AND SO THE YOUTH FIRE RAGED ON YOUTH AND PRACTICES OF DEMOCRACY AND EMPOWERMENT IN BRAZIL AND KENYA

Wangui Kimari

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INTRODUCTION*

I swear to the Lord
I still can't see
why Democracy means
everybody but me.

Langston Hughes

Things have never been the same since the re-introduction of multi-party politics in Kenya and most parts of Africa. There came Ballot boxes and Bullet boxes, By-elections and Buy-elections, Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Oppression, Stakeholders and Steak-holders (as well as Stick holders). To me the combination of all of these were democracy and demoCRAZY (as well as Demon-cracy)

Preface to *'Democrazy'* by Gado,
an East African cartoonist

I'm not dreaming about democracy

Savia, young person from Salvador

IN BOTH BRAZIL AND KENYA, countries where the median age is lower than 35,[1] youth are seen to be, as evidenced by the June 2013 national bus strike in Brazil and the Occupy Parliament campaigns in Kenya of May 2013, questioning more ardently the forms of normative political practice within their contexts. During the transport and anti-World Cup protests, and which were coupled with other col-

* This book is for Jacques Depelchin, the youth of Mathare Social Justice Centre (MSJC) and all the *quilombo* children of Brazil. It is also for the people of Salvador and Nairobi; thank you all for the many, many lessons.

1 I am using the AU definition of youth, which categorises anyone between the ages of 15-35 as a young person. In Brazil, the median age is roughly 30.7, and in Kenya, it is 19.1. Therefore, the majority of the population in both countries can be included as part of this generation (CIA, 2014).

lective convenings that occurred almost continuously in Brazil from June 2013 up until June 2014, there were demonstrations in which more than one hundred thousand of mostly young people[2] took to the streets. Their demands were for *passe livre* and for better quality public transport. At the same time, these were exigencies tied to a variety of broader social welfare imperatives and dissatisfaction with prevailing political institutions and practices. Occurring in the context of a looming World Cup, and also inflamed by the colossal expenses of the 'cup to end all cups'; these protests took on a particularly pronounced and frustrated generational tenor.[3] While a mostly urban phenomenon calling for 'FIFA quality hospitals and schools'[4] was observed nationally, regional differences were also discerned. For the most part these protests also acted as a '*grito dos excluídos*'[5] —a cry of the excluded. Notwithstanding this, in the North Eastern city of Salvador, those who participated in these 'cries' also came with more localised demands; marching for an end to the genocide of young black people,[6] to religious intolerance against the Yoruba-Brazilian religion of *Candomblé* and other Afro-Brazilian religions, to violence against women and police violence as a whole (the latter taking on a pronounced gravity in Salvador where the police were using real bullets[7] in contrast to other cities in the South where they used rubber bullets against mostly young white protestors) (S, personal communication and CMS, 2013).

In addition, the colour of the people who were most intimately violated by the pre-World Cup raids[8] and subsequent police occupations in these specific neighbourhoods, also confirmed the spatio-racial apartheids present in this context and the dissimilar experiences of being young that are part of this nation. These variances also emerged in the *gritos* of the young people on the streets who, nevertheless, were seen to have a common rallying motivation—a deep discontent with the prevailing political, social and economic state of affairs; conditions which appear to accrete, deeper, in their generation's circumstance(s).

In Kenya, the Occupy Parliament protests of May 2013 were also primarily a youth-led affair. These targeted Members of Parliament (or MPigs, as they were dubbed by the participating activists) who,

2 See Watts (2013).

3 Wyre Davies (2014).

4 Dave Zirin (2014).

5 *Ibahia* (2013).

6 See the work of the campaign *Reaja Ou Sera Morto/a*.

7 Camara Municipal de Salvador (2013).

8 *BBC News* (2014a).

seemingly one of their first actions after they were elected in March of the same year, had attempted to increase their monthly wage by the equivalent of about four thousand dollars.[9] This amount would be in addition to the six thousand dollars that they were already earning; an amount that was also couched and inflated by a bevy of other exorbitant allowances. While these MPigs were the target, they were also the prism through which to comment on widespread youth displeasure with national politics and the immiserating socio-economic conditions that did not appear registered in the consciousness of legislators who appeared more inclined towards self-enrichment. In the Facebook invitation to the initial political gathering, an event that was to gain subsequent infamy primarily due to the theatrical dumping of pigs and their blood at the entrance of the national assembly, organizers asserted that one of their key aims was 'to make Members of Parliament aware that the days of parliamentary dictatorship are over. MPs cannot—and must not!—be self-regulating; they must be answerable to the people'.[10]

More recently a May 2014 protest against the proposed rise in tuition fees by university students in major cities such as Nairobi, Kisumu and Eldoret also brought forward a list of demands that, comparable to the protests in Brazil, spoke to a wider host of structural frustrations. For these students their situation has been one in which tuition fees are increased abruptly[11] (for this trend in North America see: Giroux, 2014) while a conjunction of neoliberal regimes and other situated interventions (such as increased taxes on food) jeopardized living standards, and worked towards foreclosing the possibility of post-secondary education for many Kenyan youth.

Demographically, many of those who took part in these protests were born in the 1980s. This is a time that has been referred to as the

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9 Kenyan lawmakers are the second highest paid legislators in the world, and already earn a yearly salary that is roughly seventy six times Kenya's GDP per capita (Herbling, 2013).

10 Official Facebook invitation page for the Occupy Parliament Rally on May 14, 2013 at <https://www.facebook.com/events/358217317613270/> accessed November 1, 2014.

11 A 2010 Commission for University Education (CUE) study, supported by the World Bank and the Kenyan government, recommended the doubling of tuition fees, and an increase in the interest paid on the tuition fee loans to the Higher Education Loan Board (Andae, 2014). Without a doubt, the increase in tuition fees emerges from these kinds of 'recommendations' that are tied to the current national neoliberal imperatives of the state. The introduction of university fees in 1991, after decades when these costs were born by the government, also came out of a similar *laissez-faire* inflected World Bank backed plan that recommended, 'cost sharing'(Andae, 2014).

'lost decade',[12] although it has been succeeded by other 'lost' decades in Kenya and elsewhere (Rono, 2002). Moreover, it was a period characterized by the country's more sustained engagement with neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), as well as their resultant negative effects on employment, agricultural sector(s), health care, the education system and social welfare as a whole (Rono, 2002; Parsitau, 2008). While these youth often hear about the good old days before this decade—of jobs, a cheaper standard of living, land, free education and the abundant possibilities signified by infant postcoloniality—their insistent reality is one which harbours the negative 'convergence of structural adjustment, globalization, political change and trade liberalization' (Simone, 2001: 103); a time that, as is often maintained by a key interlocutor in Nairobi, is full of 'social challenges'.

In their lives, this coming together of unfavourable dynamics is evidenced on public and intimate levels by high unemployment, the high cost of food, inaccessible secondary and post-secondary education, and general state divesture from seemingly anything but the private sector.[13] Neither 'good governance' democracy nor 'social' *laissez-faire* initiatives have offered anything but palliatives to the individual and social body effects of these neoliberal practices that are deeply embedded in the local political economy (Rono, 2002; Parsitau, 2008). Instead, Kenya, while now recently deemed low middle income[14] (an announcement received with very little public fanfare locally) has one of the highest levels of income disparity in the world.[15] Furthermore, half of its population is living below the poverty line—a situation inflected by regional disparities and which, in all cases, is particularly pronounced for the youth, a gendered category, who make up the majority of the population.

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12 My assumption is that Rono (2002) borrows this phrase from the English translation of *la década perdida,* which is used widely to reference a similar period in Latin America, and particularly in Mexico.

13 As a read through Vision 2030 Kenya's foremost national development plan (released in 2006) illustrates, private equity takes precedence over any social welfare investment. The Kenyan government views such private investment as supreme in the quest to develop the economy (Vision, 2030). This overwhelming focus on corporate capital is ironic considering the deep structural inequalities that shape all socio-political relations in the country.

14 *BBC News* (2014b).

15 Kenya's Gini coefficient, also referred to as the Gini index or ratio, is 44.5 (Society for International Development 2014). The Gini index is an inequality metric that measures the distribution of national income or consumption of households in an economy. Using the Lorenz curve, which plots income received against the number of recipients in an economy, a Gini coefficient measure of 0 indicates absolute equality and a measure of 100 indicates absolute inequality.

Some contradictory 'openings'[16] have been engendered by the state during these times of neoliberal democracy. These include the introduction of free primary school education[17] and maternal healthcare, although there is often the perfunctory 'cost sharing' (such as the purchasing of uniforms and compulsory exam fees paid by parents with children in primary school) associated with these services.[18] All the same, in my opinion, their long absence is more symbolic than their present implementation—especially in the current neoliberal architecture in which they are employed. Nevertheless, in light of the serious need for these provisions, their application, however minimal, is still important and has positively impacted many rural and urban communities, even while traditional guarantors of self-improvement, such as education, do not allow for the same socio-economic realizations they once did.

In addition, and on a more subjective level, there has been what I have previously referred to as openings that have developed due to the availability of transnational politico-cultural practices such as Hip Hop, which emerges nationally amidst other global ideas, items and images. When localized these symbols and material goods allow for a somewhat boundless conception of self and lifeworlds: identities that span cultures and geographies and which are often established and oriented in the local environment primarily by young people (see Ntarangwi, 2009; and Weiss, 2009, on the impact of Hip Hop on youth identities in Kenya and Tanzania, respectively). All the same, these openings are overlaid by widespread socio-economic precarity that, as mentioned above, often take on a striking gravity for these youth. In this regard, Giroux (2014) asserts that:

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16 I use the term openings to capture more recent phenomena, such as Hip Hop and the globalization of goods and ideas, that allow for the proliferation of self-definitions and which become possible due to the increasing proximity to other geographies and cultures that globalization allows for. I use this word to denote 'a space or gap that allows passage or access', as per the Oxford English Dictionary definition.

17 President Mwai Kibaki instituted free primary education in 2002 soon after he took office. However, the quality of education in most of these public schools, as well as the prevailing costs of buying uniforms and compulsory extracurricular activities, still makes the cost of attending primary school quite high and inaccessible for many.

18 Uhuru Kenyatta's government implemented free maternal healthcare when he took office in 2013. While welcomed by many, the standards of healthcare still remain uncertain and there are also long waiting periods before one is attended to. As a consequence, for those who are able to, many women opt for home birth attendants, small private clinics or the myriad of foreign funded subsidised health care clinics if they can afford it.

> What is particularly distinctive about the current historical conjuncture is the way in which young people, particularly low-income and poor minority youth across the globe, have been increasingly denied any place in an already weakened social order and the degree to which they are no longer seen as central to how a number of countries across the globe define their future (Giroux, 2014).

He goes on to say that:

> Suffering under huge debts, a jobs crisis, state violence, a growing surveillance state, and the prospect that they would inherit a standard of living far below that enjoyed by their parents, many young people have exhibited a rage that seems to deepen their resignation, despair, and withdrawal from the political arena (Giroux, 2014).

The aforementioned movements and protests in both countries are evidence of much of what Giroux (2014) has asserted above. Although cautious of declaring that youth have withdrawn fully from the political arena, I suggest that they may have taken their political spaces elsewhere, constructed other temporary—or even permanent—locations from which to enact their own (dis)politics. Heeding the 2013 CODESRIA / CLASCO call to attend to the localized entanglements of democracy and neoliberalism, this research is oriented by the bid to see what other political spaces have been established by young people in Kenya and Brazil, and what this says about how they fit in to normative political fora with their hegemonic discourses of democracy and neoliberalism; ideologies which often seek to impose on youth particular kinds of political practices and subjectivities. Overwhelmingly, it is also an attempt to share strategies and political imaginations that have emerged from poor urban youth in both countries; approaches, I argue, that also gesture towards the futures for these youth, their urban settings, and of the 'democratic' and 'neoliberal' political processes that have been entrenched in their national spaces.

This inquiry is organized around three main questions. These are, first: *How do the discourses and practices of democracy and neoliberalism, if at all, shape young people's lives?* Second*: How do their day-to-day actions imply a response to the present 'democratic' and 'neoliberal' moment that is said to be characteristic of these two locations, and what negotiations (both collective and individual) are part of these responses?* Third: *What are the similarities and dissimilarities in the responses of the youth in Nairobi and Salvador, and what can these shared practices open up for (neoliberal) democracy*?

My main argument in this paper is that youth are questioning and seeking to reconfigure the normalized practices of (neoliberal)

democracy in their locations in momentous but more so in mundane ways. I do not aim to bring a new theoretical understanding of democracy or neoliberalism but rather attend to their in situ constraints for this generation. In addition, I also share how young people navigate these limitations in ways that rework and localize understandings of (neoliberal) democracy. I offer these sharings from both countries alongside each other to facilitate an exchange of these survivals strategies, in particular as it is empirically evident that these youth are constricted by and are suffering from the same phenomena. Finally, I believe that in exploring these generational constraints, reconfigurations, and sharings within neoliberal democracy that this interplay offers glimpses of the futures for this generation and contemporary politics in their locations.

While I began by mentioning some of the big evenemential ways in which youth 'crisis' is expressed (in the public transportation boycott in Brazil and the Occupy Parliament protests in Kenya, recall), for the most part this generational dissatisfaction and response to the status quo is expressed in more ordinary ways—in everyday life practices, and usually those for economic survival. To be sure there is quiescence, fragmentation and contradiction in their individual and collective actions. Even so, what can be discerned from the interviews which inform this work is that, for the most part, there is also enterprise, reflection, dedication and innovation which is entwined in and inspired by a concern for self and community (ies). My main point of departure is that it is precisely in the practices that are engaged in for individual and collective survival, that these youth speak of and look for other trajectories of political practice, and question the citizenships that democracy expects them to embody. Survival strategies here include education and 'hustling'[19] (and hustling as education as is often the case) and collective socio-economic ventures whose polyvalence (and ambiguous legal status) leaves them devoid of possible classification. These practices are often in tension with the status quo yet position youth as powerful agents and not dangerous subjects—in sharp distinction to how they are often imagined in the orthodox political institutions that have been inherited in both countries. Moreover, these are actions which can create provisional or enduring experimental political arenas, contact zones of livelihood and democratic pro-

19 The 'hustle' as is used in Kenya refers to small commercial activities conducted in order to get by. It does not; in anyway, have the negative connotations that it may suggest in North America. Most young people in Nairobi are engaged in some sort of small business a *ka-hustle*, and often multiple at a go, in order to make ends meet.

cess, in even the most routine and sometimes spontaneous of activities, many of which are tied to simple economic survival and even cultural and recreational communions.

This attention to micro practices is not to diminish what may one day cohere to be large-scale symbolic action that may profoundly alter their lives. Neither does my focus on their different civic engagements mean that they are overwhelmingly divorced from normative political institutions (although for the most part the youth interviewed did view these institutions and their representatives with suspicion). However, this emphasis on their own notions and blends of political practice is also able to highlight as well, on various scales, the inherent problems with what is often the hegemonic and Western praxis of democracy, particularly in its simultaneous concern, at once, with involving youth 'voice' and its rejection of the ways in which youth want their voices included. Additionally, while they do not, unsolicited, reference the politico-economic actions that they engage in as democratic (in fact they seem quite uninterested in the word), one can infer that since they regard mainstream political practices in their contexts as *un*democratic, the actions which they engage in to create these economic and political equalities could be their alternatives for democracy— their more intuitive democracy (ies). I say this cautiously as this is not a term they used to refer their own actions, but that is an inference of my own.

As will become more evident in a later section of this paper that shares excerpts of their own narratives, the most important strategies that both groups of youth took up and suggested for surviving the violent machinations of neoliberal democracy were resilient internal and collective strength—an unwavering optimistic resolve to just do what they felt they needed to do because they had to do it. This was expressed through various idioms such as 'don't give up' and 'keep fighting'. And as one Kenyan youth whose daily life interacts with some of the most sinister elements of the neoliberal penalty stated: 'keeping hope alive, hard work and perseverance, that's all. You can't give up' (Zulekha, interview September 15, 2014). This dialectical investment in hope is deeply imbricated in and results from the daily actions that they engage in—whether legal or illegal, traditional or alternative or a combination of these—that also fuels the imagination for a better future. It is part of a symbiotic process of visualization; of sustaining a creative and determined imaginary that is cause and effect, the seed and the fruits, even amidst apparent hopelessness. This is maintained through individual and intersubjective actions and allows for visions of improved presents and futures anchored in a kind of possible memory of the future; in an affective conviction that

things can only get better if they continue to do what they are doing which is, more often than not, striving. This faith and imagination is a key element of the scaffolding which, such is the hope harboured, will enable the advent of a political and economic environment that is 'answerable to them'. This assertion of the persistent faith of youth in future(s) amidst dystopic projections for them worldwide challenges a vast array of literature that focuses mostly on their rage and despair: their crisis.

In addition, I show here that while the grammar of neoliberalism does not orient their lives and is not part of the day-to-day lexicon of the majority of youth in Kenya and Brazil, it aggravates many of the forces that they have been living under, and it re-entrenches a precarity that has long structured their lives. Notwithstanding some of the novelty in its dislocations and refractions, neoliberalism is a (re) instantiation, in both new and repetitive forms, of many of the historical forces that these African and Afro-Brazilian youth have been living under. These youth already knew that the world was a market, and that they were part of communities who suffered its most occultist and arbitrary manifestations. Because of this they respond positively to ideas of (neoliberal) democratization when it works for them, but are ready to go beyond and above its established practices and search for other individual and collective processes in order to survive socially, economically and politically (and often psychologically). In this regard, they may simultaneously offer both counter-narratives and dominant narratives of democracy, even as they work to fill in its huge gaps.

