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### Making Use of Everything: Tangier and Its Southern, Peripheral Practices

“Southern questions”—such as where is the “South,” what is it, and what does it do?—are addressed here in terms of the ways in which places, no matter how multiply and intensely articulated, become increasingly peripheral to each other. Both in the sense of a dissipating language of common connection—perhaps with the exception of anthropocentric vernaculars that posit the human everywhere as enjoined in acts of planetary destruction—and of places moving away from each other into more prolific enclosures and wormholes of connection wearing away the definitiveness of any kind of entity. Here, the notion of peripheries as extensions of something integral is displaced in terms of the ways in which geographical and political binaries extend each other, albeit with marked power differentials, into incompleteness. Europe has not ceased extending itself into Africa, and Africa has not ceased to extend itself in Europe. Sometimes in a process of cruel mimicry and plunder, but also in more opaque ways in which the extensions reveal what might be taking place, revealing not only the ways in which Western modernities are dependent upon “others,” but which in their form are also truncated versions of more intricate architectures of collective life.

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So instead of the South embodying specific capacities, enclosures, ontologies, and potentials, it is rather its various tracks and circulations, rather than consolidations, that engender dispositions beyond clear apprehension or capture. Thinking of such extensions through the lens of Blackness, the South becomes a mode of exposure to a wider world that both unsettles the ruling calculus of what counts as lives worth living and pieces together territories of operation that cut across technologies of bordering even as borders remain obdurate and exclusionary.

So, what would happen if instead of thinking through the well-worn core-periphery divides that have characterized global urbanization processes, we might imagine a periphery everywhere. A sense of urbanization that, instead of adhering to increasingly standardized modes of production, is replete with singularities that are at once peripheral to each other in terms of their capacity for mutual translation, but also unable to attain a sense of scale or assured continuity. Where any array of familiar moves—of investment, settlement practices, and spatial arrangements—always seem to veer off in unexpected ways.

Periphery everywhere would seem to erase its functional designation, since the usual connotation of the notion would seem to indicate something that stands apart—however proximate. If periphery is everywhere whatever is designated as such would then seem to be necessarily reframed as norm, hegemonic, predominant. And if periphery is everywhere, does the term change its complexions—moving away from indicating a specific space, location, or territory to a characteristic or potential embodied in something which is not immediately or apparently peripheral. Or is the notion too weighted as a confounding oxymoron to do any kind of useful conceptual work.

Granted, the rapidity and extent of geopolitical shifts, the efficiency of logistical arrangements that accelerate and extend circulations of all kinds, and an intensifying fractiousness within the stability of most major urban regions introduce a surfeit of ambiguity to the ability to make clear distinctions between cores and peripheries, metropolises, and hinterlands (Brenner 2014, Caldeira 2017, Keil 2018, Reiss and Lukas 2022). Yet these processes are less a blurring or inversion of divides or a signaling of the ascendancy of transversal relations than an ensemble of multiple socio-spatial logics that figure any place as a series of apertures, enclosures, consolidations, and incompleteness, which continuously reposition the role and significance of that place in terms of every other (Dovey and Ristic 2017). Large cosmopolitan cities may set trends, agglomerate financial streams of all kinds, but seem increasingly peripheral to the rest of the national territory to which they are a part.

What does this mean then for the notion of the South? Should it be dispensed with altogether, and does it entail recognizing it in multiple guises, dispersed across many different versions of itself, without any clear synthesis? Some have insisted that the South was always comprised of multiple Souths across geographical divides (Connell 2007), something that connotes external conceptual invention and resistance, the relationalities of inequity, production, and resistance (Grosfoguel 2011), and “in relation to, with, through but also against other spaces, places, times, peoples, modes of knowledge and action” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Daley 2018). The South has served as a pragmatic designation for various forms of solidarity, cooperation, and interchange among nations and societies that have found themselves marginalized in the predominant geopolitical and geocultural arrangements (Mignolo 2000, Wynter 2003, Quijano 2007 Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013, de Sousa Santos 2014, Sundberg 2014, Kwoba et al. 2018). Artur Escobar’s (2008, 2018) notions of a pluriverse, which demonstrates the ways in which distinct beings and systems are thoroughly entangled in the lives of others, but instead of these entanglements assuming some overarching form, the reciprocal responses offered across entities configures and open-ended parameters of interdependency and coconstitution. Boundaries and frames will be necessary in order to coalesce energies and efforts, but these boundaries are not definitive or permanent.

