by the foliage at the back of the lot.

Nodding, Ema added, "A youth who has gone crazy from confusion sleeps all the time." He gestured impatiently for Baraka to pass him the cigarette they were splitting. "He's always sitting around smoking too much marijuana and drinking too much alcohol with others who are like that. Maybe he's using heroin, cocaine. He has no direction in life." The others murmured in agreement. "He has given up on fighting for money," Omary explained. "Maybe he's even given the chance to work, but he cannot follow directions and finish the job properly. He has no success. He's someone who cannot do anything right. Everything has gone wrong for him."

For Shavu and others, going crazy from confusion appeared to be connected to an inability to actualize the forms of becoming they had envisioned for themselves in the future. But for those reflecting on the condition from the outside, it was often more closely defined as ceasing to pursue the more immediate forms of becoming generated by life and work at maskani. What was interesting was that most of the men at Amazoni continued to have no problem placing their day-to-day lives within narratives of becoming, even if their latest business scheme had failed. During Danya's absence from 2008 to 2009, some other men had tried to start small businesses with the hope of growing their initial investment over time. Despite their lack of success, they remained optimistic about their futures, and their day-to-day lives continued to be characterized by a sense of forward momentum. Shavu, however, was among the oldest of the young men we knew at Amazoni. This had been part of what had earned him respect for a time, but it also may have meant that his desire to move away from the streets and into the social, spatial, and economic worlds of responsible manhood was particularly acute.

Figure 3. Baraka pretends to have gone crazy from confusion, and is digging through a pile of garbage for the benefit of the camera. Photograph by Ninja, 2007.

When Danya returned to Dar in 2013 after a four-year absence, Shavu was no longer regularly present at Amazoni. In fact, Amazoni itself was no longer there. In 2008, the foliage surrounding Amazoni had begun disappearing because of encroaching construction; by 2013, Amazoni had been moved to a nearby lot and renamed IFM because of its proximity to a college of the same name. Despite these changes, IFM was largely inhabited by the same group that Danya had first encountered at Amazoni in 2007. By 2013, their ages ranged from the early twenties to the early thirties. Shavu did show up at IFM at one point in 2013 to ask Danya if she would buy him a bus ticket so he could return to his hometown just outside of Mwanza. He said that he had been seriously ill over the past year and needed to go home to recover. Danya granted his request, and he immediately left the maskani. He was barely out of sight when several others pulled Danya aside with a warning not to give him money. They confirmed that Shavu had indeed been ill, but insisted that the cause of this illness was an addiction to heroin. Danya wondered aloud if perhaps Shavu wanted to return home in an attempt to get off drugs, but the others insisted that he would stay in the city and spend the money on heroin. He had been living at maskani Ferry, they informed her with contempt. During her absence, Lebanoni had also moved and been renamed after being demolished by the city council to make way for a Japanese-funded covered fish market. It had been renamed Ferry because of its proximity to the terminal for ferries connecting downtown Dar to the Kigamboni district.

All the young men at Amazoni/IFM were adamant in distinguishing themselves from individuals who were spending all of their time at

Lebaboni/Ferry and other places like it, underscoring the extent to which becoming and coming undone were powerfully spatialized for this group of youth. They aggressively policed the boundaries of Amazoni/IFM, often ostracizing those who had gone crazy from confusion and had become engaged in intensive drug and alcohol consumption. These individuals were undoubtedly bad for business, but they perhaps threatened the fragile fantasies and more immediate forms of forward momentum that were anchored to places like Amazoni/IFM.

For many of the young men we followed, life and work at maskani seemed to require them to balance on a knife-edge between maintaining a sense of forward momentum and sinking into stagnation. This balancing act led them to consistently qualify their harsh condemnations of places like Lebanoni/Ferry and those who inhabited them with the explanation that it was oftentimes pleasurable, and even necessary, to go to these places—until the time when they became husbands and fathers. Maskani like Lebanoni/Ferry were places in which wounds were made, but also cared for. Distractions like alcohol, marijuana, and fleeting romances were appropriately embraced while one was a young man fighting for life on the streets. In moderation, these provided a much-needed release from the hardships—and intermittent boredom—of life in Dar, and, paradoxically, helped *prevent* young men from going crazy from confusion.