Inevitably, this work will also attend to questions of history, geography, citizenship, imperial effects, 'radical imaginations' (Giroux, 2014), violence, love, capitalism, death, pedagogy, intersubjectivity, violence and the anthropology of states, democracies and neoliberalism, etc. While not a central theme, and not explored explicitly in this paper, I am also interested in ethnographically contributing to (what appears to be fairly under examined and perhaps misnamed at least in Africa) theorizations of what is seen as youth apathy. Often, missing from many foci on African youth are intricate accounts of why young people choose not to get into 'normal' institutionalized politics, and the different tactical and temporary ways that they may engage with mainstream political institutions. Deeper and broader accounts of this 'apathy' in the US and Europe have examined the 'moral panic' over, for example, low voter turnout among youth and their preference for more issue based politics, 'causes' rather than 'collectives' (for example, see the works of Rossi, 2014; McDowell et al., 2015; Roholt et al., 2007; Cammaerts et al., 2014). To my knowl-

edge this has not been extensively discussed in Africa, where it seems that the political stakes are materially higher for young people, where voter turnout appears to be increasing rather than decreasing and where youth may be tied to formal political organizations in important but tenuous ways, as the unemployed youth 'rent-a mob' hired for a variety of electoral 'needs'. This apocalyptic view of African youth and politics is alluded to by Rossi (2009) when he asserts that in many countries in the global south the 'abstinence' of young people from politics could be viewed with relief (Rossi, 2009: 473). Therefore, with these situated differences in play (as well as due to the widely propagated view of African youth and their potential for and practice of unruly politics) there is more work to be done in order to bring out the complexities inherent in 'youth apathy' in Africa and Latin America. Nonetheless, work on this in the US and Europe also gives us insights into the general political dissatisfaction plaguing youth worldwide, and the situated ways in which economic precarity and identity can affect how they engage in mainstream politics. Alongside apathy and the aforementioned topics that are immanent in this work, a medley of attendant themes, while not all recognized above, are implicated in the struggles and practices of young people in Brazil and Kenya as they battle with the question that also haunts this paper: *what would it take for us to get political regimes that are working for and answerable to all?*

This work is organized as follows: the first section, titled Methodology, discusses the motivations for this paper and confers why Kenya and Brazil are chosen as the sites for this research. This section also includes working definitions and expositions of key concepts such as 'youth', 'democracy' and 'neoliberalism,' as well as a run through of the methods that were used to collect data. This is followed by a section on the experiences of five Kenyan youth from Nairobi, and these narratives are shaped by the three guiding questions stated earlier. The majority of this section will be excerpts from the individual interviews with these young people so that their own experiences, in their own words, can be conveyed. The focus then shifts to the experiences of Brazilian youth from Salvador, which also follows the format of the earlier section on Kenya. Both of these country specific sets of youth experiences are anchored in the particular political, economic, and social contexts of the respective countries, with particular regard for how this manifests in the cities in question. The next section explores the dominant themes that emerged in both country studies, from the experiences shared, and focuses on the strategies for survival in democracy that youth in both locations offer to each other and to their peers broadly. I conclude by summarizing my main arguments

as well as highlighting other emergent themes which could offer pathways for further inquiry.

METHODOLOGY

This research is informed by recent and ongoing expressions of youth discontent in both Brazil and Kenya, and by the generative possibilities, they open up in their fervent bids to challenge marginalising conditions. It is inspired by the tactile resilience of many young people (a resilience that goes way above the recent fetishization of the term by the UN and other agencies) across these geographies who make life work even when it does not want to work for them (and in fact appears to want to kill them); when they are caught amidst violent structural conditions of being while also engulfed in the dislocating discourses and practices of adulthood, neoliberalism, and the discordant narratives of renewed and (re)democratized political life. In Kenya, these latter political chronicles have focused on independence, multiparty democracy, civil society dominance and a new Constitution;[20] while in Brazil, such narratives revolve around watershed events like the end of the dictatorship, the rise (and fall) of social movements, the promulgation of a new constitution, and Lula's 'third way' (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003).

In addition, this research is motivated by a Pan African desire to connect Brazil with broader African struggles in light of shared history, present(s), and expected futures, especially given the positioning of BRICS, which, for better or worse is intended to provoke greater economic and political approximation between Africa and Brazil. It also comes as a bid to connect academic work to situated struggles, uphold often sidelined youth perspectives, ethnographically theorize both the

20 All of these processes in Kenya were meant to signal a rupture from a previous non-democratic environment. Political independence in 1963 was meant to mark the end of colonial life and to herald the emergence of new free, modern, and agentive African subjects. In 1992, multiparty democracy was (re)established, and in 2002, the national elections brought about an end to the dictatorship of Daniel T. Arap Moi. This democratization of political participation was parallel to a rise in the prominence of the NGO sphere (See: Piot, 2010) for more on this in Togo). In 2010, a new progressive constitution, which institutionalized the devolution of power by creating local governments, was promulgated. All of these normative democratic processes were thought to signal the potential for greater political participation by young people nationally. Without diminishing some of the openings that these changes have brought about for some, the young people interviewed still feel that the formal political sphere—with its consequences for both public and private life—offers very few options for meaningful political participation in the ways that they as youth would want to participate, and neither does it implement the fundamental socio-economic rights that they would want guaranteed.

neoliberal conditions of being and the responses to them by youth in the South, and to work for broader social, economic and political change in and beyond southern geographies. It is, finally, informed by both non-academic narratives about the lives of structurally marginalized populations in both of these places, as well as anthropological studies on related themes in both countries (see, amongst others: Scheper-Hughes, 1993; Goldstein, 2003; Alves and Evanson, 2011; Caldeira, 1996, 1999; Ntarangwi, 2009; Rasmussen, 2010; on youth elsewhere see Jensen, 2008; Weiss, 2009). Theoretically and methodologically, it is situated primarily in the discipline of anthropology, but is heavily interdisciplinary and draws from history, geography, political science, cultural studies and sociology—all of which are localized to address the particular contours of life in these two locations.

BRAZIL AND KENYA

AT FIRST GLANCE, Kenya and Brazil may appear completely disparate and counterintuitive localities in which to anchor a comparison of young urban life amidst democracy and neoliberalism. Brazil's population is about 200 million, roughly five times that of Kenya's 44.5 million (World Bank 2014 statistics). In addition, they have different cultural geographies, languages, and politico-economic histories that are heavily inflected by the legacies of a plantation economy in the case of Brazil, and by the extant dependencies of (post) coloniality in Kenya. The 'green city in the sun' is also very different from the hot undulating beaches of Salvador. Yet a common experience of extreme wealth inequality despite their formalized middle income status,—both remain among the most unequal societies in the world in terms of class, regional, and racial disparities in the case of Brazil—as well as similar politico-economic experiences since the late 1980s, allows for common ground in which to anchor a comparison of young urban life. Essentially, these referred contemporary political and economic experiences were constituted by 'neoliberal economic policies, the microeconomic integration of domestic capital into transnational circuits (i.e., denationalisation of firms and their integration into global value chains) [and] a decisive role for finance in economic policymaking, and political democracy' (Saad Filho, 2010: 12).

Within these post 1980s conditions it becomes apparent that neoliberalism can be seen as the economic form of democracy while democracy is the political form of neoliberalism (Petras and Veltemeyer, 2003; Saad Filho, 2010, 2014). Essentially, they live in each other, and it is the hegemony of this coincidence (which is not a coincidence) in both Brazil and Kenya that also renders this comparison possible. The 2010 visit of the then Brazilian President Lula to Kenya 'to unlock new areas of social and economic cooperation, including bio-diesel fuel production and soccer training'[1] also validates these similarities. While Lula's visit was taken locally as an indication of the 'shift' in Kenya's global trade relations— refocusing its gaze East and South and no longer North—, an international relations expert in São Paulo was quoted as saying, in relation to invigorated Brazil / Africa relations, that 'what brings them together is that they are at the frontier of capitalism'[2], and one could add democracy.

In addition, both Nairobi and Salvador are cities where the majority of the population are youth, and where the bulk of urban residents live in poor urban settlements. Experientially, they are also countries where I have engaged in both community and research work, particularly with youth, and are two cities that I know personally having been born and presently living in Nairobi, and also having conducted ongoing research in Salvador since 2007. As a result, for better or worse, I have spent a significant amount of time recognizing, living, and reflecting on the covert and overt similarities between them.

Brazil and Kenya's experiences with neoliberalism and democracy, or neoliberal democracy—as they are often conveyed as a 'two-for-one package' (Beaudreau and Clairzier, 2009; Saad Filho, 2010, 2014)—have not been too dissimilar. Kenya's forays with neoliberal economic interventions grew immensely in the early 1980s, and, similarly in Brazil this explicit neoliberal turn gained traction in the late 1980s after the end of the dictatorship. In both countries this involved the political and economic processes mentioned earlier (Saad Filho, 2014), and these economic restructuring directives were the agenda of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who are tasked by their members to bring about what they envision as global development through financial and professional assistance. As the ideology of neoliberalism permeates deep within the architectures of these institutions, the Structural Adjustment Programmes employed included drastic liber-

1 Allan Odhiambo (2010).

2 Christian Lohbauer quoted in Odhiambo (2010).

alization instruments such as deregulation, privatization, and reduced public expenditure on health, housing, education, agriculture and other public services. Since their implementation in many countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, it has been documented that these programmes have had devastating social and economic effects on many lives (Stiglitz, 2002; Ferguson, 2006; Weiss, 2009; Auyero and Swistun, 2009; Gandolfo, 2009; Sommers, 2010; Mains, 2011). Furthermore, Ferguson (2006) discusses how these neoliberal practices took shape on the African continent, and led to transformations in the senses of self of African subjects in relation to complex dispositions of global connection and disconnection. Feelings of connectivity are linked to access to transnational goods and citizenships (human rights, cultural identities, etc.) that neoliberalism produced, and the disconnections are a result of the fall in living standards and the seeming distance between socio-political and economic lives lived on the continent, and those lived in the West. Referring to these 'disconnections' in the Kenyan experience, Rono (2002) argues that:

> The structural adjustment programme has generally encompassed reduced relative expenditures on basic needs and social services, mainly education and health costs. Local products have been subjected to serious competition from imported ones and often from subsidized commodities. In this process, the poor have been exposed to severe socio-economic risks such as unemployment and retrenchment. Economic decline has gone hand in hand with the depreciation of the Kenya shilling, rising interest rates, the reduction of government expenditure, especially in the development and welfare sectors, the limiting of wage increases and the reduction of government subsidies at the national level. There is evidence to show that the SAPs have increased the gap between the rich and the poor as well as the income gap between the rural and the urban population in Kenya thus increasing poverty (Rono, 2002: 87).

Overall, the political, social and economic effects on the ground have been dire; the full grasp of their manifestations are only incrementally being revealed and, yet, still do much to temper the cited advances of this neoliberal period.

Earlier we mentioned some of what are seen as the openings from the particular politico-economic moment. Aside from free primary education and maternal healthcare, there are also the 'connections' (Ferguson, 2006) and human rights and freedoms discourses (Englund, 2006) that engender multiple conceptions of self, as well as claims from the state. The attachments to these connections and hegemonic human rights and freedom discourses illustrate their growing uptake

on the ground. In Kenya, many of these rights and freedoms have been legislated in the 2010 Constitution, and there were wide efforts to familiarize *wananchi,* the common person*,* with this document and with astounding results.[3] All the same, the application of these rights is mediated by the lack of basic necessities such as food, water and housing, and the reluctance of established political scaffolding that does not reform so easily. The fracture(s) between legislated rights and the inability to claim them will be evident in the narratives of the young people interviewed and which follow in a subsequent section.

In Brazil the advances attributed to neoliberalism, particularly since the latter 2000s, include the following:

> Twenty-one million jobs were created in the 2000s, in contrast with 11 million in the 1990s; the Gini coefficient fell from 0.57 in 1995 to 0.52 in 2008; the incomes of the bottom decile rose by 91 percent between 2001 and 2009, while the incomes of the top decile increased by 16 percent. Incomes rose by 42 percent in the poorer Northeast against 16 percent in the richer Southeast, and more in rural than in urban areas. Female income rose by 38 percent against 16 percent for men, and the income of Blacks rose 43 percent against 20 percent for Whites. The population below the poverty line fell from 36 percent in 2003 to 23 percent in 2008 (Saad Filho, 2014).

The author goes on to add that:

> Despite these achievements, the Brazilian economy has slowed down since 2011, for three reasons. First, government policies have failed to kick-start self-sustaining growth driven by private investment. Second, the balance of payments has deteriorated because of the slowdown in Brazil's main markets (China, the EU and the US), sluggish commodity prices, and currency devaluations and export-led strategies in several large economies. Third, the domestic currency has been vulnerable to shifts in capital flows due to economic policy shifts in the advanced economies (Saad Filho, 2014).

This slow-down, a direct result of the recession in other economies, is coupled with recent massive expenditure on mega-events: the World

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3 One interviewee in Mathare, Nairobi, estimated that of the people in his constituency '90% are constitution literat'. This is due to the widespread formal and informal efforts to make Kenyans aware of their new Constitution that occurred both before and after it was promulgated in 2010. At the same time, while the instruments may be there in theory to challenge any political action or inaction by their leaders, which they do not agree with, citizens are often hampered by prevailing institutional attitudes that do not always support or encourage people taking up these rights.

Cup and the forthcoming Olympics. The combination of a slowdown in the economy and major expenditure on such colossal international convenings has provoked many Brazilians to call for 'more bread', 'fewer stadiums' and 'FIFA-standard hospital'. One young interviewee in Salvador, commenting on his lived post-Fordist reality asserted that, in his view, neoliberalism has worked to 'mercantilize all social rights' and in this way created a 'social catastrophe' particularly in the poor urban *periferias* of Salvador where he comes from. Similarly, in the marginalized areas of Nairobi, ongoing neoliberal economic policy and its 'democratic' political avatar aggravate conditions of an already entrenched precarity. This grave disparity is then (re)entrenched in these spaces for years to come. As a result, the peripheral urban areas in both countries seem to be the sites of neoliberalism's most pronounced 'ruin-making' (Stoler, 2008), and this devastation seems to weigh disproportionately on the lives of young people due to a 'diachronic sequence of historical transformations' of which neoliberal democracy is the most recent instantiation (Wacquant , 2008: 9). It is due to this convergence of factors and the ways in which they combine in the lives of young people in particular, that this research has prioritized the category of youth.

YOUTH

FOR THIS RESEARCH, I purposely use the definition of youth that is contained in the African Youth charter. This charter classifies all those between the ages of 15-35 as youth (African Union, 2006: 3). I privilege this designation over the UN definition, 15-24 years of age, for the reason that, in my opinion, the AU definition best captures the situation in both Nairobi and Salvador where, due to a myriad of social and economic reasons, young people often find themselves 'stuck' in their progression through the locally accepted and desired life course. In this regard, they may start school later, stay there longer, and start working long after their peers in the global North. And in situations of high unemployment young people[1] would then gain independence from their families later in their lives as they would be engulfed in a period of 'waithood' (Honwana, 2012); in this way living

1 There are various statistics for youth unemployment in Kenya, and these run anywhere from 65% to 80%. In Brazil, Campos (2013) puts unemployment at about 50.5%, and it is reasonable to infer that youth constitute the bulk of these figures. Notwithstanding this, it is likely that both of these country statistics on unemployment may have included even those in 'informal' employment. Tied to this, the polyvalence of youth employment situations, as we will see in the excerpts, was also likely not considered in these formal measures. These are some of the issues, which invariably contribute to diverse statistics on employment.

as 'youth' for often much longer than the 24 years delimited by the United Nations (Mabala, 2011).

This age group is also prioritized here because they make up the majority of the African population. One in four Africans is between the ages of 10 and 19 years old, and the absolute number of young people in sub-Saharan Africa is growing faster than anywhere else in the world (Sommers, 2010: 318-321). Similarly, the majority of the population in Brazil is young, with an average age of 30.7 years—well within the AU's definition of youth. Due to worsening socio-economic conditions (and this was well attested to in the interviews conducted), few young people can afford to leave their home until quite late into what the UN categorizes as 'adulthood'.

Numerical designation aside youth is a category that has both 'hard' and 'soft' meanings, and which is significant in various ways in both local idioms and transnational bureaucratic discourse (Burgess, 2005; Durham, 2000). In the colonial period, being young in East Africa was defined along a trajectory of historical meanings that marked transitions in important life stages (for instance childhood, warriorhood and adulthood) with relatively public and socially sanctioned lifecycle rituals like circumcision and marriage (Burgess, 2005; Durham , 2000). In addition, both in Africa and beyond, youthfulness emerges as iconic of situated political events. For example, also in Colonial East Africa, the category youth was often used by gerontocracies to define people with 'fire in their belly', 'independence' or 'pride' (Burton and Charton-Bigot, 2010: 10). More recently, events such as the 'Arab Spring' as well as, particular to this paper, the aforementioned *passe livre* and anti-World Cup protests in Brazil and the university and Occupy Parliament movements in Kenya attest to this generational 'fire' which is said to be embodied by youth.

Currently the negative material effects of economic restructuring such as increasing poverty, a narrowing of the welfare state, and high unemployment and underemployment create a youth demographic which is increasingly defined by those material conditions. As a result, in many urban sites youth can be seen to constitute a particular class (Sommers, 2010: 11; Mains, 2011). Nevertheless, while asserting the convergences in postcolonial youth situations, I also recognise that how young people in general are imagined—whether as 'teenagers,' 'adolescents,' or 'youth'—is embedded in a confluence of local and international power dynamics, and the 'fire in the belly' that motivates their responses to these forces. The political nature of the moniker used to characterize this generation is evident in both academic scholarship and public discourse. In these global and local fora, young people in the West (with the notable excep-

tion of black and Latino 'urban youth') are for the most part discursively constructed as 'teenagers' or adolescents (essentially coy, creative, and prone to an endearing—because mild, naïve, and ultimately inconsequential—rebelliousness), while the identity of their Third World—in this case African and black—counterparts (who are also typically imagined as male and poor) is 'youth'—a title that is habituated to suggest an amorphous group of 'undesirables', 'criminals' and 'subversives'. Ultimately, these pejorative identities trade in anxieties about a 'youth bulge' or a dangerous 'lumpenproletariat' underclass that represents a threat to security at home and abroad; the always available 'militia' and 'gangs' ready to do the violent biddings of venal politicians (Comaroff and Comarroff, 2000: 307; Fanon, 2001: 130). Highlighting the political and oscillating nature of the term youth in Kenya, Mathathia (2008) states:

> On the streets, we existed as mere statistics. The closest we came to acquiring unique identifiers was in a police occurrence book—idlers, suspect, *Mungiki* adherents or Unidentified African Male. Sometimes, in election years specifically, we became 'The Youth' while in NGO literature we made token appearances as 'Unemployed Youth.' At some point NGOs began to refer to us as 'Marginalized Youth' but then the donor funds tended towards the Girl Child's agenda, so the Girl Child became the new Marginalised and we went back to being Unemployed Youth (Matathia, 2008: 101).