The massive literature on globalization and translocality clearly has established the diminishing importance of physical contiguities for intimacies of all kinds (Larsen 2014, Hall 2021). The rapid development of East Asian cities over the past several decades has placed them at the forefront of urban proficiency, while certain districts of US and European cities exude the atmospheres long associated with the “third world” urban. Divides of all kinds, of course, proliferate, and these are weighted in terms of calculations of privilege, efficacy, and rights. If periphery is everywhere, this also indicates the explicit and implicit endeavors of groups to render others peripheral to their concerns and operations. Not dissimilarly, collective life has become increasingly peripheral to the affective needs of individuals, constantly prioritizing regimens of self-improvement, seeking the status of influencers or being influenced, establishing themselves as an essential niche market recognized and appealed to (Kipfer 2002, Mingione 2019, Anderson 2021, Goldman 2022). But even here, in terms of Deleuze’s notion of *dividuation*, the apparent integrity of the individual is peripheralized in favor of fragmented impulsions and imaginaries.

If the identification of entities entails distributed and dispersed figurations, distinction between the periphery and its “others” might be sustained

in terms of rapid assessments about which positions and features of a thing or place might be operative or important at a given time. Here, periphery everywhere is a particular status alternatively signaled as the requirements of a particular game that constantly shifts attention and resources elsewhere, but always temporally, as the place from which attention is shifted expects some kind of returns without necessarily having to do anything differently. Across the thousands of urban districts around the world full of half-finished projects yet to reach fruition, a common attitude is one of expected waiting. It is anticipated the money, effort, and attention will eventually return. Yet, it is not that actors in such situations are desperately or blindly holding on; many are prepared and indeed do operate somewhere else, and they have done so all of the time. What becomes important then are the relays between those who venture off, seek to cultivate, or are enfolded into new terrain, and those who remain, bear witness to changing or obdurate conditions in place, while each position remaining somewhat peripheral and not overly dependent upon each other (Hillenkamp 2015, Cielo and Sarzosa 2018, Fernández-Álvarez 2020).

Perhaps at some overarching geopolitical level, the notion of periphery does not much matter. As the scales of locality slide up and down a vertical axis of volumetrics and incorporation, so too does the local on which we ground our positionality: that is, the ground beneath our feet. The solidity of this grounding position is undermined by the roiling geological instability and volatility to which we stake our claims, bending the lines of apprehension. In other words, there is a certain geological characteristic to the layers of sedimentation that come to un/settle emplacement (Yusoff 2021). As such, the political subject has been placed in positions that move across and beyond previously envisioned political and existential conditions. In these emergent, vague, and often unformed situations, the foundational political concepts of the self in relation to others are being transformed in the very act of becoming a subject. Currently, this partly occurs through a particular slice of the manifold planetary computational systems in which subjection occurs: polyscalar autonomous remote sensing systems. These systems are used for both utopian and totalitarian goals, but inevitably yield mixed and contradictory results. Through a kind of vicious (and viscous) combination of interdiction, immobility, intimacy, the assertion of care, and constraint, these grips on individual and collective imaginaries accelerate as much as attenuate through new technics of power and decision-making (Bishop and Simone 2020).

### Blackness as Extension

Yet, an obdurate, gnawing propulsion of difference underpinning the salience of the periphery persists. Conceptually, we might think of this through the trope and concrete experiences of Blackness, as that which sets and is set apart, as a dehiscence that continues to underpin a mathematics of what counts and what doesn't, a scale of total valuation registering a difference that continues to make a perpetual difference. Blackness both settles and unsettles the coherence of place and is fundamental to the question of what *holds* the urban *in place*—its populations, sensibilities, labor, economic and symbolic coherence. Moving from the *holds* of ships transporting slave labor, the holds for the display and sale of Black bodies, the apparatuses of immobilization on plantations, the architectures of mines, and the geological codifications of earth processes—all have underpinned the deployment of the fungibility of Black and indigenous bodies (King 2016, Warren 2017, Best and Ramírez 2021).

Here, Black existence is converted into signifiers of exchangeable value that knows no limit, that instrumentalizes the human being's essential absence of defining characteristics and niches to become, through violence, a constantly refigured domain beyond what is instituted as the *definitive* human (Jackson 2020, Judy 2020; 2021). This process haunts the capacity of the urban to hold anything together as a coherent entity—its centers and peripheries. No matter the technologies of surveillance, the lures of citizenship, the curated affective inclinations, the provisions of services and welfare by states, the agglomeration of economic functions and their forward and backward linkages across space, the city is haunted by the violence necessary in order to ensure the scalability and consolidation of the plantation and mine as critical motors of urbanization.