At maskani, young men's lives were characterized by stiff competition for business and fights over precarious resources; police harassment, arrest, and brutality (which varied in intensity depending on which government was in power); and, every so often, bulldozers sent to clean up the city center by demolishing roadside businesses. It might seem that in the midst of this relative chaos, as well as the elaborate prestige economy described above, there would be little room for periods of inactivity and boredom. In fact, men emphasized that the greatest assault to their wellbeing was sitting around at Amazoni with a sense of having nothing to do. This assertion echoes work by anthropologists showing that, in the context of severe marginalization, boredom seems to derive from being both under- and overwhelmed (Fast, Shoveller, and Kerr 2017; Jervis, Spicer, and Manson 2003; Mains 2007; Musharbash 2007; O'Neill 2014). More than malaria or HIV, young men feared these periods of stagnation, when introspective thoughts about the past, present, and future could become a source of overwhelming confusion. In these moments, tensions between the places of their childhoods, the youth appropriated maskani of the city center, and those elsewheres from which they were physically and symbolically excluded, were thrown into sharp relief. As Ninja lamented in 2007, "Sometimes we just sit there [at Amazoni], staring at each other as if at a television. There's nothing to do. Then we feel different from *watoto wa mama* [lit. 'children of mother', rich young people]. You feel confused. You walk along the street and see all the nice things in the shops. You want to have those things, but you can't buy them because you have no money. And yet this is why we came here."

Figure 4. "A tiring state of affairs." *Choka mbaya* references fatigue that is caused by having an abundance of unstructured time and no money, as opposed to fatigue that is caused by hard work. Note the confused thoughts circling the young man's head, and the marijuana he smokes to deal with them. Graffiti art by Kindo, 2007.

After a while, Kindo added, with genuine longing, "People are so poor, yet in this country there are so many expensive cars. I would like to drive one of those cars."

At maskani—and in particular places like Lebanoni/Ferry—one way that young men mediated boredom and a sense of stagnation was by quickly spending what little extra money they had on cigarettes, marijuana, alcohol, girlfriends, and *mitumba* clothing. These were highly effective means of regaining a more immediate sense of forward momentum in their lives, but they undercut plans to accrue the kind of savings that would allow them to move toward desired future-oriented forms of becoming.

Leaving

The anxieties that inform experiences of coming undone at maskani are evident among youth living in much of Africa and the world (Dhillon and Yousef 2011; Hansen 2005; Honwana 2014; Mains 2007; Masquelier 2013; Sommers 2012; Wyrod 2016). Over the past several decades of neoliberal globalization, the modernist dream of inevitable progress has been thrown into crisis. It is no longer a given that each generation does better than, or

even as well as, its predecessor (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). For many of those who inhabit the margins of a city, life and work on the streets extends indefinitely. At the time of writing, only one of the men from Amazoni/IFM—Chimo—has been successful in accruing the amount of money and, perhaps more importantly, the kinds of social connections, required to set up small businesses and homes in the *uswahilini*.[12] Over the ten years of our research, many of the men we followed continued to engage in street-based entrepreneurial activities in places like Amazoni and regularly enjoy themselves in places like Lebanoni/Ferry.

A fair number, however, did eventually leave Amazoni. Plans to leave were usually made quietly. Young men exchanged social media messages with contacts in other places who promised them connections to work and a place to stay (for a few days at least), and began saving money for bus or train tickets. Despite their longstanding connections to places like Amazoni and Lebanoni, actual moments of leaving involved equally little fanfare. Youth often appeared to say good-bye as if they might be back the next day. Indeed, they did not generally know how long they would be gone. Despite this uncertainty, and the fact that these men had not yet accrued enough capital to set up a home, get married, or start a family, these spatial flights or fixes to the growing anxieties of street life were highly meaningful, and they engendered new, fragile forms of becoming.

In 2012, Ninja began living at an all-boys orphanage in the Kigamboni district. In return for room and board, he did everything from bookkeeping to helping the boys with their homework. By continuing to do odd jobs in his spare time, he was eventually able to accumulate enough capital to begin buying *mitumba*, which he sold throughout Dar on foot. As his English improved, he found work as an informal tour guide for a network of Chinese development workers.

Inspired by Ninja, Dotto relocated to Kigamboni, where he found work selling potato chips at a small stand. When Danya returned to Dar in 2014, the most exciting development in Dotto's life was the acquisition of a serious girlfriend, a recent high-school graduate named Carol, who spoke excellent English. The two of them were living together in a small rented room in Kigamboni, which Dotto was paying for each month through his earnings at the chips stand. After making sure that Danya would not mention his previous "street life," Dotto proudly introduced her to Carol, making use of his own rapidly improving English.