Consequently, even while individual experiences are not homogenous, generation remains an important principle of distinction when investigating how the effects of contemporary political economy (ies) have been meted out. Certainly the experiences of this age group are indeed variegated, but it is largely the case that postcolonial urban areas are the sites of 'new and alarming forms of youth marginalization and exclusion' (Sommers, 2010: 328-9).

As I have indicated, this generation is often considered both a nation's great promise and plunder, charged currents of both danger and change. Embodying this dual capacity in Nairobi and Salvador, they are often waged in an intergenerational battle with an older and predominantly male leadership who are intent on preserving their own power and vitality (Rasmussen, 2010; Clark, 2011; Burgess, 2005; Burton and Charton-Bigot, 2010; Vigh, 2010). This cross generational relationship is increasingly fraught due to economic and socio-cultural disparities across the different age cleavages enhanced by persistent neo-patrimonial networks, particularly where transitions of power between generations have not been effected—a situation that is highly contentious in Kenya where powerful grand-

fathers still cling to the title of youth (Burgess, 2005: 11; Rasmussen, 2010; Kagwanja, 2005). As these intergenerational negotiations continue to heat up, youth are often the losers in this battle intensified by the dire effects of global neoliberalism (Rasmussen, 2010; Biaya, 2005: 231; Sommers, 2010; Mains, 2011; Cho, 2010; Weiss, 2009; Ntarangwi, 2009; Burgess, 2010).

Furthermore, implicit in the machinations of neoliberal democracy, and often regrettably under theorized in Africa's urban centres, is the heightened penalization and surveillance of poor and young populations which combine to produce a kind of structural biopolitics in specifically poor geographies (for this in Brazil see: Caldeira, 1996, 1999; for more on this in the US and Europe see: Giroux, 2006, 2014; Wacquant, 2001, 2003, 2008; and for more on this in Turkey see: Yonucu, 2008). One need only turn to the pre-World Cup raids in Brazil's larger cities, or the imprisonment, death, or disappearance of many young men, whether (suspected) Mungiki, Muslim, Somali or poor over the last few years in Kenya (particularly in Nairobi and Mombasa), as testament to the nightmares of the broad reach of the excessive policing and militarization that comes with these processes. This is surveillance and carceralization (and murder) implemented by the state that aims to enforce a 'penal treatment' rather than a 'social treatment' of poverty and dispossession (Wacquant, 2003: 198).[2]

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2 Mungiki is a Kikuyu-centered sociopolitical movement in Kenya that was outlawed as a dangerous cult in Kenya following the election of President Mwai Kibaki in 2002 (Mungiki, anticipating and desiring a smooth intergenerational transfer of power, had supported Kibaki's rival Kikuyu candidate and President Moi's handpicked successor, Uhuru Kenyatta). The name 'Mungiki' means 'multitude' in the Gikuyu language. It is predominantly a Kikuyu movement that combines religious, political, 'criminal', and social aspects in the pursuit of what they believe is a better Kenyan society. The 'sect' was banned in 2002, and since then the police have been linked to the disappearance and murder of thousands of Kenyan youth who they claim to have suspected of 'being Mungiki.' While extra judicial killings by the police are normalized in the country—evidenced by the periodic 'shoot to kill' orders issued at various moments of the nation's history (for one example see Kagwanja, 2005: 107)—very few human rights reports have been able to document the frequency and full extent of these killings which occur in an ongoing manner. One organization, the Oscar Foundation Free Legal Clinic, did release a report in 2008 that documented at least eight thousand young men had been killed by the police in what was, ostensibly, a crackdown on Mungiki in a span of a few years. One year after this report was released, human rights lawyer Oscar Kingara and his collaborative researcher John Paul Oulu were assassinated in what is generally seen to be an example of the very extrajudicial killings they sought tirelessly to document. More recently, the 'anti-terror' raids on Somali and Muslim communities also pay testament to the militarised nature of the state. Notwithstanding the persistence of state violence in Kenya, there is a dearth of academic research on this, and greater efforts

Highlighting this, Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) argue that the 'sense of physical, social, and moral crisis congeals, perhaps more than anywhere else, in the contemporary predicament of youth, now widely under scrutiny' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000: 306). For these reasons, more than any other generation, they are given greater consideration in this exploration of the situated experiences of democracy and neoliberalism, and of the effects, alternatives, and transnational survival strategies that the current moment produces for them. In attending to age specific experiences in these two urban settings, I also recognize that these are gendered and often racialized and ethnicized and take on the specific shapes of particular locations. Cities themselves often have very gendered and classed histories, and ethno-racial nuances also intersect with these class and gender hierarchies. Currently these factors layer on and have fluctuating salience in the contemporary living conditions of most of the population of Nairobi and Salvador, and tend to influence the 'advanced marginality' of its young inhabitants (Wacquant, 2008).

It is the way that all of this sticks on their bodies—the dynamics of demography within current socio-political and economic situations—that gives youth the power and necessity to reimagine how they fit into pervasive national notions of neoliberal democracy. Increasingly, the 'fire' which tends to characterize these coping strategies is seen as a problem distinctive of postcolonial cities of the South, and Nairobi and Salvador are no exception. In such a scenario, while the looming bright lights and civil liberty doctrines of the 1990s neoliberal (re)democratization were supposed to provoke greater democracy and prosperity for younger generations in Southern urban centres, it is now widely documented that it is principally these same youth who are excluded from both new fortune and the institutions that underpin it. Informed by this exclusion, and by the alleged danger that this youth 'problem' it is seen to herald, I heed the call to examine how youth 'impertinence' can be a signifier of the contemporary moment, as well as gesture towards new possibilities and trajectories for present and future that are generated by their situated anti-normative political and economic practices. Therefore, I dwell and delve into their mundane daily life practices because I am interested in how these actions could reveal how youth make sense of the global political and economic discourses that so pervade their public sphere(s), and how they reconfigure them for their emancipations.

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need to be made to document and to analyze the relationship between neoliberalism and militarization of the state in Africa.

A comparison of youth survival strategies in the present also allows us to discern similarities and (dis)junctures in transnational youth mobilizations for democracy, as well as how they see their own location (or dislocation) within these projects. It may also permit future generations in both sites to further recognize their conjoined fate(s) and its implications for each other's lives. The continual approximation of Brazil and Africa, I have suggested, means that these youth are increasingly entrusted with democracy and economic empowerment for the other, and the reshaping of what this may look like for the days to come.

DEMOCRACY AND NEOLIBERALISM

DEMOCRACY IS ONE OF THOSE terms which signal a commendable egalitarian objective that most people would generally agree with, but that has been appropriated in so many forms that its etymological implications and practical usage often remain at odds with each other. In its pervasive use (and cooptation), it is at once tactile and (extremely) elastic. The Oxford English Dictionary states that democracy is 'a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives' (OED, 2014). This definition points towards what is often considered the hallmark of democracy and democratization: frequent elections. Furthermore, the collapsing of economic borders and the resulting unfettered commodification of goods and services that are central to our neoliberal present, are also increasingly taken as a metonym for democratic ideals.

While such applications of democracy, elections and *'laissez faire'* economics, are widespread in the recent histories of both Kenya and Brazil, the majority of the young people interviewed for this paper did not feel that they were in fact living in a democracy, and those who did often added that it was only for a rich minority and not for the majority of the population that included them. As more than one young Brazilian and Kenyan interviewee articulated unhesitatingly,

'it is not practiced here'. Therefore, while there was consensus that a fundamentally participatory form of politics was a good idea, they did not recognize it in their environment(s). Moreover, they added that when it did ostensibly appear, democracy did not hit the ground in ways that took them in, and therefore, its various adoptions in the public sphere left them curious about its real definition and intent. This discordance between ideas of democracy and the way it emerges locally contrasts with its popularity over the last few decades; the local and global optimism that 'third world' locations were taking up such, presumably, participatory and non-hierarchical political practice, versus its actual face on the ground. Highlighting these discrepancies Caldeira and Holston (1999) document that since the 1980s more than fifty states have adopted political democracy, and also argue that it has become 'a global value adopted by the most diverse societies' (Caldeira and Holston, 1999: 691). Despite the energetic uptake of political democracy, there are vast contradictions in its localized conduct and particularly in regards to the actual 'civil component of citizenship' which is pursued and that strongly differs to that which is inhered by the term democracy (see also Tagle, 2008). With particular reference to Brazil, Caldeira and Holston (1999) term this broad inconsistency 'disjunctive democracy', and argue that it is due to Western emphasis on political democratization as opposed to a 'consolidation of democracy that requires social and cultural changes [and] which escape the analysis of this narrow political perspective' (Caldeira and Holston, 1999: 691-692).

Youth confusion about democracy is further aggravated by the fact that many, and perhaps most, political parties and organizations in both Kenya and Brazil reference this form of governance in either their names or public discourse. They do this while seeking to enact particular social relations and forms of governing that cannot all possibly imply and lead to the same political goal. In Brazil, for instance, there are at least five distinct active political parties, of quite different political leanings, that include democracy (in various iterations) in their party name.[1] In Kenya, there are at least thirteen such parties[2] and likely many more due to the 'ephemeral nature of political

1 Some of these parties, which vary along the political spectrum, are: *Partido Social Democrático (PSD), Demócratas (DEM), Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB), Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB),* and the *Partido Social Democrata Cristão (PSDC).*

2 These include: the Democratic Party of Kenya (DP), Forum for the Restauration of Democracy in Kenya (FORD-Kenya), Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Wiper Democratic Movement (WDM-K), United Democratic Forum Party (UDFP), Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Maendeleo Democratic Party (MDP), among others.

parties' in the country (Cheeseman et al., 2013: 6). In light of these appropriations of democracy, it is important to raise the question: what can young people actually understand about 'democracy' if it is seemingly integral to many separate political formations that may share very little in terms of ideology but which tend to, both tacitly and explicitly, exclude real youth participation? Furthermore, what can be made of these forms of 'democratic governance'—pervasive in both Brazil and Kenya—that anchor regimes responsible for the ongoing and increasing marginalization of this generation? As one interviewee in Salvador said:

> Democracy is a type of governing that is open to all—at least it is theoretically like this. But for us in the black community that reality has not been extended. We live in a democracy, but an imaginary democracy, illusory democracy. We black youths do not have access to our basic rights, unlike a young middle-class white person who has access to the best schools, they have all the necessary financial conditions for life and have so much knowledge of the world; they who live their whole life in a private school, travelling […] Anyway, it is quite different from our reality as black youths from the periphery. But it is even more complicated for us to access a college and try to adjust into other spaces where there are young people who have had everything in life (Caroline, Interview October 1, 2014).

Caroline's assertion above reveals that for her the democracy which is said to exist in Brazil is no democracy at all, particularly as it has failed to secure even the most basic rights for the majority of people. It is, in her words, 'illusory' or 'imaginary'; a play of light. Furthermore, in connecting fundamental economic and social conditions to her ideas about democracy she highlights a more material conception of this mode of governance, one that was also emphasised by all of the interviewees. For them this should be a political practice that guarantees them fundamental socio-economic rights—food, waged employment, equal access to schools and freedom from state violence, and that allows them to have presents and futures with these certainties. It is due to these multiple reflections and configurations of democracy—from those in formalized public space to those in the young *periferias* of Salvador—that I do not present a single working definition of this term. Instead, I attend ethnographically to what is presented here as the reasons for why young people do not see democracy in their contexts, and also take these to gesture towards (when it is not explicitly mentioned) what they see as real democratic ideals and practices. It is important to reassert that these youth rarely referenced their own actions as being democratic, but indicated, very clearly, why they did not feel that

they were living in a democratic milieu. Their ideas rub up against the discourses and practices of democracy that have become established in their mainstream national political environments; fora that uphold the end of dictatorships, frequent elections and the promulgation of new constitutions as symbols of a vibrant democratic present.

This is not to say that the ideas that these young people present about democracy must be different from some of the views normalized in mainstream political fora, but to suggest, rather, that their praxis of it is often different. This, however, is not just a difference between ideology and praxis. I argue instead that their temporary and permanent staging of what they see as this political ideal may intersect with, or may wholly differ from, key democratic metonyms such as 'elections' or the 'rule of law.' And while they are, to an extent, fine with what are taken as its traditional propositions mentioned above, at the same time they extend them to assert their generations' priorities. They do not celebrate rubber stamped procedural democracies, of mere election acclaim, which do 'more harm than good' (Victor, personal communication, 2014).

Listening to the remarks by Kenyan and Brazilian youth (in these interviews and beyond—in songs, murmurings, ruminations, and in events like the Occupy Parliament protests in Kenya and the transport protests in Brazil in 2013), there is much dissatisfaction with the present, which, as we argue above, is often characterized broadly as democratic and neoliberal. Recognizing that much of the tenor of this article would seem to indicate that the youth of Salvador and Nairobi do not feel that they are living in a democratic moment, my ethnography of both, what is visible (their social conditions) and often invisible (their ideas, desires and projections for the future), addresses the point that while notions of democracy may not always differ between youth and an older political class the youthful embodied practices enacted for more egalitarian living conditions may be very different from those in what is normatively understood to constitute the political sphere proper. It is due to these differences, contradictions, and at times similarities in local conceptions and practices of 'democracy' that ethnography becomes an indispensable tool in localizing the situations of those who are seen to be the most excluded from it. Ethnography will also allow for a more vivid understanding of the 'tactical' and 'subaltern' forms of political agency (Podder, 2015) that obtain in both Brazil and Kenya. Making visible these practices in/of the everyday also allows us to expand and give more qualities to the social meanings of what counts as political and democratic. Intentionally working with this confusion, I do not give a working definition of democracy but rather unpack the ethnograph-

ic data to reveal themes in what young people take as democratic practice(s), as well as the critical potentiality of its reconfigurations for their own future(s).

Neoliberalism on the other hand, in contrast to democracy, was a term that very few youth in both locations had ever heard of. Unlike democracy, it has not been sufficiently established in the glossary of local discourse to emerge as an axis through which young people—particularly those who are less educated and poor—can use to orient their lives. Nonetheless, tracing the multi-scalar and multi-temporal effects of diverse neoliberal economic interventions on the lives of these young people in marginalized urban spaces helps us map out, if not the situated meanings of this term, then certainly its manifestations. In this way, we recognize the apparent overstatement of the importance of the term globally, as Thorsen and Lie (2007) have argued, while still identifying the grave impact of what constitutes neoliberal policy in both Kenya and Brazil. From the retrenchment and unemployment of their parents (and typically themselves as well) to high tuition fees, transport and food prices, we can trace the effects that the expansion of neoliberal horizons have had on the trajectories of young people in both of these places. Cognizant of this disproportionate effect on this generation, one Kenyan youth stated that 'neoliberalism affects the youth most because you find that if you privatize an organization people will lose their jobs, and it is the youth. And this is what makes them get into drugs and crime' (Muthuri, interview August 29, 2014).

As with democracy, then, I am less interested in developing a working definition of neoliberalism—as argued above it is not a term that is a 'seamark' in the lives of young people—but rather to use what can analytically be taken as its spatial and temporal formations, and in doing so to interrogate how it has moulded the lives of the young people in question. Pursuing such a trajectory, neoliberalism can be interpreted, at once, as a 'social catastrophe' which 'mercantilizes all social rights', or in another young person's eyes (for whom it was a recognizable category): 'I don't see neoliberalism bringing a *praça* where people can go with their children' (S, personal communication September 14, 2014). By resisting a working definition of neoliberalism and, instead, teasing out its norms and nuances through upholding multiple experiences of it, I would like to privilege all of these diverse perspectives that give meaning(s) to this term on the ground.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research builds on work that I have been fortunate to do and reflect on over the last eight years in both Kenya and Brazil. To un-

derstand in more the complicated ways youth experiences with democracy and neoliberalism, my research assistants and I were able to conduct interviews and do participant observation, both formally and informally, with thirty-five youth in Brazil and Kenya. These young people are all from marginalized areas, and are representative of different genders, educational backgrounds and, more particular to Kenya, ethnicities. Moreover, during the research process we also built on our own experiences of being young in these two countries, which, in our different embodiments, is both similar as well as distinct in ways that will become clear below.

The kinds of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) associated with ethnographic work were indispensable to this project as consistent review allowed for patterns to surface from the qualitative data that upheld the importance of all matter in the everyday experiences of young people. We also collected short life histories of participants and the gathering of brief biographies during these interviews, and guided loosely by research questions,[3] allowed for a deeper study into how the present moment, broadly categorized as neoliberal and democratic, shapes the lives of poor urban youth in both Brazil and Kenya. In addition, they helped clarify the various shades of class, race and gender that persist in—and are transformed by—these changed settings.