Holds are architectures simultaneously intersecting interdiction, boundedness, intimacy, and belonging. As such, the discursive politics and violence necessary to suture these things together operated through managing the intensive spatial proximities of masters, overseers, slaves, and the indentured. These proximities contained the over-coding of genealogical ties for some and their total abruption for others, the regimented temporalities of industrialized agricultural production and the seasonal cycles of the plot, the total surveillance of socio-spatial organization and the dissimulative operations of Black spiritual practices What Denise Ferreira da Silva (2017) emphasizes are the ways in which difference has been mobilized to constitute regimes of separability, and importantly, the mode of calculation that institutes liberty as

entwined with property. The protection of citizenship was to be secured through the availing of both land and self to the terms of property.

Property was something always in need of development. It was not simply that one was able to possess land, but property was something in need of development, in need of being attached to measures of productivity. This required a taming of the land, the imposition of disciplining maneuvers exerted by the position of the owner. The imbrication of the property form on the body of Blackness made it available to the coercive force possession required to impose a specific disposition on both body and land; to detach it from its organicity and ecology.

Urban governance and analysis has predominantly focused on what differences *mean*, what and how they signify. But an economy of *differences without separability*, to use Ferreira da Silva's term, maintains the possibilities of computation to introduce new improbabilities into the world. For, once the Black body is revealed as featureless flesh by the violence imposed upon it, there is the danger, for the capturer, that this flesh will do something that cannot be grasped by any language, any form of control. Here, a potentiality, brutal though it may be, emerges out of the most blatant disregard of one for another, a fundamental act of misrecognition, but which unleashes from the humanity denied another plane of extensionality, of the flesh without definition, which saturates the field with the very questioning of proportioned distinction, and which challenges the presumption of the individual as a master of a life of their own (Weheliye 2014). Blackness becomes less of a body and more of an *extension*, a spreading out across distance, a choreography of relays, circuits, and tracks across which collective sensibilities are experimented with.

The logics of comparison, contrast, dialectic, and contradiction disappear into an elemental position of the incalculable, and thus the possibilities of a spaciousness. Something is brought to the world without calculable value, without proportions as to efficacy and potentiality. For Blackness refuses such measures and possibilities; they are forever postponed or extended, something that will never be there as we might understand it, yet always present as an invention taking place—"out there," peripheral, but yet immediately present as a promise whose fulfillment is "besides" the point of wherever residents might be located (Moten 2018). These residents need not necessarily be "Black." This is not a matter of demographics or even the distributions of the effects of racial capital, for Blackness is everywhere, and not simply a generalized precarity (Mbembe 2017).

Here, differences generated, are *different*, in that there is no ready language to account for and incorporate them, and so they are marked initially

by intensities and thresholds rather than conceptual categories (Deleuze 1995). They act as sources of illumination that enable a visualization of the space in which distinct enactments are seen and felt as having a relationship with each other. There is a constant interplay of inside and outside—distinctions themselves that are arbitrarily marked even when assuming an ontological divide. That which comes from the inside, the indeterminacy generated by the operations of the apparently familiar, are extended, projected onto an outside, so that they may be either embraced, disattended to or defended against. At the same time, that which emanates from larger surroundings can be selectively folded in as either an active countervailing frame of reference—that which is established as a living negation, that to which we orient ourselves in opposition to—or as an implicit resource for the ongoing revitalization of cultural orientations themselves. So, there is a double projection at work, working from the inside-out, and the outside-in.

What then Blackness suggests here is a double move: periphery everywhere, but perhaps more significantly the sense that the everywhere is within the periphery, that *the periphery itself is the locus for the siting of everywhere precisely because the refusal of proportionality, assessment, and valuation enables the simultaneous existence of multiple ways and manifestation of living*. Of course, no such “emancipated” urban spaces may actually exist, given the constantly engineered scarcities of land, resources, affordance, and the regimes of governance that exist to skew the distribution of opportunities.

But one of the implications of Blackness coming into the world is that any procedure for holding territories and bodies within a particular logic of emplacement is also continuously unsettled by enactments of agencies that create dispositions *besides* these logics, right next to and aside their predominance but also in their very operation. These manifestations of a *besides* are not autonomous zones or trajectories of liberation, but something more mundane, modest, and ordinary. They constitute a periphery not marked with specific identifying characteristics but with the capacity to generate specificities that exceed the available accounting procedures. They are ways of organizing inhabitation that operate in the midst of neoliberal urban built and social environments as their *inseparable difference*, positing scenarios that can neither be generalized, scaled, or transferred, yet nevertheless exist.