Other men left the city altogether. Just as they had left the places of their childhoods and come to Dar with the intention of fighting for a different life, they left the city and went to smaller cities and towns in search of a life that was far removed from the streets, and, in some cases, to recover from periods of psychic crisis and addiction. Shavu may or may not have been sincere in 2013 when he asked for help with a bus ticket to return home, but when Danya returned to Dar in 2017, the rumor was that he had recently recovered from his heroin addiction by going to Zimbabwe to live with relatives. Albo G returned home in 2009 to recover from a cocaine addiction.

A few years after completing secondary school, Kindo began borrowing a friend's laptop and using online tutorials posted on YouTube to teach himself graphic design. In 2013, he had stopped spending time at IFM and was supporting himself through small-scale freelance work, though he still did not own his own computer. In 2014, he left Dar and moved to Mbeya, where he opened a small business. In terms of meeting his basic needs, his life in Mbeya was no easier than the one he had left behind. His earnings were often not enough to pay for the single room he rented monthly, and eventually he began sleeping in his shared rented workspace. Yet he continued to emphasize that this move itself was highly meaningful. "I don't want to be in that [street] life anymore," he told Danya when she asked whether he had ever considered returning to Dar, where a network of maskani may have allowed him to access to more economic support and odd jobs than he currently had access to in Mbeya. "I want to grow up," he told her repeatedly.

Ninja eventually moved away from Dar. Against tremendous odds, he grew his initial investment in *mitumba* into a small business selling clothes and CDs, and relocated first to Mwanza (his hometown) and then to Arusha to live and work with his younger brother. In 2017, he informed Danya that he expected to get married within the next three years.

Conclusion

As they moved through adolescence and into adulthood on the streets of Dar, the men we followed were not stuck or in a state of perpetual waithood, as has been argued about youth in Tanzania (Kerr 2018) and elsewhere (Hansen 2005; Honwana 2014; Sommers 2012). Rather, life and work in places like Amazoni/IFM provided a powerful sense of forward momentum, engendering both more immediate and future-oriented forms of becoming. As time passed, however, as well as during moments of crushing inactivity and boredom, the meanings and affective experiences of these places could shift significantly. Life at Amazoni/IFM could equally generate a sense of stagnation, and engender forms of coming undone that led some men to relocate more permanently to maskani like Lebanoni/Ferry. Others pursued more aggressive spatial flights and fixes: they left maskani, or even the city altogether, in an attempt to regain a sense of forward momentum in their everyday lives. Indeed, these moves did create new forms of becoming, however fragile.

By bringing into view this shifting geography of affect, we extend previous work examining the ways that contemporary African men infuse the city with a gendered and generational urban politics of the possible—and, we would add, the impossible (de Boeck 2013: 95). Indeed, coming undone in places like Lebanoni/Ferry was not passive, but generative of its own kinds of recognitions, happenings, and vital experiments. Experiences of going crazy from confusion were often mediated with excessive drug and alcohol use, which opened up new social relationships and a sensorium with its

own daily rhythms and routines. Going crazy from confusion in places like Lebanoni/Ferry was just as social and shared as fighting for life in places like Amazoni/IFM. Over time at maskani, men learned from each other, as Mwinyi put it, how to become and come undone in the city, underscoring that age-grades and age-sets continue to be important contexts for the gendered negotiation of lived experience in contemporary African urban contexts. In making these observations, our goal is not to fix categorical frames of subjectivity such as gender and generation (Noble 2009); rather, recognizing that gender and generation are social processes that are continually remade through the practices of everyday life in particular places (Wyrod 2016), and that in different times and places "we are interpellated, and subsequently identify, in different ways, deploying different resources" (Noble 2009:880), we have attempted to capture forms of identification and life that emerge in relation to maskani, which are inflected by age and gender, youth and masculinity, but not reducible to these or any other standard frames.

The lives and places we trace in this article were constantly in motion, constantly in the process of becoming and coming undone. Here, we have attempted to make visible how youth used urban space, as well as particular kinds of spatial flights and fixes, to "carve out life chances" (Deleuze 1997:3) from the shifting contours of youth, masculinities, and inequality (Mains 2007). In doing so, we underscore both the "forces that structure and determine social phenomena into well-worn paths and those that maintain the contingency and indeterminacy of those paths, allowing individuals to veer off into unexpected directions" (Raikhel and Garriott 2014:8). As Mains (2007) points out in relation to his work with unemployed young men in Ethiopia, the spatial fixes that men enacted across time—from moving to the city and fighting for life at maskani, to moving between maskani like Amazoni/IFM and Lebanoni/Ferry, to moving away from the city, or at least away from maskani—are quite different from what Harvey (2001) envisioned when he developed the concept to show how space is used to defer the crises inherent in free-market capitalism. Their spatial fixes were also often highly precarious. Competition for work on the streets of Dar was fierce, and it was complicated by police violence, zoning laws, harassment, and arrests. Maskani moved frequently because of encroaching construction and government crackdowns on informal vending. Lives lived elsewhere, away from the city, could be characterized by even greater hardship and boredom than that experienced at maskani. And yet, through these moves, men continued to generate a powerful sense of forward momentum in their everyday lives—a sense of becoming—even when their efforts resulted in minimal financial success. Alternatively, moves to places like Lebanoni/Ferry allowed them to "remain in suspension" (Biehl and Locke 2017a:4), resigned to the fact that fighting for life usually produced little in the way of material advancement. Unfortunately, this state of affairs continues to be the norm, rather than the exception, for those who inhabit the margins of contemporary Tanzania and similar African settings (Simone 2004).