Throughout this research exercise I also paid close attention to the mediums of creative life such as songs, poetry and dramaturgy that many young people use to express themselves—all phenomena that give intensely affective insights into both what shapes them most acutely as subjects, and, also, their ideas about political life. Furthermore, I followed the various 'evenemential' displays of their dissatisfaction in both Kenya and Brazil (for example, the *passe livre* and anti-World Cup protests in Brazil, and the Occupy Parliament and anti-tuition fee hike protests in Kenya). Having friends, acquaintances and colleagues who were involved in some of these demonstrations, I was able to have extensive conversations about the significance of these movements and the deep underlying issues and frustrations from which they emerged. Literature both academic and non-academic supported and informed these musings and offered broader

3 This research was guided by five key questions in and which informed the interview process. These are: 1) *What do youth think about their lives*? 2) *What kind of individual and collective struggles (even in organizations/movements/groups) do they enter in to make their lives better?* 3) *What do they think of democracy*? 4) *Have they ever heard of neoliberalism*? *If so what are their thoughts*? And finally, 5) *What important messages and strategies for bettering the future would they share with their peers in Brazil /Kenya and elsewhere*?

historical, geographic and anthropological moorings. Throughout his process, I acknowledged the necessity to be critically reflexive of my own position as a middle class Kenyan female who could, potentially at least, be read as one kind of material representation of the neoliberal democracy under investigation.

I believe it is irresponsible not to be aware of this positioning and of the tensions that this can produce in any research endeavour. I am confident, however, that the mixed methods approach employed, building as it does on significant amounts of time spent in both countries, participation in youth practices, and the privileging of self-narration in the life histories allowed the voices of these young Kenyans and Brazilians to come through. This is particularly important in light of current state practices that disregard their expressions and survival efforts, and often in more violent ways than previous non-democratic regimes.[4]

NAIROBI / *NAIROBBERY* / *NAIBEGGARY* / *NAI-ROB-ME* / GREEN CITY IN THE SUN

What follows is a brief history of Nairobi, which is overlaid with historical events from Kenya's past in order to contextualize the city and the social and politico-economic forces which continue to shape it.

The city of Nairobi is, in many ways, central to the modern history of Kenya. Situated half way between Kampala and Mombasa, Nairobi was originally considered a mere stop on the way to serving more important British interests of commerce and colonization in Uganda. White's (1990) brief historicization of this Kenyan metropolis confirms that it was formed in 1899 when the railhead reached 'the place of cool waters'—*enkare nyrobi*, as it was known by the Maasai.

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4 Authors like Silva de Almeida (2002) and Caldeira and Holston (1999) talk about the significant increase in violence in Brazil since the end of the dictatorship and the establishment of 'democracy.' The increase in both state and other forms of violence takes on a particular gravity for those who are young, poor, black and *favelada,* and is coupled with the 'precarious' structural social situation that Paixao (2004) examines. This is also evidenced in Kenya and some of these trends are mentioned earlier in this paper. Highlighting this proliferation in youth killings by police and other state machinery in Kenya since the reinstitution of 'democracy,' one interviewee whose brother was killed by the police said to me: 'if you want to know how many people are killed by the police go and ask the city mortuary how many police vans come by every day' (G, personal communication November 24, 2014). This is a very grave testament to the frequency and normalization of state violence, and one that that lies in sharp contrast to the state's claims (and the claims made for it by others) that it upholds democratic ideals.

After 1899, efforts were soon directed towards creating order from this savannah landscape, as it was to be the initial location of permanent European occupation. This ordering was necessary to create an outpost that would facilitate resource extraction and the creation of a sunny, and incorrigibly, British home away from home. It is important to note that while this city was 'new,' it grew from accretion as many of its future sites were built on, and grew from, existing African villages such as *Kileleshwa* and *Buruburu*; locations that retain their names to this day (White, 1990).

By 1901, the city had eight thousand people, and in 1906, it had thirteen thousand residents of primarily African, Indian and European origin. This growth in the urban population, and principally the African demographic, had much to do with a series of catastrophes that preceded and followed the establishment of Nairobi in 1899. Especially important in this regard were the rinderpest scourges of 1889 and 1901 that decimated large stocks of cattle throughout the country, provoking increased urbanization as many came to the city to find some form of material sustenance with which they hoped to, eventually, replenish these losses (White, 1990: 30).

In addition, others came to Nairobi to raise money for the hut tax which was first imposed in 1902 by the colonial administration, and were also escaping from famine, dispossession and the changing social relations of the time provoked by the relentless incorporation of rural African life, public and intimate, into a capitalist economy. Due to the variety of their motivations, as well as the surveillance and hostility, they faced while in the city, many of these migrants did not always stay in Nairobi.

A number of those who remained and shaped both the geography and social relations in this urban were imperial African military forces from other British 'outposts' such as Sudan and Ghana. These soldiers were brought to Kenya as military regiments during the First and Second World War. It is also important to note that many of the earliest African settlers in Nairobi were female sex workers who came to the city to 'dig with their backs' so that their primarily rural, though increasingly urban, households could be sustained (White, 1990). In this capacity, they accumulated enough to build houses that were both their sites of work and the rental abodes of migrant workers. Furthermore, by performing somewhat 'spousal' roles to the men who visited them, they were able to ensure that the male migrant working class—who really were the majority of the population of Nairobi albeit on the margins—could stay in the city. These roles accommodated some of the established gendered needs of these male migrants who would desire less and less to go back to family life in

the rural areas; a situation acknowledged by the colonial state with mixed and fluctuating sentiment.

European settlement was encouraged by the protectorate's second commissioner, Sir Charles Eliot (1901-4), as Mother England was anxious to get back debt accrued from building the railway and, concomitantly, also to extend the reaches of the British empire (White, 1990: 35). This settlement was bolstered by narratives of a 'white man's country'; of abandon and lordship over natives and nature (Jackson, 2011). As a result, by 1914, the core of this 'green city in the sun' became primarily European, and this was only to change during the years that marked the dawn of independence. The South Asian descendants, the 'colonized middle' (Myers, 2003), were brought to Nairobi as, primarily, indentured labourers to build the railway. They were also the 'in between' class in the colony. In this regard, phenotypically, socially, geographically and commercially, they were to be important 'buffers', employees of empire who, for their most part, could be used as such by virtue of their 'mid-level subject positions' (Myers 2003:27).

As mentioned above, and similar to other African cities established from within the British imperial enterprise, Nairobi was imagined as a tabula rasa, a terra nullius, which necessitated an ordering that would render it legible to those who now occupied this space. Towards these ends, the resultant architectural, infrastructural, and administrative organization also made imperative racial compartmentalization and surveillance. While, to an extent, postcolonial Nairobi was to be de-racialized, the displacement, immiseration, and discontent that independence was meant to have quelled continues unabated to the present; is material and affectively layered in the topography of the city. Therefore, the postcolonial African city, while engulfed in a myriad of political, social and economic orientations that go off in many directions, nevertheless, is oriented by these origins; still remains a site for the exercise of the dominance of the state as it was in the colonial period. Related, while the threats of displacement have always loomed large for many of the city's 'informal' settlement residents, these took on a more pronounced gravity since the 1980s. This is as land in the city gradually became a more obvious interface for the conjunction of politics, ethnicity, neoliberalism and generational contestations (Klopp, 2008; Obala and Mattingly, 2013). As a result, this city remains a site of continual battles; proxy or stated, democratic or otherwise.

As argued above, Nairobi—or whatever playful moniker it goes by these days—has not fully ruptured itself from the coloniality of its past. Scholars have shown that the discriminatory racial,

classed, and gendered ideals that underscored these spatial practices are still easily recognized in the city's organization (see Hake, 1976; Charton-Bigot, 2010; De Lame, 2010). As a consequence, Nairobi remains a city replete with colonial scaffoldings, while at the same time immersed in postcolonial daring, polyphony and excess—a type of 'postcolonial pastiche' that, like its monuments, borrows and is inspired from multiple and contradictory histories (Larsen, 2011, 2012).

For its residents, then, it becomes a city that is both yielding and unyielding, an urban sphere where as many doors are open as are closed and where all sorts of miracles of survival take place for the majority of its three million inhabitants. In this regard, and as Hake (1976) and De Lame (2010) describe, in its postcolonial incarnation Nairobi is both a place of unimaginable prosperity and concomitantly a brash 'self-help city' of 'don't-die survival'. It is then simultaneously conjured as 'Nairobbery', 'Nai-beggary' and 'Green city in the sun'; an abundance of seemingly incongruous monikers that have become etched in the landscape, and which charge it with much material and psychic cadence.

Its various geographies can signal environs that look like they were modelled on the rolling pastures of an English countryside complete with residences that replicate the pomp and pageantry of antiquated British nobility. At the same time, Nairobi is a city that breeds hypermodern architectures that mimic those in other neoliberal urban territories, and whose incidence is only set to increase with the gradual implementation of the recently proposed Integrated Urban Development Master Plan for the city of Nairobi 2014-2030 (NIUPLAN).[5] These present and proposed constructions—seemingly from a familiar and futuristic neoliberal architectural toolbox—include, for example, skyscrapers, hotels, factories, super highways and shopping malls. Nonetheless, when both of these colonial and hypermodern architectures end, often abruptly, they give way to the many jarring realities of poor urban life in Nairobi. These numerous areas of exclusion are the immiserated parts of the city where, as Muehlebach (2013) observes, things 'fall apart again' and again, and where the population density per acre of land is, at least, twenty times those of more affluent neighbourhoods (Hake, 1976: 27). Furthermore, Si-

5 The proposed NIUPLAN 2014-2030 is the second post-independence master plan for Nairobi. The preliminary study for this plan was supported by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). In its hallowed focus on the investment potentials of the city, this plan definitely emerges from within prevailing neoliberal imperatives, which have been privileged by the Kenyan state since the 1980s.

mone (2004) has shown that this 'inner city' is typically a place where rarely any significant urban policy or programming has taken place for a considerable amount of time (Simone, 2004: 423). And which is, similar to Brazil, seen as the justification for the 'city of walls' and 'fortified enclaves' that Caldeira (1996, 1999) discusses; erected by those who seek to be furthest away from all that may emanate from these sullying places long associated with crime, darker skin, poverty, and lack of order (Alves and Evanson, 2011: 23).

It is from these neighbourhoods that our young Kenyans come. They come shaped by the coeval histories of both colonialism and the 'lost decades' of neoliberalism. This most recent neoliberal period is one which was stewarded by Daniel Arap Moi, the second and longest serving president of Kenya, and continued by subsequent 'democratic' administrations. Their narratives below will demonstrate how young lives are fashioned and suffused by complex political, economic and spatial histories that are made worse by neoliberal democracy and its attendant violence(s), such as the penalization and surveillance of poor urban populations (Wacquant, 2001; Giroux, 2006: 181). Additionally, these experiences also explicitly describe the struggles that youth enact for both the present and future, and the many hopeful and imaginative survival tactics that they want to share with their peers whose lives are also solidly embedded within both local and global neoliberal and democratic frontiers.

'DEMOCRACY IS FOR THE RICH'[6] VOICES FROM YOUTH IN KENYA

The individual excerpts below are presented as one continuous narrative although they were responses to particular semi-structured questions asked during the interview process. These questions influenced the sequence of information generated and therefore a pattern, shaped by these questions, will be evident in the accounts below. While some questions differed in each city, the bulk of these, guided by the three research questions mentioned earlier and attended to in both Kenya and Brazil, were:

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. How long have you lived there?
4. What do you do to make a living?
5. What is life like?

6 Gachihi Gachihi, interview October 15, 2014.

6. Is it better or worse than before?
7. What is life like for youth in your area?
8. Have you ever heard of democracy and if so what are your thoughts?
9. Have you ever heard of neoliberalism and if so what are your thoughts?
10. Do you think democracy and neoliberalism are good things? For you? For youth?
11. What do you do as an individual or in a group to make life better? Why do you do it?
12. What dreams do you have for the future?
13. What advice, message or strategy for making life better would you give to other youth in Kenya/Brazil and around the world?

Seventeen interviews were conducted in Nairobi however, only five are used at length below. Two are from females, and three are from male interviewees. The other youth narratives are referred to in various places throughout this paper and were also central to the data analysis process. It is important to note that most of these conversations were conducted with youth from various poor urban settlements in the East of the city, particularly in *Mathare*. Other participants were also drawn from *Ruai, Dandora, Huruma* and *Kariobangi*. I have sought to contain, to the extent that I am able to, the actual phrasings that were used by the youth, and believe that as they are they still allow for their ideas to come across; for the sentience of their lived experiences, and nuanced expressions of these, to emerge.

FRANCIS

I have lived here in Mathare for about 12 years. I sell phone accessories. Life is okay if you have a business like mine. I can say it's not good and not bad, it's just fair. Not bad. If you can have the basic needs you can say life is not so bad, but given a chance I would wish to live a better life than the one I have. Life is not enough. For youths life is hard because people are engaging in criminal activity because of poverty, lack of funds, idleness and lack of jobs. If you don't have money you find yourself engaging in some bad activities, it's not by choice. You need money to survive. You find someone with a kid and he or she doesn't know what to do and the family needs to eat. Because of this they are forced to engage in unlawful activities, because the government is not helping them. Life in the past was simple because I used

to live with my parents and everything was being provided for, and so life was easy.

Crime was so high in the past, but in the present there are some jobs created by the government such as *Kazi Kwa Vijana* [Jobs for Youth] which have reduced the crime rate, and so life has changed a little bit for the better. Still, even with these jobs, the life of a youth is difficult because they have to do things contrary to what the government likes; selling marijuana and robbery, and that takes them to prison. And that is the life the youths are living, most of the youths; selling marijuana, stealing and anything that can lead you to prison.

I have heard of the word democracy while watching the television, but it is not practiced here. My understanding is that with democracy things are done fairly; you are free to do anything and your rights are not infringed. I have no idea about neoliberalism. From what you explain, yes, there are instances where such things take place. For instance, there is a man called Waweru who was contracted by the Nairobi Water company to employ the youths of this area. What he did, he travelled to his rural village and brought youths from there here and gave them the jobs. The youths from this area were supposed to benefit but because of him and other women, he decided to make only a few people, who he chose, benefit. If I say we have democracy, I mean in Kenya and not in Mathare because that doesn't exist here. When meetings are called, there are people that have a bigger say than others [do] even if they are not making sense, and if you try and express your opinion it may not be taken into consideration. For example, the individuals of one group who are working in conjunction with village elders have more say here than anyone else. There is that connection between the village elder and these people which makes them think that they are superior, and so many people don't like them. One of the members of the county assembly has the right plan but he has never gone to all the parts of Mathare to find the right and trustworthy people. Also those that were working with the previous governments are old but they are still here, and they are not giving the youth the chance to work with this government.

To make my life better I am saving so I can expand my business, raise my kids well and make my family happy. To start my business I was given a loan by my parents. It was hard to pay it back. I used to pay back the loan with the profit from the business and consume the remaining money, and so saving was a problem at the beginning and expanding the business was difficult due to the lack of finances. Also I was selling very few products and lending frequently to customers, and sometimes some customers disappear when they know they have a big debt. Tracing them is hard, and this is a challenge.

I am part of *Ostrom youth group*. There are things we have to do; if we get donors, we supply sanitary pads to girls in another area called *Kosovo* because we want to save the youth. We are at the initial stages of things, but we are currently doing savings. We registered a few months ago and we are done writing the constitution. I joined the group because we say it is good to help the youth of Mathare. When the group expands, we will create jobs through, for example, garbage collection which will ensure that the youths are not idle. Our group faces challenges like funding. When you tell people to contribute, they find it hard to donate because they are jobless and they only have the little which they get and which they eat. So, the group is still stagnant.

My dreams for the future are to be a successful businessman and have a happy family. I also encourage people to join groups and involve themselves in things that can help the community both as individuals and as a group. I know life is hard, but patience is more important. It may take long to bear fruits but finally it will come.

ACHIENG

I am 25 and have lived in *Huruma* since I was born. I do a lot of things; I am a blogger and a community facilitator. Life is very hard, and if you can't afford the basic needs it looks very hard. Initially we used to buy some basic needs, like milk and bread, with 50 shillings but now you cannot buy them with that much, you have to add more money. If you go shopping with a thousand shillings, you cannot buy so many things. You will end up with few things in your basket.

Back then, I was young and I used to get everything from my parents, and so I thought life was easy. Now I am a grown up and live alone and so I have to do a lot to make ends meet. People have to squeeze themselves with the little they are earning, and saving is very hard because people use all of their money. Life is hard now compared to previously. It has changed.

Youths are people between the ages of 18 and 40. They make up the biggest percentage of Kenya. The job market is not taking youth because they think they are not ready for work. A lot of youths are graduating and they are not getting work or a job in the profession they qualified for. Those that did not go to school are engaging in drugs, robbery and in some indecent work that is not paying. By indecent work I mean that young girls are engaging in prostitution in nearby estates, and the men are carrying heavy loads, collecting bottles and washing them to sell, and so they make a living from that. The life of a Kenyan youth is not okay, they are struggling.

From the word democracy I understand that it means having your freedom, freedom of speech, and being included in decision making.

It is my democratic right to vote. If someone is democratic it means their human rights are not infringed. Not everyone is democratic because we just had our by-election in Mathare and not everyone came out to vote; they don't have love for the country. A lot of youths cannot be considered democratic if they are being recruited to join *al-shabaab* and then they return home to terrorize their country. In Kenya, the only people that think they are democratic are the politicians and the rich. Whatever they are saying is being implemented, because they are people with a say in the government.

I have heard of neoliberalism. It is where the resources of a country are being shared only with specific persons. For example specific resources which are used specifically for specific people. The specific people will always benefit, like the rich and not the poor. For example, in Kenya *Kibera* and *Mathare* are known to be the places of people who are not well off, and *Runda* and *Kileleshwa* are for the rich. It is the rich who will always benefit.

Democracy is a good thing if everyone is included. It is good depending on whose side it is favouring. If it is a poor person being protected it is good. Like if there is a bill in parliament discussing the people from the informal settlement it is bad if it does not focus on us, but if it focuses on the people from the slum it is good. If it is for the few it is bad. Democracy and neoliberalism affect the youth because they are the biggest percentage of the people in the country, and so the ideas of the youths should be included in all of these things.