### Extending Tangier

I want to illustrate these points in the context of Tangier. On the surface Tangier is easily available as an iconic case of the periphery’s ambiguity. It is perhaps the world’s largest Southern city where Europe can be clearly viewed

across a narrow strait. It was once the administrative purview of seven different European nations, inscribing morphological divides in the city that largely persist to this day. But in the past two decades, Tangier has gone from being a kind of backwater city, peripheral even within Morocco, living on the exotic orientalism of its past—a city of intrigue, massive gold reserves, and narcotic haze—to a massive construction site and the ascendant center of Morocco’s growing economy. Equipped with the continent’s largest port, soon to be doubled in capacity, one of the world’s largest automobile manufacturing plants, hundreds of clothing and textile factories, and heavy investments in transportation and logistics infrastructures, Tangier is widely viewed as a kind of “core periphery.”

Peripheral, in that it retains locational advantages in terms of cheaper land prices, labor markets, and flexibility of regulations. Core, in that it is rapidly becoming one of the world’s centers of transshipment and is a place of convergence for Morocco’s diaspora and national population, with 2.5 million persons of Moroccan origin transiting through Morocco every year (Vogl 2015). It is at the center of Morocco’s aspirations to be the predominant broker for consolidating West Africa’s economic potentialities. The Tangier region materializes much of Morocco’s nationalistic aspirations, and it is also availed to various accords that enable the extension of various facets of European sovereignty into its territory through various apparatuses of policing, repatriation of investments, and exceptional property regimes (Hagmann 2021).

Substantial state involvement in property markets and infrastructure development in recent decades contrasts with a protracted history of auto manufacturing, which largely accounted for the production of much of the city’s built environment. Across an undulating landscape, dense settlements were built by an assortment of extended families, informal associations, and developers over many years, usually without governmental and service articulations to the rest of the city. Bni Makada, Bir Cherif, and Benkirane, to name a few, remain tightly knit “hill topping” bastions of the poor and working classes, who have incrementally materialized substantial improvements to their respective built environments over the years. While now fully incorporated within the city, these settlements, frequently referred to as “favelas” by youth who live within them, continue to posit atmospheres of contention, militancy, and independence—a source of anxiety for the ruling regime. In the valleys between the hills and toward the coastal planes, tens of thousands of new “affordable” apartments have been built, not only to accommodate a growing population of Moroccans coming to the region in pursuit of new work opportunities, but also to disentangle the “favelas” of the city. To



provide a platform of individuation away from the intricate webs of collective life that have dominated the city (Bogaert 2011).

More importantly, affordable housing, according to Kurtz and Leonhard (2016) became a means of promoting regional development, of cultivating and stabilizing a working-class population. This was done through substantially incentivizing the building industry—itsself a spur to increased employment—through the restructuring of ownership on collectively held land, exemptions on taxes, licensing fees, land acquisition subsidies, mandated price ceilings of low-income housing sold in on the private market, as well as state-backed mortgages for high-risk borrowers (Martin and Mathema 2008). The years following the 2008 financial crisis, which hit Europe much harder than it did Morocco, marked a period of massive property speculation, particularly as Spanish investors were drawn into more advantageous markets. The deteriorating “European” sections of the city were rapidly converted into what is popularly referred to by diasporic Moroccans who return to Tangier every summer as a new “Miami,” replete with a rebuilt corniche, hundreds of new apartment blocks and hotels primarily geared to retirees, summer vacationers, speculators, and as destinations for cleaning the massive volume of illicit funds derived from the region’s marijuana production.

The massive scale of new spatial products substantially inflated land and construction costs, and ramified across the construction industry, as more small-scale developers, once concentrating on affordable housing, quickly grabbed as much land as they could, and quickly started putting up buildings that were either held back from the market in anticipation of increasing value or were released to occupation half-finished. As might have been expected, the attempt to simultaneously pursue large scale affordable housing production *and* facilitate speculative investment in a built environment designed for more high-end uses and occupations imploded (Kutz 2018). This is in part due to overproduction and the redirection of affordable housing stock to lower-end speculation, as many Moroccans acquired two or more properties to either hold on to or rent for income. Housing shortages for the poor and working class thus persisted, to be compensated by an unprecedented volume of autoconstructed buildings, estimated to be close to one hundred thousand units in the past five years (Benarrosh 2019).