NOTES

1. *Masela* is derived from the English term 'sailors'. It is a reference to the constant mobility of those who work on the big ships that pass through Dar's port, men who traverse the globe with the aim of making a living and seeing the world. Kerr (2015) suggests that this term can be equated with the English terms 'gangster' and 'thug,' but this was not generally the case in our context.

2. *Mishemeshe* is derived from the English term 'mission'. It can be used as an adverb, meaning a combination of 'quickly', 'readily', 'flexibly', and 'efficiently', as well as a noun to describe a period of time spent looking for work, roughly equivalent to the English phrase "being on a mission." A third usage is as a noun, to refer to a person who engages in the daily hustle of looking for work.

3. A distinctive brand of Swahili hip-hop and music more generally that originated in Tanzania and is now immensely popular throughout East Africa.

4. We use the word *fighting* as a possible colloquial translation of the Kiswahili verb *kutafuta*, which can literally be glossed as 'to search' or 'to look for', but when used among young men with reference to life (*kutafuta maisha*) or money (*kutafuta pesa*) 'to fight for' is perhaps a more accurate translation. Moyer (2003) has qualified this phrase further to refer to 'fighting for a more meaningful life'.

5. While young women might pass through Amazoni, they would generally not stay long. Women who did spend time at maskani usually did so at places like Lebanoni, where some sold illicit alcohol *(gongo)* and engaged in sex work. In general, young men and women maintained largely separate spheres of economic activity downtown (May 1996). Young men had various forms of street-based employment available to them, from washing cars, to carrying loads, to selling everything from shoes to pirated DVDs to roasted peanuts on foot, but young women usually found work in bars and restaurants (Lugalla and Kibassa 2003).

6. Local street slang is constantly evolving. As just one example, by 2013 this condition was described using the verb *kuvurugwa* (*amevurugwa*); the literal meaning of *kuvuruga* is 'to disrupt' or 'to mess up'. When used in the passive form, *kuvurugwa* means 'to be disrupted (in the head)' or 'to be messed up (in the head)'. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the second author observed that the passive verb *kuchanganikiwa*, which can be glossed as 'to be caused to be mixed up (in the head)', was used to describe this affliction.

7. Despite linguistic fluency and long-term fieldwork in Eastern Africa by the second author, we have yet to find a satisfactory translation of the term *masculinities*, let alone

responsible masculinities. However, we were often able to get at a discussion of masculinities and responsible masculinities by approaching it "sideways" (Vaughan 1983), such as by listening to what our interlocutors had to say about what it means to become a whole person (*mtu mzima*). While this phrase is not gendered, it generally becomes gendered through use.

8. *Bongo* translates literally as 'brain', and is a colloquial term for Dar and Tanzania as a whole—a reference to the ingenuity required to fight for life in these settings (Callaci 2018).

9. Though not necessarily gendered, the Kiswahili word for youth *(kijana)* generally becomes gendered through use. The youth described here were masculine.

10. While this group of young men did not regularly send money to rural relatives, they did frequently help each other out with small sums of money to cover the daily costs of food, cigarettes, marijuana, alcohol, and, in Kindo's case, school fees. However, the small size of these loans meant that they did not significantly detract from efforts to save money among those who were doing so.

11. Our study focused exclusively on young men, and we are therefore unable to comment on whether young women faced similar forms of psychic crisis; however, the young men we followed generally viewed going crazy from confusion as a gendered problem, related to gendered forms of precarity in the city, and an inability to provide for dependents.

12. The second author, in her long-term research with a similar population over more than ten years, has documented only three occasions when young men completely and successfully exited street life; one of these resulted from marriage to a woman from Japan, and another from marriage to a woman from Norway.

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