I do a lot of things to make life better because you cannot sit down and expect life to be better, and so I have to work. Through the articles that I write, I am trying to bring the other picture of the slum that the media houses are not telling. When we appreciate the little that is there, we can't continue complaining; no matter how little we have we take with thanksgiving. If you go to other countries the same is happening, hardship is happening there and so we need to appreciate the little we have in our lives.

I am not satisfied with life and that's why I am striving hard. I am not in the position I want myself to be in. I have to work extra hard and read things that change my mindset. I belong to a group called *Madoya Tumaini Youth Group*. We formed the group after the post-election violence when people were divided along their tribal lines. And so, we saw the need of bringing them together because these were people who we had grown up with. We had not attained the age of voting and so we thought 'why are we even fighting amongst ourselves' especially when we can't even vote? So, we decided to come together and form a group.

Together we engage in garbage collection, planting of trees and bamboo plants, educating and counselling the young girls who are dropping out of school and training them in entrepreneurship and savings. We also partner with other groups and organizations to do advocacy. *Inuka* Kenya [a local NGO] asked our organization to mobilize youths so that they can educate them about the constitution, and especially on the referendum. We have been doing a lot of civic education and educating the youths and community about getting tested [for HIV/Aids] and the use of condoms. We have also been doing environmental advocacy; trying to inform them of the importance of keeping the environment clean. We also do this through clean ups.

The only leaders we put to task are our office bearers [MPs and members of county assemblies - MCAs], but we do not put national leaders to task. The only task we can do is voting them out however, most of the time you will find us talking without doing any actions. As an individual or a group, you can still put them to task through the use of social media and in this way make them answerable.

Young people in Kenya and the world should know that we are strong and so being the largest population we need to work when we are still young because we will not do it when we are aged, and we need to make a stronger foundation for our kids. The youths need to think beyond garbage collection, car washing and pulling of carts. We need to think big! If you are only thinking about these kinds of jobs, which I call petty, the community starts thinking that we are not responsible and they should not look up to us as responsible citizens. We don't need to do petty jobs. Think big and you will act big.

Furthermore, the government should reduce the fees for starting a business to ensure that everyone invests. The levies should not be higher than the capital that one is able to use to start and save. Also the business environment should be friendly and welcoming, especially to starters; where I am sure of my safety and that of my goods. Now the government in power promised to create jobs for the youth but still the older people who are tired are still working, while the youths graduating are not consumed by the job market. And whatever the government has done it is not to my expectation. What they should do is that 50% of youths should be guaranteed employment, and then the rest should be engaged in entrepreneurship.

But so many youths are dropping out of school! The youths are not given the chance and older people have a bad perception of the youth. Also many have not gone to school and so that prevents young people from doing business. The older generation thinks that youths are not qualified and the youths think they are fine to do it all. The

older are the more experienced; they are the owner or manager who look at you like you are young and not qualified when you go and look for a job, and they also judge you due to the area where you come from.

For my future I would like to get married, have kids and take them to good schools. I would also like to invest in a good business, and be a good citizen.

MARY

My name is Mary. I am 30 years old and I am from *Kiamaiko*. I am a salonist [hairdresser] and do a few other jobs here and there. Life is hard for people like us who are not employed. Still we go on working and the little I get I consume all of it, yet I am expected to save so that I can pay rent.

The male youth are at risk because they need to be smart and live a life beyond their normal life. And because they don't have a job, they are forced to go stealing and that's where they are gunned down. For the girls they go looking for a job and then they end up getting pregnant and sick; some are even involved in prostitution. Young girls are widowed because the people they call their husbands are gunned down when they go stealing. The youths are dying; they get killed and soon we will not have that age group. So life is very hard.

I know of democracy as a political party. I only know of the Democratic Party, but I don't know very much. I hear politicians say we are bringing democracy to the community. They mean that they are going to bring good to people in the community. This is usually during political campaigns. In these campaigns, they usually say democracy which I think means good life. To my mind, neoliberalism sounds like something rebellious and seems to mean 'people who are against what is there.' I don't know if that is what it means. Democracy is a good thing but neoliberalism isn't. Democracy means peace in the community but neoliberalism is not [peace].

To make life better I do a little bit of work here and there. Myself and a few girls came together to form a group. We go to houses and ask to wash their clothes. We ask a lot of girls to come and join us, so in our area girls are busy with these jobs.

I have registered the group. We are also creating awareness on health rights; we empower young women and inform the youth on what they are supposed to do. We do follow up on gender issues or community issues through the proper channel. And we also get into the details of these young women's lives. My dreams are to live a better life, for the community […] other members to live a better life. For me this means a life where I can receive help from the people around

me and also where we can be helping each other. The advice I have for youths in Kenya and the world is don't sit down and wait to be helped, stand up and do a lot. Look for a job that you are capable of doing without being pushed or being choosy.

THUO

I am selling fruit juice and I am a computer programmer. I did IT and programming and so we as a group take contracts from schools and companies; we make websites for them then we receive the pay. Life to me, personally, is fair depending on what I do and my determination. Life was a bit harder in the past because there were no resources, but at the moment there are resources that NGOs and the government have chipped in, though not to our expectation. I mean if you have an idea you can implement it with the funds from the government, and though hard to access them it is better than earlier days. Life is not good for youths where I am from because most of the youths don't know how to make it in life; they don't have the mentality and they don't have ideas. They are not educated. They engage in drugs and theft and so their lifestyle is not good.

I have heard of the term democracy from former president Kibaki. I have never heard of it anywhere else. It means having openness, transparency and fairness and respecting the rights of the people. It is taking place though the effect is very little and hard to feel. Its effect is so low, such that you can't feel it happening.

I have never heard of the term neoliberalism. If people are not involved […] it looks like a government issue yet it is supposed to be shared with all the citizens. It is like there is barrier with the information; it doesn't reach citizens. It affects me as an individual because it is my right to receive information yet it doesn't reach me, and through government engagement with us there may be resources that can come and help the community. And so to me it hinders a lot if there is no information. Now is the time when democracy and neoliberalism are picking up. A lot of people have not understood the two. It is high time the government engages the people and educates them on the two things and how they should use them.

If you compare, accessing funds was harder in the olden days, and now getting loans from banks is easy, and also the loan rates have been lowered. The NGOs are here to engage the people with different ideas, and so as an individual, I take advantage of that and take part in their different activities.

I am the manager of Ostrom youth group. We do many things such as have a football academy, and we expose people through exchange programs. We also visit the sick in Kenyatta hospital, we

engage the youth through educating them on the effects of drugs, the dangers of pre-marital sex and we support them to start a business by giving funds and encouraging them. To run the group we contribute money amongst ourselves that comes from group activities, and we have donors as well. We are now encouraging more and more youth to come and save. We also do business, and the business we do is we all contribute some money that goes to the business account for individual and group projects. We also get funds from donors in the Netherlands. Everyone is involved in decision-making, not just the office bearers, and we reach consensus by debating amongst the members.

My dreams are to have a big business around the central business district (CBD) and own a house and ranch. If the project grows, we expect to engage the young people that are growing now because they are the future. I hope in the future that we as a group will be able to change the lives of the young people by having on board a large percentage of youths from here. What I would share with other youth is that life is you and it is not hard; it is all about how you are keeping busy and the activities you do in life. Really, you can be what you want to be. It doesn't matter where you come from or where you are; no matter your background or your money abilities. Life is about you and what you want to be in life.

The government plays a role in making the youths engaged and their lives better, but right now very minimally. I would like to urge the government to involve the youths more through other youth activities. They can do this by creating chances and resources.

OTIENO

My name is Otieno and I am 28. I live in *Madoya* which is the slum that is neglected. I am a community worker and I am also working with the organization that is called the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention (JCCP) as a security focal person. I report security incidents that happen in the community. We are reporting these incidents to avoid repeating the 2007/2008 election violence scenario. I also run a small restaurant with my dad. I am also into activism, and I was part of the team that was fighting big people to stop land grabbing in our area. We did this with the help of Amnesty International organization. I was also part of *Bunge la Mwananchi* [the people's parliament].[7]

7 The people's parliament is a grassroots group of diverse Kenyans who come and meet under a tree in a public park in Nairobi, and talk about a variety of topical public issues. They have also been involved in various national advocacy campaigns. For more information, see: Kimari and Rasmussen (2010).

I feel like youth have been excluded from the main forms of governance. Also the agenda of employability is long gone from the government's agenda. Also if you look at the NGOs or the civil society they don't talk about the youth. It is a divide and rule scenario here so life is hard. I am taking a look at the future; in three years to come we will be struggling and the reason is because it will be a lot harder for the youth as there will be no employment. The government wants to retrench people. And the youth are lied to concerning the government tenders they were to be given.

The problem is also with the youths themselves, some are ignorant while others just wait for handouts. You find some youths just seated around while chewing *miraa* [khat] and they say that they will be owners of a storied building but they don't take the initiative to save! I think there should be awareness creation and advocacy. We sometimes hold community youth forums but not often in Madoya. There is one in *Ngei* on community policing and the other is done by JCCP. There is not always a youth forum in Madoya and so we usually go to the ones done in other places because the question is: who will attend in Madoya? As an individual, I can attend the forums, but my friends will ask how long it will take and if there will be some form of payment afterwards. I blame it on the NGOs that come here, play with our minds and then give us 500 shillings afterwards. This has made the public know that there is always money involved in these NGOs forums.

I am a member of a group though and the group is called *Tumaini Youth Group*. We have bathrooms that we rent to people, we sell water and now we make furniture using bamboo that we have planted along the river. We have tried as hard as we could to recruit people but the turnout is still poor in the group, maybe six or seven people. The reason for this is that we don't give money to people to work with us.

What should be done is that first, the government must take the initiative of looking into the welfare of the youth. That is looking into micro-finance, starting projects for the youth and giving the youth loans to start a business at no interest. The NGOs and civil society should also be helping. And they should not ask for funds from donors in the name of the youths, and do nothing for them. Like the African Youth Trust, they were here for maybe six weeks, made us fill out some forms and then they disappeared.

Life is 50/50. That is, some have jobs, some are active in business and income generating activities like shoe shining and running videos shows. But the others ones are just chewing miraa. Miraa is life to them and that's the reason why they get into crime.

I have heard of democracy yes, it's all about good governance; that is citizens being governed as they should and that the government gives an ear to the grievances of the people. Neoliberalism? Yes I heard about it from Professor Okoth Okomo when I attended a seminar on leadership and campaign strategies for six months, and he touched on some terminologies but he wasn't so clear on their meaning, so I still do not know the significance of neoliberalism.

I think we lack proper policies in that the policy or guidelines that are being used in the privatization process do not involve the ordinary citizen. The policies only benefit a few people, and even if you go to court, you will not win. What we need to do is look into the policies of the companies so that they don't benefit a few. Democracy is good for the youths but neoliberalism […] I think it is also good because the most important thing for us, the youth, is advocacy.

To make life better, as an individual, I create awareness like I told you earlier and I also pass employment information to the youth in my group. To be honest though, I don't see any real initiatives. For now, we create employment from the growing of bamboo and making furniture from the same bamboo. The youths we work with underwent some training and this helps us.

In the future I would like to see awareness creation for the youth, and the government taking initiative on the issue of youth employability even if it is not for all of the youths, but something to make the youths stop being idle. I have a dream that things will get better. Even Martin Luther had a dream that came to pass, but it depends on the time frame so probably in 20 years to come. In Kenya, the gap between the poor and the rich is so big and that's why we are ranked top ten in the world for income differences. And this is the government's failure. Look at the initiative that was taken by Mandela in South Africa? People now are at par with each other there. So we need leaders who are capable of pushing for reform, not just theirs but for the whole population.

Because there are no jobs, I would advise the youth to join micro-finance groups, as well as other groups. Like ourselves, we have a group of seven and we each contribute 70 shillings every week, and this enables us to access loans as low as 50,000 shillings. So long as we have a good business plan life will change. And it is not a must that you need a lot of money to start a big business. Joyce started as a charcoal seller but just look at where she is now. The only problem with the youth is that they want big things.

‘THE LIFE OF A KENYAN YOUTH IS NOT OKAY, THEY ARE STRUGGLING’

AS THE NARRATIVES ABOVE CONVEY, young people in Kenya are struggling. These are their experiences within the processes of democratization that have been ongoing for over twenty two years,[1] and one of the watershed events that marked the beginning and the supposed gains of this trajectory were the multiparty elections in 1992. While they have heard of the hegemonic democracy that pervades their national political spheres, and are often accused of threatening it, they have not felt in their lives. In contrast to its purported gains, for them it has opened up and is appropriated locally in ways that in practice have excluded them; it does not extend beyond the television. Whereas in its limited normative meaning and practice it is nevertheless still, taken to reference participation, representation, and fair

1 After a 10 year ban on other parties President Moi, in response to both local pressures from civil society groups and international pressure for ‘good governance’ that occurred in tandem with Structural Adjustment Programs, revoked the 1982 amendment in the Constitution that upheld single party rule. As a result, other non-state parties were finally allowed to contest in the 1992 general elections. However, despite the ability to run in these now ‘open’ elections, oppositions parties were only able to come to power ten years later in the 2002 elections when a coalition of political parties and civil society groups came together to form the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) and won these national elections.

elections etc., none of these has been part of the reality of the youth interviewed here.

Their life experiences also highlight the personal conditions of economic uncertainty which have worsened over the last few decades; a situation where basic amenities are no longer affordable and where life is 'not okay'. They say that these are realities force young people to engage in income generating practices, which make them even more vulnerable to repression from state forces. In mapping out the trajectory of this increasing hardship, Mary picks up on the particular moments when economic liberalization took on greater ascendance in Kenya, and this is in the mid to late 1980s during the Moi era. Her life bears witness to its harsh material power in the present. Registering these particular temporal moments, Mary says that:

> The little I get I can't even provide for my daily needs. Life has not been so fair. During the Moi regime, there was corruption and a few jobs here and there. But things are worse now; houses that we used to rent for 1,500 shillings inclusive of electricity and water now go for 2,500 shillings exclusive of water and electricity. Essential commodities like *unga* flour also have prices that are too high. When you go to school it is said that there is free education yet if you take the child to school there are things like books and tuition [after school curriculum studies] fees that you will be asked to pay. This makes education expensive even if it is meant to be free (Mary, interview October 1, 2014).

Mary and her peers are youth that live in, extending Benjamin's expression, the 'garbage heaps' of empire; the parts of Nairobi which are blatant signifiers of the myths of linear developmentalist ideals and in fact are their very ruins. These sites also dispute very manifestly the supposed prosperities that are said to emerge from a neoliberal political economy for they are neighbourhoods, which often have no water, sanitation or basic services. This dearth in fundamental provisions is also coupled with countless state violences, such as the normalization of shoot to kill policies[2] and which necessitate young life to be lived 'beyond normal life'. Consequently, whatever democracy they may have heard about, it is not here; the practices of the state in these neighbourhoods have not differed significantly from previous non-democratic regimes and are often much worse. Instead, as Achieng

2 While extra judicial killings by the police are normalized in the country and this is seen in the explicit 'shoot to kill' policy that police officers have been given at various moments in our history (for one example see Kagwanja, 2005: 107), very few human rights reports have been able to document the frequency and the full extent of these killings which occur in an ongoing manner.

documents, it is present only for those who have 'specific resources' who use them 'specifically for specific people' and only 'the specific people will always benefit, like the rich and not the poor' (Achieng, interview August 30, 2014).

Notwithstanding the absence of the rule of law in their lives, both individually and collectively these youth enact political practices, fragmented or sustained, in their day-to-day activities. These occur predominantly in those activities for basic economic survival, and which many refer to as their 'business' or 'savings group.' In these actions, while they assert and work for their rights, they do not explicitly reference democracy and continue in their own movements forward which outsiders could infer as the site of actual democratic practice (the bids to come together in groups, the privileging of local voices, the dialectic debating about alternative politics, consensus processes, amongst others). This reach for alternatives notwithstanding, they do not shy away from the normative democratic politics in their environment when it works for them. As one interviewee stated 'the only task we can do is voting them out' (Achieng, interview August 30, 2014). Therefore, through participating in elections and in civil society programmatic activities they engage in these recognized political spaces. However, these 'proper channels' are often resistant to the ways in which young people want to organize, and create obfuscations of additional bureaucracy, 'technocratic anti-politics' of a similar vain to those practised on shack dwellers in South Africa (Pithouse, 2006: 30), which can demoralize and prevent further youth engagement. Highlighting this Oguna, referring to his elected leaders, stated that:

> When some are elected, they think they are superior. If you tell them what the youths are facing they speak bad. They are not working for the youths. I mobilized youths to go to *Kariokor* to sermon the youth leaders and we were told to use the proper channel. This step was not successful and so we wait for the next election (Oguna, interview September 1, 2014).

For the most part however, both individually and collectively, these young people in Kenya indicate, in both thought and praxis, that the political change they envision and want to enact is one that can only happen when basic socio-economic rights are established; when life stops being 'hard' or has signs of improvement. In these uncertain conditions that are seen to impact even intimate dreams for the future ('I want to have a ranch and a family' and 'my dreams for the future are to have a successful business and a happy family' etc.) they engage in political work which is entwined with economic survival.

There are definitely many moments of being 'idle' of just 'chewing *miraa'* and of 'talking without actions'; of dreaming of owning a storied house but not 'saving' to get there and of lethargic reactions to any impetus due to rights and needs for support that have been spurned. Nonetheless, however long these moments endure, and this is impacted by factors such as class, gender, education and individual motivation, what is evident is that most youth are involved in work that can secure them from 'routine day to day contingencies' (Podder, 2015: 41; Honwana, 2012). What's more I argue, informed by the above narratives, that these survival engagements imagine and build towards a more substantive situational politics; one that would also be free of the killings that cause Mary to say: 'the youths are dying, they get killed and soon we will not have that age group'. In contrast to this current 'democratic moment' where I would argue that the most coordinated killing of young males since the Mau Mau[3] period has been witnessed (recall the case of the Mungiki youth and Somali and Muslim men discussed earlier), the political practices they want to put in place would end these violences. It would also be a moment where the indignities of lack of employment would be curtailed, and there would be the provision of *really* free education, affordable basic commodities and rent, access to loans and participatory decision making. This would happen within and without the institutionalized political structures—in a coming together of temporal and formal modalities that would be used to work towards these goals. Essentially, what they want and work for while is 'not practiced here' is bigger, and so it engenders a contemporary situation where, paraphrasing one interviewee, 'the only problem with youth is that they want big things' (Otieno, interview September 15, 2014), 'things' that are much bigger than democracy.

SALVADOR DA BAHIA, BRAZIL: THE 'CAPITAL OF HAPPINESS'

Like the relationship between Nairobi and Kenya, the history of Brazil is also deeply entwined with the foundation of its first capital Salvador da Bahia (Nobre, 2002: 110; Collins, 2013). This initial Brazilian metropolis was established in 1549 and the architectural legacies that resulted from its life as the foremost Portuguese South Atlantic commercial centre persist, and principally in the historical centre *Pelourinho,* now a UNESCO heritage site. These Iberian baroque ruins, colonial infrastructure, attest to the historical trajectories of the country

3 The Mau Mau was also known as the Kenya Land and Freedom Army and was the foremost military wing of the independence movement in Kenya. The Mau Mau were most active from the late 1940s until the late 1950s.

and which include the murder and displacement of millions of indigenous people, settler colonialism, slavery and deeply structured racial inequalities. The dual developments of this urban, demonstrated by the *cidade alta* (high city) and *cidade baixa* (low city), evidence the classed and racial materialities that emerged from all of these moments. Furthermore, I would argue that they confer another subterranean quality to the city that emerges from the hauntings of these combined moments, and with particular regard to the underground infrastructures and memories of enslavement that uphold the urban architecture.

Referring to Salvador, although attending to broader trends, Collins (2008) asserts that 'given the extent to which today's institutions, ethics, modes of interpretation, racial ideologies, and political economic structures emerged in relation to a colonial world, much of the physical and metaphorical landscape upon which we all tread is an imperial effect' (Collins, 2008: 283). The focus on Salvador therefore, while central to this paper, is also a medium through which to map out the history of Brazil that develops from the combined forces that constitute these imperial stamps, and which, akin to Nairobi, still have significant material power in the city today.

Not too long after Amerigo Vespucii landed in Bahia in 1501 and gave it its name, the slave trade to this part of the world was established. Via the British ships that carried enslaved Africans to the Americas these 'unfortunate arrivals' traversed the Atlantic and were brought to the North Eastern city that would later be known as Salvador. They came as the cargo and motor of these vessels and built an urban space, in sharp contrast to its name and despite the number of churches in its vicinity, which was never their saviour. It is their industry, blood and bondage, and that of their descendants, that created this colonial urban, the 'brown mother of Brazil', which has since contributed to every aspect of Brazil as we know it today (Paixao, 2004; Collins, 2013).

Salvador was the largest slave entry port in the Americas and it is principally through this harbour that Brazil received the largest number of enslaved Africans during the slave trade (Skidmore, 1990: 7; Sansone, 1998: 3; Graden, 2006: xix). Conservative estimates put the number who came to Bahia, between 1520-1850, at 4.4 million (Graden, 2006: 1). These Africans were forced to labour in the coffee, tobacco, sugar and cocoa plantations that made this region so important to Portugal.[4] From the late XVIII century, as the country

4 In the XVI and XVII centuries, Bahia became one of the world's great sugar centres due to the extensive plantation system which relied on slavery (Pierson, 1967: 7).

grew in size and other states began to establish themselves agriculturally, there was an internal slave trade that saw many enslaved Africans moved from the North East to the South when 'the foreign slave trade was closed and the growth of the coffee producing regions of southern Brazil' made imperative the procurement of additional forced labour (Degler, 1971: 38-39). It was in this same period that the capital was transferred further south to Rio (Collins, 2013: 167; Vasconcelos, 2006).

Notwithstanding the primacy of slavery in this region, this city of Salvador or *São Salvador da Bahia de Todos os Santos*[5] as it was initially christened was never meant to be a black city. To the great dismay of Dom Joao[6] of Portugal and many of his subjects, efforts to disperse the black population proved futile since the capital city of this new Portugal had considerable 'preponderance of the negro' (Pierson, 1967: 29). In fact after abolition, by virtue of the fervent national bids to undo the cruel history (ies) which had facilitated the presence of too many *negros,* it was said that blacks in Brazil would have had more luck entering 'the kingdom of heaven' than Brazil (Skidmore, 1974: 194). Associated with this, abolition, while had happened later than anywhere in the world, created indignant fervour about the possible 'radicalization of the abolitionist movement', and this fear had grave consequences for the Afro-Brazilian population (Paixao, 2004). A direct result of this, and as Paixao (2004) documents, is that 'drums, spiritism, faith healing and the African-Brazilian martial art called Capoeira were considered a crime', and 'criminal liability was lowered to 9 years of age' (Paixao, 2004: 746; and see also Reis, 2005).

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that with the dawning of the new republic in 1889, one year after emancipation, race became more keenly discussed in Brazil. The burgeoning social and political thought between 1888-1914 was filled with preoccupations (as well as disavowals of this preoccupation) with the race question (Skidmore, 1974: 118). During this time, in a bid to refashion itself from an ex-slavocracy into a country with the economic, political, social and cultural requisites of the 'modern' world, Brazil debated its future avidly. The emerging intelligentsia wondered, agitated, whether 'modern pro-

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5 In English, it means 'Holy Saviour of All Saints Bay'. It was so named after Amerigo Vespucii the Italian explorer who landed there on All Saints Day, November 1st 1501. Amerigo Vespucii also gave his name to the Americas, which initially only referred to Latin America.

6 Dom Joao was the king of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves from 1777 to 1825.

gress was meant only for white men in temperate zones' such as the US and France (Skidmore, 1974: IX). And the key motivating question that would fuel these debates for the next few years was: *how can we prepare for a future that looks likes Europe*?

One of the first solutions employed to attend to this national question was to attempt to look like Europe phenotypically (Skidmore, 1990: 124; Paixao, 2004). This was conducted through eugenic practices that were entrenched both in the constitution and immigration laws, as well as a Lombrosian criminology which linked phenotype to criminality—working to barbarize African descendants in Brazil and beyond[7] (Nascimento, 2007; Vargas, 2008). The Freyrian[8] pastoral scene of a racial democracy that was to become the 'basis for Brazil's self-portrait' and 'modern identity' from the 1930s onwards was very far from being realized (Skidmore, 1976, Hanchard, 1998:54; Paixao, 2004).

For Salvador, this meant that every notable growth period of the city reinforced a '*padrão periférica*'. This is an extension of the city by a fortification and augmentation of economic spatial divides where, as if often the case, each territory can assume different colours (Soares, 2009). An example of this is the Pelourinho district, which began as an imperial centre of whiteness in 1549, and at the end of the XIX century was incrementally being occupied by 'workers' and 'immigrants'. By 1940, engulfed in a period of decline, it was officially declared a 'red-light zone' (Collins, 2013: 167), and, at once, anthropologically, as the Black Rome (Sansone, 2000: 5).

On the national front, the post-world war period was marked by extended moments of both elected governments (1946-1964),

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7 In 1921, bolstered by claims that there was a racial democracy in Brazil, members of the Brazilian-America Colonization Syndicate, all of whom were black American, had a unique mission to set up a community in the 'racial democracy' so extolled by Freyre and his advocates. They planned this in order to escape the Jim Crow rule of law in Louisiana. Hindered at the outset, the dreams of a terrestrial paradise for these African descendants would never be realized. The reason, although they would not know it until much later, was that their skin colour was adjudged to be 'regressive' in the process of miscegenation, and that this posed a threat to Brazil's, supposed, racial democracy (Gomes, 2003).

8 Gilberto Freyre was one of Brazil's defining social theorists in the early twentieth century. In the 1930s, he wrote a seminal sociological survey on Brazilian race relations titled the *Master and the Slave* (1933). In this book, he described these race relations as harmonious and asserted that this was evidenced by the large *mulatto* population. This 'Freyrian' view of race relations has endured for a long time as it has been propagated by the state both locally and internationally, and has thus proved an indefatigable obstacle to the black organisations which seek to bring to light the prevalence of anti-black racism in Brazil.

and a military dictatorship (1964 to 1985). This earlier period was also shaped topographically by an increase in urbanization due to the development of both the oil and steel industry in Salvador. The lack of sufficient and adequate housing for this surge of new workers led to increasing 'densification' of already established *favela* areas; integrating them firmly into urban life and giving rise to the contours of the city as we know it today (Soares, 2009: 87).

Despite the socio-political restrictions that came with the dictatorship, from about the late 1960s a 'revolution of rising expectations' was on the horizon. In Salvador, much of this took the form of an explicitly black expression of discontent, and was also inspired by the anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles all over Africa and the black Diaspora. As a result, black power ideologies and goods, strategies and semiotics from transnational African networks, became integral as signifiers of an Africa and blackness that was, since the 1970s, relentlessly being imagined in the city, and in a process that is often referred to as the 're-Africanization' of Bahia (Sansone, 1999, Crook, 2009; Covin, 1996; Hanchard, 1998). While this re-africanization was incrementally being territorialized in the city as whole, both Pelourinho and Liberdade were, and still are, neighbourhoods whose names became key metonyms for this vibrant and powerful 'blackitude'.

Silva de Almeida (2002) asserts that it was social movements like these in the 1980s which organized and triggered 'new conflicts' that helped push out the military dictatorship, as well as claim new rights that 'left their mark on the 1988 constitution (Silva de Almeida. 2002: 10). The power of these movements, however, was diminished significantly by Brazil's taking up of orthodox neoliberal projects; a process that also occurred in tandem with, and was also inhered by, a hegemonic idea of democracy. Therefore, this decade that was lived under the hope of social movements was closed with the ascension of a neoliberal mission introduced under the democratically elected government that succeeded the dictatorship in 1985 (Silva de Almeida, 2002; Petras and Veltemeyer et al., 2003; Saad Filho, 2010).

Attending to this Saad Filho (2010) asserts that 'at the political level, democracy has become established as the political form of neoliberalism in Brazil.' Rather, the neoliberal transition and the democratic transition are 'mutually reinforcing and, eventually, mutually constituting' (Saad Filho, 2010: 24). For the author this symbiotic relationship between democracy and neoliberalism happened in the following three ways:

> First, the neoliberal economic transition was achieved through, and validated by, democratic means. Second, neoliberal policies support the democratic regime because they fragment the workers through higher unemployment, faster labour turnover, the repression of trade union activities, and the rise of economic insecurity. Under neoliberalism, the repression of working class activities becomes primarily 'economic' rather than 'political,' as was the case under the dictatorship. Third, democracy is the best political regime for neoliberalism because it guarantees the stability and predictability of the 'rules of the game,' making it more easily managed by the moneyed interests (Saad Filho, 2010: 24).

As they work together the conjunction of these two forces ultimately engendered the 'amplification of social inequalities that had historically accumulated' in the country, and in Latin America as a whole (Silva de Almeida, 2002: 11).

In the 1980s, these inequalities were evident in the increased precarity in the *periferias* of Salvador, and were catalyzed, in part, by the decline in manufacturing jobs, as well as the dearth of Municipality expenditure in these mostly poor and black areas; a situation also aggravated by the distance to the town centre as well as a poor public transport system (Sansone, 1999; Soares, 2009). Furthermore, Soares (2009) documents that it was in the 1980s and 1990s, the emergent neoliberal period, that poverty grew immensely in the *periferia* and the 'seas of poverty' and 'islands of wealth' that characterize the city were consolidated (Soares, 2009: 89, 94). More specific to the Pelourinho district a neoliberal heritage movement, a direct result of the 'UNESCO'S acceptance of the neighbourhood onto its World Heritage List,' sanctioned the displacement of many of its residents. While historical re-instantiations of this segregation continued, Salvador's spatial apartheid was now further re-entrenched under a newer neoliberal front; the guise of heritage (Collins, 2013: 168).

For young people in Brazil, the majority of who are facing the dire social and economic insecurity that is consistently being ossified in their environment, their experiences of neoliberal democracy are shaped by its ominous manifestations on an intimate and community level. This uncertainty brought about by the present moment inevitably impacts their participation in normative political life, and with marked regional disparities (Silva, 2009: 12; Pimenta, 2014). In regards to the North East, it is an area with one of the highest levels of poverty, unemployment and illiteracy in the whole country (Paixao, 2004; Soares, 2009). This structural inequality is also deeply inflected by a racism that persists in this city, and whose manifesta-

tions consistently call into question its status as the capital of 'happiness' and 'saints'.

The youth who we profile here come from these experiences. As mentioned earlier, most of them were born during the 1980s, which was a seminal period for some of the stronger and more radical social movement actions by organizations, such as the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (MST) / The Landless Workers Movement; the explicitly black organizing nationally and locally through organizations such as the *Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)* / United Negro Movement, and *Ile Aiye*. Furthermore, they grew and became more socially and politically aware in these times of the neoliberal project that gained traction even in Lula's, ostensive, 'Third Way' (Petras and Veltemeyer, 2003). As a consequence, much of their day to day life is taken up by negotiations of an environment where three times more Afro-Brazilians are killed by the police than any other racial grouping in Brazil, and where the police kill six people every day. Race, then, is a 'matter of life and death' in Brazil (Smith, 2014), and this is a corporality that is very familiar to them.

Police violence is compounded by economic precarity, lack of access to basic healthcare and good education, as well as the penalization of many forms of urban protest. The coverage of the recent *passe livre* and anti-World Cup protests and the shock at the obviously violent responses from the State, have shown to the world what many black and poor communities have been facing in urban spaces for a long time. Moreover, the combined structural aggressions further demonstrate how 'disjunctive democracy' installs some rights while violating others; bringing about a situation of both celebrated democracy and unrelenting political violence (Caldeira and Holston, 1999; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006). Demonstrating this paradox is the simultaneous increase in the incidence of homicides for Afro-Brazilians alongside more affirmative action and public discussions about structural racism. Stressing these contradictions, Vargas (2008) also argues that this is a time when there has never been:

> [...] so many Black nongovernmental organizations focusing on health, violence, media, culture and electoral politics. Never has so much Black music and so many dance groups engaging with, openly criticizing and proposing alternatives to endemic Brazilian racism [...] Olodum and Ile- Aiye in Salvador, Cidade Negra and Afroreggae in Rio being only the very tip of a vital movement that does not shy away from the national public sphere while engaged in local grassroots antiracist efforts. Never has Brazil had such vigorous debate on affirmative action, reparations, and historical forms of racialized discrimination. Never

> has Brazil had so many self-defined Afro-Brazilian elected representatives at the local, state, and national levels. Never has Brazil had so many weekly magazines run by and targeted to Blacks. And, it seems, never, sadly, has Brazil had such levels of police brutality, death, and other forms of violence perpetrated against Blacks, especially in large cities such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Salvador, and Recife (Vargas, 2008: 119).

It is to the narratives of young people immersed in these moments of both political democracy and violence that we now turn.

'I AM NOT DREAMING ABOUT DEMOCRACY'

WHILE MULTIPLE INFORMAL individual and group conversations were conducted as part of this research project in Brazil, only eleven were conducted in the semi-structured interview format that was integral to this process. These interviews were conducted by my research assistant; a 27 year old photographer, *'militante'* and sociology student at the Federal University of Bahia.

The same thirteen questions used in Kenya also applied in Salvador, although with some contextual allowances. Below I draw extensively from five interviews, from three women and two men, all of which I translated myself. The other youth experiences not included here were, nevertheless, instrumental in guiding some of the key assumptions of this paper, and were also useful to the data analysis process. It is important to note that these youth came from diverse *barrios populares* in Salvador, a city with roughly the same population as Nairobi; Caixa da Água, Brotas, Laura de Freitas, Pirajá and Beiru. And in this collection of lived moments, they offer a survey of what life is like for young people in this city.

CAROLINE

My name is Caroline. I have a degree in education from the Federal University of Bahia. I am also an evangelical. I trained to be a teacher

but I'm not working. Currently I am sustained by my parents. When I want a little extra money, I do some small work here and there for some women and this gives me some money for a week or so. I have lived in Pirajá for the last twenty-four years.

Look, I realize that being young in Piraja is not much different than being young and black in Brazil, especially in the *periferia* [periferal and popular neighbourhoods]. And many young people are not worried about the future, but I'm not blaming them for that understand? I know it is something bigger than them that we need to blame, something that transcends the truth. And many are working and not working, or working in the informal market in low wage jobs. And many do not study. They have little chances in their life and many are not sure how to grasp it as they should. And what I see for young people in Pirajá is that to study is the second or last option. What they do [...] in fact, they want to earn life in a fast way. They want work and they want money. And sometimes they work and study and then work in the end does not work out. They do not have a family to support them like I do right now, and who help me as I continue my studies for a master's degree. The other young people do not have this opportunity and they have to work, putting studying aside [...] neglecting it in a way that is not neglect. It really is all difficult to reconcile.

There have been some changes over the years, and I can talk in regards to education... I'll talk regarding studies. A while ago, say even 5 years ago, we did not know a young university graduate on our street. Then recently a girl I used to eat with managed to get into university, and then I also went to college. Also the quota system for blacks has enabled many young people to enter university. I think it also raises the self-esteem we have. Now some are thinking: 'there I can get into college,' and are even thinking 'I can get into UFBA [Federal University of Bahia], I can enter UNEB [University of the State of Bahia] and any federal and state university.' I see now that some are already claiming this space. But in relation to studies we are still a minority. And it is still only a very a small portion that are leaving high school who are thinking about this. But those who left maybe 2 or 3 years ago are no longer interested in education. It is just work they are thinking about [...] and then some young women get pregnant early and so they have to leave their studies because they have a family.

Democracy is a type of governing that is open to all—at least it is theoretically like this. But for us in the black community that reality has not been extended. We live in a democracy, but an imaginary democracy; illusory democracy. We black youths do not have access to our basic rights, unlike a young middle-class white person who has access to the best schools, they have all the necessary financial

conditions for life and have so much knowledge of the world; they who live their whole life in a private school, travelling [...] Anyway, it is quite different from our reality as black youths from the periphery. But it is even more complicated for us to access a college and try to adjust into other spaces where there are young people who have had everything in life.

Then, about neoliberalism... neoliberalism is minimal state intervention in the economy, and this is only minimal intervention to strengthen large companies and industries and big business. And on the other hand, it is we the people that are going to be hurt by this whole market opening for private companies.

For the future, I dream that we always take education as an umbrella; that all black youths from the periphery have access to quality education not only in college, but in their basic education. Then there are the politics of quotas that opens university up to these black youths. This has to be accompanied by a reform in basic education. We need a better basic education and this is more important than the university. Our community needs basic needs to improve significantly, much more than access to university.

I think that's it. Also you have to have self-esteem. The self-esteem of black youth has been shaken constantly by a number of factors. I think that this is a problem which affects the psychology of black youth who think that they are not capable of anything; who find themselves unable to get a good job and think they will not get through college. And this is a very complicated issue that has been going on for a while [...] the self-esteem of the young person has been bombarded since childhood. So it is complicated to deconstruct this, but it is possible, highly possible through education.

SAVIA

My name is Savia and I am 19 years old. What more? I don't know, like, I'm black, a student of social sciences in the first half of my degree at UNEB, and I am now going into the second half of the year. I went to a private secondary school on a scholarship. I live in Lauro de Freitas in Intinga. Intinga is a neighbourhood of Lauro. I have lived there for nine years. Life here is pretty similar to the life of black youth in the entire periphery of Bahia; young boys are quite marginalized and there is a real issue of drug trafficking. That is quite clear.

So I'm a bit of an exception there where I live. All the young people I know are studying in public school, or those who do not study in public schools are scholarship recipients in private schools, or their parents end up paying for private school. Some young people I know are not in the city because of problems with the police. And so they

spend time outside and then come back. Sometime it is also problems with the police or problems with the traffickers themselves. There was a recent change in my neighbourhood that I think was more ideological than practical, and this was the installation of the UPP [*Unidade de Policia Pacificadora* / Police Pacification Unit] there in Intinga. There was that thought that 'the installation of the UPP in Intinga has come and now things will change.' As if the violence would diminish due to the UPP! It does not make that much difference whether the UPP is civilian or military, I don't like it. And I hear and understand the suggestions about the importance of people watching over you more. All the same, there has not been any practical change in the reduction of violence or drug trafficking in the community. I don't think it is so positive installing the UPP there. It just appears to be a continuation of the criminalization of the black community, and we can't stop the shootings that come with this…

I've heard talk about democracy, I mean what common sense says about democracy. Durkheim also talked about democracy. I know that common sense thinks that democracy is people power, but what does that mean in practice? The theory is cool, but the practice is not so interesting because the representatives that people have do not represent the people or their interests, and instead represent the minority.

Neoliberalism? I just know basic stuff. You could say that I'm half illiterate politically, and that's because I'm still self-subjected to a logic that says everything which is connected to politics is bad and I should try and change it—that's why I am not interested in knowing anything about it. University is also not saying anything interesting.

Individually I dream about having the basics, and sometimes I think that it appears to be a privilege just to want the minimum, the basics right? For example, owning a home, having financial stability [...] I do not want to be rich but I do want to have what is basic, and travel the world with my job. I plan to be an anthropologist. Individually [...] I'm not dreaming about democracy, but it is kind of utopian thinking about equality, an egalitarian world for everyone [...] for every gender, race, ethnicity [...] I dream of what at the end of the day? Anarchism is interesting.

For young people in Brazil and Kenya [...] everyone wants one recommendation all the time, huh? Okay, study your ass off to get out of the marginalized condition that we are in. I know that it makes us tired having to overcome everything; you have to overcome the scrapping of the public university, public health etc., but this is the way that you overcome to achieve. And also it is important to join forces to fight this system that inserts us in this context of marginalization. As an individual, I'm trying to fight my way out of the marginalized

condition that I am in, and I am doing this through what everyone put in my head—that I had to study to get into the university. Collectively, I do not know what I do. I have not done anything yet although there are some projects that I am thinking about in my head that are in the stage of 'analysis'.

CLAUDIO

I'm from *Jacobina,* and currently live in Salvador. I have lived here for two years. For money [...] I have no fixed income and I am sustained by my mother. I lived in Jacobina until I was in the transition from ages 17 to 18, and then I came to Salvador. The life of a youth in Jacobina is totally different than the life of a youth in Salvador. So Jacobina for me, in the world view that I have, has not advanced. In Jacobina there exists a multinational called Yamana Gold, and it is because of this company that Jacobina is known as the City of Gold. So until today, since the arrival of *Bandeirantes* [Fortune Hunters], because the city was built by these pioneers we explore gold in Jacobina. And so there is a multinational which is from Canada named Yamana Gold, and the city is entirely dependent on the company. The trade depends on Yamana Gold. And of all the gold that workers remove for Yamana Gold not even 1% or 0.01% stays here, it is all exported to Canada. The company has tax-free status, and even controls the local economy. There is still plenty of gold in Jacobina and it is estimated that there is still about 30-40 years before it is depleted. And Jacobina is totally hostage to it, and people like [...] people don't have the political sense to know the effects of this mining by Yamana Gold.

I've heard so much about democracy. For me the society that I live in now, when I was 15 or 16, I thought it was quite a democratic society, a society of freedom of rights; a beautiful society. So when I came to Salvador in between my 17 and 18th year I had a 'thump' and reality struck. The first thump I had was because I went into a pre-university course and I found myself living with different people, people of many identities and all with different economic power. So that was my first thump. And also the studies I had in the pre-university courses were also a thump. Many things I learned in these courses I did not learn in school, and had never heard talked about. So that's my process [...] it was a very 'punk' process, but it was still a process of understanding political structures. I now know how the dynamics of capital in society work. I understand what it is to be black. I understand the process of struggle and exploitation that black people have suffered and suffer to this day. I understand all these issues, and have more on the inside, and now I think I am totally different and I think different than I thought three years ago.

What do I think about neoliberalism? It just really does not make sense to stop here to explain what economic liberalism is as it is a historical process. But for me, briefly, neoliberalism is a bourgeois practice of capitalist logic that is part of the process of making markets in society; its use value, exchange value and even the whole process of social welfare policies and pacification policies such as the UPP. And then we return to that question of youth… regarding the UPP's; why are the youth not aware of what the UPPs are? Why are UPPs installed in the poor neighbourhoods where most of the population is black, poor and *favelada*? And this population does not have the critical consciousness to know that black people have suffered and suffer to this day. And the youth have no idea either. Why not equip the youth so they can get stronger? The process of neoliberalism didn't end all of this, the process of neoliberalism is exactly this; you become a hostage to this practice even if you have no idea what those practices are. Like the paternalistic welfare practices that we see an intensification of by some parties that we elect to power; all those practices that do not help the people at all, especially black people.

As an individual, I dream of a society where people can be equal, a society where people can have the same material conditions. So, collectively I dream of the same; this is an emancipation of the working class, the emancipation of the black revolution and that black people understand their history and how it has functioned. I also dream that the youth from the periphery lift themselves up from what has been imposed on them.

A strategy for us all is to keep on fighting and not to give up because our only emancipation is resistance. Only resistance will show that we are strong, it shows that we can lift ourselves and we can have the black revolution, and we can show that we are blacks because we understand our historical process of being black is resistance; resistance and fighting for social emancipation.

FABIANA

My name is Fabiana Lima and I live in *Arraial do Retiro*, I'm currently enrolled in a Nursing program at *Mauricio de Nassau* which is a private institution. I harbour the hope of going to a public institution one day. I am 18 years old. At the moment, to gain a little money, I recite poetry both individually and in a group.

Now, as a group, we recite poetry in buses. We also have small poetry booklets that we give out, but we also sometimes just recite poetry. Our group is called 'The Poet Resistance' and we meet every week. We sometimes work together in pairs, and we get money

through 'passing the hat' on the bus. We do this not only with the intention of *just* doing poetry, but so as to get people to reflect on race and social issues in Brazil.

I live in Arraial do Retiro. At the moment the neighbourhood has been very quiet, but it was never this way. The issue of drug trafficking has always been a big issue in this area. All the same, I socialize with neighbours and with residents, and sometimes not when I don't feel like it. Why is this so? I feel like I belong to another world. I try to be with them, I try to bring them to my side but this is not always seen as a good thing. In the end, I have become alone in my own neighbourhood. I enter and leave, talk to people but do not walk with anyone.

I have seen a person go to their child and say about me: 'oh, this one she studies hard she is always busy.' They would only see me when I was selling popsicles on the bus and on the beach. I started at 13 years old, and they were always very happy with me because my cousin had another more violent path and he followed it even if we had started selling popsicles together. But then again I do not know… my cousin had other ways and he could not stand the harsh reality of life and went to the world of crime. So, they always made this comparison and they say: 'why, you did not follow the same life as your cousin even if you lived in the same house. This is very good'.

What I notice is that there is no chance at all in that community. I have lived there for the last 18 years and all the projects that have tried to come out of there did not survive. In addition, I see no other cultural moments in the community except the times when people come together over the weekend and sit at the bar to drink and dance. Aside from that, I see no other chances of coming together. This October, because of the forthcoming elections, two doctors, one general practitioner and a dentist are going to come to our community. But I'm sure it is only this month because of the elections. Throughout the year this does not happen, the government does not send anyone.

What I understand about democracy is that all people should have the same opportunity to have the same rights and the same duties. What I think of democracy in Brazil is that it does not happen here. This is due to the historical and indisputable fact of social inequalities. I do not believe in democracy in Brazil.

I do not see that neoliberalism has improved or worsened my community. I do not see that neoliberalism brings a space for culture. I do not see that neoliberalism brings a *praça* where these people can go with their kids. I do not see that this neoliberalism is good for the youth.

My life is [...] I as a person, as an individual, I always seek knowledge and this has brought a huge improvement to my life. And also as an individual I always seek to bring people to the reality that knowledge always builds up the person. Not only financially, but it is something that is very good. And as an individual also I've thought about starting community projects here like poetry recitals, but the fact of wanting to get into college, financial issues and also because I am alone I have not been able to establish these poetry recitals. Today I am rethinking this idea because I am with a group and so it may be easier. But I think as an individual I still need to bring an improvement to the community… I think of bringing both pleasure and reflection for the community. And I think this can best come out of a group because it is a coming together of a very strong militancy. It is not *nothing* to get into a bus and say that racism exists right? Not an easy thing, there is danger in this. As well, talking about the government that robs us and what we can envision anew [...] it is not an easy thing.

As an individual, I dream of a financially better condition in my life and in the lives of my grandmother, my mother and my sister. And that I can get a medical degree in endocrinology and be a general surgeon. I would then be a great reference for the community and be seen as a black woman who is a winner. Collectively I want, and I do not know if I'll be alive to see it, but that the black community is strengthened and that there will really be a racial democracy in Brazil. And that democracy will exist insofar as there are all rights and equal duties for everyone. And that no more young black victims die of a stray bullet, or through the genocide that is happening of young black men through police violence. I also hope today that no more young people die, and if death comes it will come as part of a natural ageing process. I think that is our wish collectively, to win over these bad vibes that are happening here.

I would say that we should fight and we cannot give up on our dreams because if you believe in yourself, anything is possible. And some setbacks will happen, some smaller and others larger, but do not give up on anything you dream. And look for strength where it is not, and we will try to make life better in every way, not only financially, but with all our friends friend's and society. And go on fighting to try to improve the lives of everyone, not just for yourself but for everyone. That is what I leave as a message.

HENRIQUE

So my name is Henrique, I'm a student of history here at UFBA. I am 25 years old and a militant of the black movement as well! I am in no

black movement organization, but I do this work through my own actions as I am not institutionalized or organized in any space but advocate for the cause of being black, and I understand the importance of this. I am also a militant of the PCB [*Partido Comunista Brasileiro* / Brazilian Communist Party] and the UJC [*União da Juventude Comunista*/ Communist Youth Union]. I live in Beiru.

Beiru was a farm that was given as inheritance to the owner who was an enslaved person that had had a very good relationship with his 'master'— that is how he got this land. This farm which was legally owned by him then became a *quilombo* [maroon community] where other black people came to hide and try to reconstruct their lives away from slavery. The violent politics of the state in this area still continues to date. But the crime rate there has gone down. Still the police violence against the community continues.

As I am a Marxist, I ask: 'who is democracy for?' We understand that democracy in its meaning is the will of the majority, right? Except that in a classed society, democracy for the majority is not possible right? There are other instruments that exploit the interests of the majority and make sure the interests of the minority dominate over the majority. So democracy, therefore, today is elective; it boils down to you voting twice every four years. Being a 'political citizen' means that you go and vote, but other mechanisms of direct and indirect participation do not exist as it is only the election which counts as politics. These mechanisms are super distant from the masses and their daily political life. And when the masses recognize this and want to participate directly in politics, the state power uses police repression and also judicial means and repressive laws against them. Democracy, in my opinion, is a scenario when the minority society, which is the bourgeoisie that destroys and splits the classes—these are the bankers, factory owners, contractors, and media, —can ensure the greatest control through violence but also through democracy and elections.

Neoliberalism was a policy that started in Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s. What happened was that there was a commercialization of services and of all kinds of things that you can think off. So from health, education, housing, sanitation and even safety, all are meant to be privatized. It is also the transfer of the economy from the state; the privatization of national companies. Brazil's neoliberalism was a social catastrophe. For youth this also brought about the privatization of their public spaces which were then given to private initiatives to build hotels, apartment buildings and shopping centres. This reduced the spaces where youth can socialize and have sport courts, squares, places for theatre and local bands. So, neoliberalism in so-

ciety reduced youth public space, as it commoditized and privatized public land.

I don't see that there is a lot of politicization of youth in this community. I do very little to change this, actually, because we also need resources to do this. Maybe a community radio could do a lot to engage the consciousness of youth... even newspapers. But we have no means to fight for an ideal society together as youth. Maybe a conversation here and a small circle there when it is possible to discuss a few issues. But our target of action is too small, and we have to recognize that as well; that our range of action, our means of accessing these youth is also very limited. It is not the fault of the youth. And it is also difficult to dialogue with people.

I dream that in the future there will be another society. I dream [...] maybe I do not see this process happening but it is important that we stick to it and defend an egalitarian society that is more just right? Where individuals can participate in political and social life [...] It is good to know that no one is against that. I think about another Brazil, a Brazilian society where individuals see themselves as equals, and are equal. Whether it will be formal through laws or in the constitution it does not matter, what matters is that this egalitarianism between individuals within their differences and convergences will exist. Respect and tolerance for all sexualities and especially for blacks and women who are the most exploited and historically oppressed groups. That is what I dream.

'MY LIFE IS LIKE THE LIFE OF ALL YOUNG BLACK PEOPLE IN THE PERIFERIA'

The youth profiled here from Salvador, similar to their Kenyan peers, are not 'dreaming' about democracy. While narratives about the end of the dictatorship and the emergence of a more democratic political and social environment have been part of their childhood, they do not seem to differentiate their current political moment from those that have gone before them. Moreover they do not believe in democracy in the form in which it appears in national political spaces—in the setup of socio-political relationships it has engendered—because of the 'indisputable fact of social inequalities' (Fabiana, interview October 8, 2014). Furthermore, for the most part, for those who are acquainted with the term neoliberalism, they do not see it making significant changes in their lives; transformations that would indicate rupture in their 'fatal ways of being alive' (Marriot, 2000: 15). Rather, for them, it is part of a historical process of marginalization that is now merely advanced—an 'advanced marginality' (Wacquant, 2008) that coheres, especially, in their neighbourhoods and in their generation.

Consonant with this Claudio emphasises that 'it just really does not make sense to stop here to explain what economic liberalism is as it is a historical process'. He goes on to say that for those who are not accustomed to this term it does not mean that their lives are exempt from its knotty entanglements since 'the process of neoliberalism is exactly this. You become a hostage to this practice even if you have no idea what those practices are. Like the paternalistic welfare practices that we see an intensification of by some parties that we elect to power; all those practices that do not help the people at all, especially black people' (Claudio, interview October 5, 2014).

Efforts to challenge this status quo where the 'realities of democracy have not been extended' are, admittedly, on their part limited (Caroline, interview October 1, 2014). Rather, while their participation in elections is guaranteed and upheld 'twice every four years', Henrique conveys that alternative political expressions that are outside of the ballot, and which he would prefer to engage in, are received with repression. These state responses can be seen to stimulate and occur concurrently with what is often considered youth apathy; blatant disinterest in normative political spaces and also a delinking from institutions which can be seen to be part of the same state forces i.e. education and formal employment. As one interviewee in Kenya described it, 'as a common citizen you just surrender because we have no other option' (Muthuri, interview August 29, 2014). This indifference, while subject to individual agency, can also be due both to feelings of domination and to the lack of meaningful opportunities in many poor urban communities that provokes a disregard for official institutions, and prevents the completion of accepted life progressions by many young people and in this way leading to an interminable 'waithood' (Honwana, 2012). This apathy can be further explained in Caroline's terms when she says that youth are 'neglecting [life] in a way that is not neglect' (Caroline, interview October 1, 2014).

Highlighting these situations in an article that discusses the 'dictatorship over the poor' in Brazil, Wacquant (2003: 200) states that:

For, despite its return to constitutional democracy, Brazil has yet to construct a state of laws worthy of the name. Two decades of military dictatorship continue to weigh heavily on the functioning of public force, as well as on collective mentalities, with the result that a broad spectrum of social classes tends to identify the defence of human rights with tolerance of *bandidagem*. So that, besides deep-seated urban marginality, violence in Brazil finds a second root in a political culture that remains profoundly marked by the scars of authoritarianism.

It is due to this encrustation of authoritarianism and its novel and recurring neoliberal instantiations that these youth from Salvador call for a new society, a 'new Brazil'.

It is important here to mention the recent bids to make university more accessible to black Brazilians in Salvador, and in Brazil as a whole, and that have also been coupled with welfare policies such as *Bolsa Família*.[1] While they recognize these interventions by the state, for young people such as Caroline and Claudio, these policies cannot profoundly change social conditions, as they do not reconstitute governing structures. Rather, they are instead token palliatives which do not improve education at the basic level and neither question why the welfare and the literacy levels in black communities are the way they are. Therefore, none of these youth are able to entirely celebrate what are considered the positive gains from mainstream neoliberal and democratic practices. They need a doctor for more than just the electoral period, and more than police pacification units to stop crime and violence in their communities since neither of these state initiatives can challenge the structural reasons for their social visibility and their unrelenting civic invisibility (Huggins and Castro, 1996).

All the same, echoing their peers on the continent, they push forwards with a persistent wish and imagination for the future. This is one that has the economic minimum, a natural ageing process, community groups, dreams of a family and educational possibilities. While sustaining these dreams they also advance in indifference, in inspiration or just in daily movement, motion within motion (Vigh, 2010), amidst their own general antipathy towards democracy. All the while, as can be seen, they look for an inclusive political reality which will one day extend to their communities.

1 *Bolsa Família* can be translated in English as Family Allowance, and is a family grant that allocates cash funds to poor families in Brazil to buy food every month. This transfer is roughly $100 and is contingent on the children of the recipient family regularly attending school. It was launched in 2003 by the Lula administration as part of his Zero-Hunger program.

SURVIVING NEOLIBERAL DEMOCRACY

INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH EMANCIPATIONS

AS STATED EARLIER, this research is oriented by the bid to see what political arenas have been established by young people in Kenya and Brazil. Specifically, I am interested in how they extend and endure neoliberal democracy and what this says about how they fit into normative political spaces that are anchored within the hegemonic discourses of these two co-constitutive ideologies. It is also an attempt to share survival strategies and political imaginations that have emerged from poor urban youth in these times where they are increasingly marginalized; approaches that also gesture towards the futures for these youth, their urban settings, and the mainstream 'democratic' and 'neoliberal' political processes that have been entrenched in their settings.

This modest attempt to compare youth experiences from the current moment was shaped by three main questions. These are: First *How do the discourses and practices of democracy and neoliberalism, if at all, shape young people's lives? Second: How do their day-to-day actions imply a response to the present 'democratic' and 'neoliberal' moment that is said to be characteristic of these two locations, and what negotiations (both collective and individual) are part of these responses?* Third: *What are the similarities and dissimilarities in the responses of the youth in Nairobi and Salvador, and what can these shared practices open up for (neoliberal) democracy*?

The approximations in life conditions for youth in both Salvador and Nairobi are explicit and do not need much recounting. Some of these are the perils of state violence, and unrelenting socio-economic uncertainty that provokes versatility in livelihood strategies. This economic flexibility is embodied by the poetess who is also a nurse, by an IT programmer who is also a juice-maker, and by a small restaurant owner who is also a bamboo farmer and furniture maker. In addition, the common assertion that life has become harder, even in these times of political democracy and when contemporary welfare policies, increased business loans and education opportunities accorded to youth are granted, ostensibly, to guarantee an improvement in life conditions from subsequent generations, is echoed in both locations.

For the most part, unless probed, the young people whom we spoke to here did not explicitly use the terms democracy or neoliberalism. As the interview excerpts demonstrate, their main preoccupations were with the attainment of day-to-day needs for the present, and a sustainable minimum for the future. These concerns were for food, educational opportunities and a job in the now, and economic stability, cultural and recreational spaces and the opportunity to have a family for the future. Beyond this parallel in life situations and concerns, there are also convergences in their ideas about the practices of normative politics in their contexts. Both their stated present and potential political actions did not reference consistent and enthusiastic engagement with the institutions of mainstream electoral democracy. Rather, they talked about activities such as coming together to share knowledge and skills, while also working and saving together; efforts that seek to entrench both economic security and socio-ideological changes in their individual and collective lives. Evidencing this, for Muthuri in Kenya a future hope was for:

> […] A way of supporting ourselves. For example, through forming a group and raising some money to purchase something or start a business that would be beneficial to the group. There is already a group of twenty people contributing 100 shillings daily to buy a motorbike [to transport people] that will be shared among members. And apart from that, coming together to do voluntary work in the area (Muthuri, interview August 29, 2014).

And even if they were part of registered institutions such as Ostrom youth group or the Communist Party of Brazil, it seems that their main way of politicking and engaging with their peers, when they are able to it, is in roles that did not wholly affirm what were taken as conventional political ways of being. While they did not wholly

reject them, and took part in prototype democratic events such as elections and civil society organized seminars, their preferred modes of peer-engagement were in activities that were 'informal' insofar as they were not facilitated by or linked to government or civil society proper, were focused on socio-economic or socio-cultural survival and were fluid.

Stressing youth opposition to established ideas of democracy in government funded youth councils in the US, Taft and Gordon (2013) argue that many youth involved in these platforms understand democracy in fundamentally different ways and favour alternate ways of democratic participation than is guaranteed within these institutionalized youth fora. Connected to this, they report that the dissidents within these councils had significant frustration with the kinds of representative democracy that was being promoted in these government settings, and often left. Akin to the young people from both Brazil and Kenya who are the focus of this paper, these dissidents questioned the kinds of citizenships that undergird and are produced by these youth councils; for what ends and for whom they were created. In addition, while youth in the US indicated the problematic ways in which 'voice' was privileged over 'authority' and 'impact' in these meetings, young people in Brazil and Kenya highlighted the grave disconnect between the structured inequalities that render their lives bare, and the established democracy that does not resolve these conditions; a situation that does not even give them 'voice'. Even if, like their peers in the US, they are asking for more 'horizontal' political engagements, they are also asking for something much bigger than what has become known as political democracy.

Their narratives here emerge from and are placed within particular intersubjective contexts. The chronicling of their experiences, many of which are violent, is not to keep them within particular 'typological dimensions' but to show their context as one where they realise that they have to 'fill in the gaps' of the government for their survivals (Wamucii, 2011: 190- 195). To seal these vacuums, amidst the parallels and differences in their situations, these youth offer similar survival sharings to help negotiate the conditions in which they find themselves. Collectively this is coming together to share knowledge and to start cultural and economic groupings. These are essentially fluid associations which privilege economic survival but also inhere a polyvalence which defies categorization, and that make sense within the particular 'underground sociabilities' of the *favela* (Jovchelovitch and Hernández, 2013); the spontaneous relationships of 'contradictory modalities' that are part of neoliberal urban life in the global south (Simone, 2001: 104).

Emphasizing the importance of these youth formations, Carlos from Brazil shared that:

> So I also think the advice I can give is to make connections, for like this you begin to open up the range of life. Start making partners and form a large web because it is in this union that we will be able to give us the strength to change everything that is being imposed on us. So I think the advice I can give is this: strengthen the union of the youth. You should fight and immerse yourself in everything and not stay with your arms crossed expecting change to fall from the sky, or some politician, or someone to become like those names from the past like Mahatma Gandhi or *Zumbi*[1]. Neither will come out of their tombs and help us. I think we are the real *Zumbis* of today, and we have to fight, be warriors and be persistent. And we may die there, but we may also get to be with our children and inspire them to be able to fight. This will create a new youth. My advice is this (Carlos, interview September 29, 2014).

Furthermore, as an individual strategy youth from both Brazil and Kenya really emphasised two core actions; the pursuit of education and the rallying of internal strength. Education for knowledge is important, but, above all, is necessary for the improvement of socio-economic status. As Savia declared, youth need to study their 'ass off' because it creates opportunities to come out of the marginalized condition they are facing (Savia, interview, September 20, 2014). Even so, while there is recognition of the possible bounties of education, Prince (2013) argues that there is no promise in these times; no assured prosperity even for those who are chasing and have acquired formal educational qualifications and the many attainable, often NGO, certificates which are traded like bonds for the future. Emphasising this, Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) convey that the persistent linear modernist ideals of progress and development, which are central to the dogma(s) of a free market economy, have been 'mocked' by the conditions of youth today despite them attaining higher levels of education than previous generations (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000: 307). Unfortunately, this cohort of young people who are jeered by what Abbink (2005: 5) has called 'faulty modernizations,' even with prevailing conditions of large scale unemployment and poor wages, are still informed by enduring narratives of education = job.

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1 *Zumbi dos Palmares* (1645-1695) was the leader of the most famous *quilombo* or maroon community in Brazil called *Palmares*. This community existed for over a hundred years despite the determined state attacks against it. It has become a symbol of Afro Brazilian resistance and pride for centuries.

Yet within the 'debris' there is 'optimism,' even when the pursuance of education and training as a mode of economic stability is consistently imperilled by a lack of opportunities (Prince, 2013), and even when such close proximity to violence would signal otherwise (Pimenta, 2014: 709). Notwithstanding this lack of guarantees and general insecurity, there appears to be a metaphysical force, a powerful imagination, which connects both individual and collective strategies in an inexorable determination to circumvent the hardships of contemporary young life in both Kenya and Brazil. I argue that this is a symbiotic process of visualization; of sustaining a creative and determined imagination that is both cause and effect, the seed and the fruits, even amidst seeming hopelessness. This is maintained though intersubjectivity and allows for an unyielding drive that fuels the pursuit of another life, another society, another youth. To be sure there is a large percentage of youth who are 'apathetic', disinterested in social and political valued goals, and harbour less positive views about the future and its possibilities. And they are many. However, the consistency in confidence in the future and the resilience of dreams emerging from these youth narratives, while not outwardly routed into the cohesive formation of a sustained broad based radical and alternative politics, confer the similarity in what youth are dreaming about. These are visions of a new society, a more just and egalitarian life, community unity, marriage, a family and economic stability. In reaching for these dreams, temporal and permanent associations are formed that target but are not exclusive to economic survival. These are organizations such as youth groups, poetry collectives, savings and merry-go-round assemblages, and other types of cultural and recreational associations. Within these unions, whether in the foreground or the interstices, spaces are made for political practice which do not reference conventional democracy, but are ready to use some of its tools when it works for them and dismiss them when they won't. In essence, these fluid kinships labour for a politics that is secured in the marginal experiences and dreams of young people (a historical marginality that is exacerbated by neoliberal democracy), and in their momentary or long term existence these associations work for the development of a political and economic environment which is 'answerable to them' and for them.

In their opinion, the problem is not just that democracy is disjunctive and that 'although their political institutions democratize with considerable success, and although they promulgate constitutions and legal codes based on the rule of law and democratic values, the civil component of citizenship remains seriously impaired as citizens suffer systematic violations of their rights' (Caldeira and

Holston, 1999: 692). Though this is definitely problematic, these youth also take issue with the fact that established political institutions were *never* theirs, and so they do not have faith in the legal or civil institutions that exist, ostensibly, for them to seek redress. For them there has never been a real democracy, racial or otherwise, and they have never felt like citizens.

Even so, while they may seek audience and alliances with state entities when it works for them, for the most part they do not seem to have faith in 'democratizing democracy' that is often proposed and, allegedly, pursued by incumbent regimes. Instead, whether it is via reciting poetry on the bus, blogging, opening a car wash in groups and even starting savings collectives to cater solely for events like death,[2] they show that they are prepared to work for something bigger that will fill in these fractures, these very violent openings, in the normative political democratic practices that prevail in their locations.

2 Martha, interview October 27, 2014.

CONCLUSION

IN HIS ESSAYS ON Africa's role in the global Ferguson (2006) conveys how the 1960s and early 1970s were 'undoubtedly the halcyon days of East African city life full of economic and social promise as cities swelled with men, accompanied by their wives and children, finding formal sector jobs' (Ferguson, 2006: 19). These days of feasting conceded to fasting when many countries in the south began to experience the economic crises of the late 1970s and 1980s. The poultice prescribed to ease these downward trends were neoliberal reforms recommended by international financial institutions commandeered by their more powerful Northern member states. Key aspects of these reforms were Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS) that, Simone (2004) argues, brought about increasing impoverishment of much of the population throughout Africa, and with pronounced and deeply sinister implications for those who were already in the 'garbage heaps' of their settings. In addition, there was also an increase in what Mbembe (2003) calls 'theatres of cruelty and desire,' and, elsewhere, the 'privatization of public prerogatives and socialization of arbitrariness' (Mbembe, 2001: 389).

These SAPS became animating elements of these theatres that were obliging states to discontinue many of the social services and subsidies they had been offering to their citizens, and in this way call-

ing forth a greater neglect of those who lived, especially, within poor urban settlements. In addition, higher food prices and the increasing unavailability of health and welfare services made what was often already bare life more urgent (Ferguson 2006; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000: 341; Amann and Baer, 2002). Detailing this process in Cote d'Ivoire, Nguyen (2010) highlights how in the 1970s, due to pressure from institutions such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Ivorian state stopped supporting the housing sector as these organizations declared such policies incommensurate with the 'new internal consensus that favoured free market' (Nguyen, 2010: 132). Parallel to this, in both Brazil and Kenya comparable free market programmes have prevented agrarian reform and ensured that interventions such as tax breaks for corporations are enacted simultaneously with cuts to social welfare and the penal treatment of poverty.

The youth examined here were born or grew up during the 'lost decades' of economic liberalization; when political democracy and neoliberal policy became increasingly mutually constituting. This paper has ethnographically depicted some of their experiences within these contemporary moments of neoliberal democracy which appear unremitting. It has shown how youth from Nairobi and Salvador are moulded by the coeval past and present moments of democracy and its avatar neoliberalism; what they think about these practices, how they chose to respond to them both individually and collectively, and has also gestured to what this may mean for the future(s) of mainstream politics that is broadly characterized as democratic and neoliberal. The hegemony of the terms democracy and neoliberalism, as well as their multiple co-optations and manifestations, piqued my curiosity and inspired me to examine how youth related to the configurations of what is said to be normative contemporary politics in their locations. Tied to this I felt compelled to interrogate the power and salience of these ideological formations that are increasingly used to explain our presents.

While there are some expected differences in the lives of young people in Kenya and Brazil, and one key difference was the prominence of the NGO sphere in Kenya in contrast to Brazil, for the most part, the majority of young people in these two countries are immersed in situations of comparable precarity. In addition, their engagements with these state of affairs was similar. Collectively, both groups of youth advised for the realization of associations in order to share knowledge, experiences and also to better basic economic conditions. Individually there was a marked emphasis on the pursuit of educational credentials. Overall, the

superseding strategy that connected all of these activities was the fostering of a dialectical faith; an imagination of a better future that materialized from a rallying together of sustained individual and collective strength.

These findings, while comply with the depictions of youth uncertainties, do not overwhelmingly confirm the 'crises' 'resignation' 'apathy' and 'danger' that characterize many studies of youth, and particularly those in the Africa. While heeding the important directions that much of this referred literature guides us to, as well as recognizing the violence that characterizes youth lives, this dystopic literature does not always touch on the ways in which young people interpret, make sense of and answer back (or sideways) to hegemonic practices and discourses that are increasingly ossified in material ways in their contexts. Therefore, this work also localizes these Brazilian and Kenyan perspectives, in their convergences and differences, to see what these youth with analogous experiences can share with each other in order to get through these more than 'disjunctive' democratic times. This is also a Pan African endeavour as I am of the opinion that, in this time of the continual approximation of Africa and Brazil, there needs to be more bids to get youth thinking about the struggles that they are increasingly responsible *for* each other. It is also a way to recognize some of the pathways for existence in a period that shows no sign of surrendering 'democratically' and *'neoliberally'*, and which, in a marginalization that is more advanced, enacts penalties on youth that extend from Palestine to Florida, Johannesburg to Istanbul and Nairobi to Salvador.

What does this mean for democracy? What does it mean for neoliberalism? As these practices are solidly inserted in the social, psychic and political materialities of both Kenya and Brazil they are impossible to 'vote' away. Furthermore, it appears that from the Lula to Uhuru Kenyatta regimes, even with their unparalleled 'focus' (read fear) on youth, each government has worked overtime to consolidate these neoliberal democratic frontiers that so neglect this generation. A myriad of small and big, local and national youth groups and social movements such as *Reaja ou Será Morto* in Brazil, and *Bunges (La Wananchi, La Wa Mama and La Mashinani)* in Kenya, among other nameless but powerful associations, are tackling this marginalization in their own ways. And even if they just make it up in movement forward, in this motion within motion (Vigh, 2010), their localized political practices are not just active signs of the disconnect between ideology and praxis but something more; an attunement to the inadequacies of how democracy takes shape in their contexts and actions, however feeble, to make it mean more.

Future research can examine how this contemporary preoccupation with the youth 'problem' increasingly ties them into regimes of control (such as business loans, compulsory registration of youth groups) and is also paralleled with larger investments in the armed forces of the state, and new policing strategies such as the Pacification Police Unit (UPP) in Brazil, and the National Youth Service (NYS) in Kenya. The particularly gendered impact of such exercises would also be imperative to study.

While they work on mitigating daily struggles of a life whose every day practices require all of their resources, they are still burdened with filling in the (very large) community and personal gaps left by a neoliberal political economy. As they do this there is increasingly a convergence between their 'mundane' and 'momentous' practices; poetry collectives join *Movimento Passe Livre* and bamboo furniture carpenters become Occupy Parliament. These actions 'present the realm of the possible' (Podder, 2015: 56), the politically possible, that goes beyond mere survival. And whether in temporary or permanent ways, within this quotidian daily wage political praxis, 'youth from the periphery lift themselves up from what has been imposed on them' (Claudio, interview October 5, 2014), and in movement forward forget to 'dream' about democracy.

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