While much of this Tangier story adheres to the well-known trajectories of neoliberal urbanization, I am particularly interested here in a multiplicity of dispositions whose characteristics remain more unsettled and ambiguous. While much of the built environment may continue to exude a sense of incompleteness, even excess, building continues to the extent that

entire new districts are being constructed from scratch by ensembles of scores of small and medium scale developers putting up one or two apartment blocks. Over a period of less than five years a newly built region north of Mesnana and east of Manar has literally appeared out of nowhere—an area of five-to-six-story blocks whose commercial zones are almost entirely dominated by building supply, furniture, hardware, and tile stores. While the state remains heavily implicated in the production of housing for an aspirant and growing middle class, the allocation of land and resources for this piecemeal yet mass-produced affordable housing at the city's periphery is more heterogeneous (Kutz and Lenhardt 2016). It entails a combination of competing local “authorities,” religious-entrepreneurial groupings, and purveyors of illicit economies. In many ways they constitute a “real” property market for the region.

Nevertheless, and just by my own anecdotal account traversing the different districts of the region, there are no less than four thousand incomplete, unoccupied, or barely occupied buildings in Tangier. Easily attributable to overproduction, there is something more complex about this picture that queries the very notion of the “uninhabited.” Rather, it entails a series of specificities not easily comparable, not readily indicative of a general trend. While certain macro-economic and political trajectories may constitute a viable genealogy for this disposition, what any individual “case” might signify is often not readily apparent. So what are these dispositions of the uninhabited, and what implications might they have? Initially, the easiest entry question might be this: uninhabited for whom, and according to what evidence.

Many apartments are not officially rented or occupied but are the locus of a circulation of temporary occupants of varying backgrounds, nationalities, and migratory statuses. The buildings may not be fully finished, maybe are being held back from the market in anticipation of increased valuation later on, may never have been intended for immediate occupancy but rather act as placeholders, and thus lack electricity and water connections. On some occasions, the developer lacks the money for maintenance or taxes, or faces undo debt obligations or even extortion from competitors. Whatever the reason, the building usually has been assigned a guardian, or a guardian imposes himself unofficially on the scene. They then make particular apartments available under the table for a fee. In other circumstances, apartments are unoccupied simply due to the season, where the owner is an MRE (Moroccan living abroad) who only occupies the facilities at certain times or is keeping it for later on or for other family members and does not want to engage in the bureaucracies of formal letting.

In other instances, the apparent vacancy is deemed a resource in reserve. Here groups of extended families or even neighbors, most usually in one of the city's "favelas," have mobilized meager savings to acquire land before the price escalates beyond their collective means. Given the short-time frames legally instituted in terms of developing that parcel, they construct a building for later use. This is an interstitial position. They may be unwilling or unable to extricate themselves from the entangled small-scale economies that dominate their present residential location. This entanglement requires constant attentiveness, recalibration through negotiations with neighbors, and participation in a multi-dimension associational life. So, they await the fuller economic elaboration of their prospective, new surrounds, incrementally testing the waters, waiting till the time is right, if indeed that time ever comes. There is also an atmosphere of a rush to build, a kind of mimetic frenzy, anticipating the prospects of unaffordable land, construction costs, shifting governmental policies and more extensive competition. They build as quickly and as much as possible in the present with the conviction that eventually viable occupancy rates and thus profitability will be attainable. Here, incompleteness is turned into an advantage, as it permits access to either financial relief, debt rollovers, and tax exclusions. These are not so much "failed" projects but rather indicative of the faith in the generativity of "delay," while nevertheless, the instantiation of, and access to, a physical asset is secured. These assets sometimes act as a currency, where buildings are swapped for others, or for other businesses and opportunities. Given the circulation of rumors that constitute the bulk of information across a city where official records are hard to obtain, where decisions are held close to the chests that render them, many projects are initiated in anticipation of others. Rumors about new factories or airports or logistical zones will sometimes be sufficient to put up a housing or commercial development now, which remains nearly but not totally complete, so as to get a jump on what is coming.

There are swathes of self-constructed buildings that seemingly stand incomplete for protracted periods of time, waiting for other plots to be filled in with similarly incomplete constructions—such as those evident in the Oudaya district. The intent here is to make minimal expenditures in order to emplace facts on the ground as an invitation to metropolitan authorities to regularize land and/or to provide the necessary articulation to essential urban services. Eventually these rudimentary constructions may be completed and inhabited—and some are indeed inhabited at least provisionally or occasionally—or their owners are often willing to consider other options. They may aggregate their small holdings for a small developer who will

build an apartment complex and allocate flats at no or little cost to the owners. In contrast to the rush to build, many projects are in no hurry, slowly and incrementally taking shape over time.

In some instances, large developments ran out of cash and interest. In Boukhalef's scores of homogenous apartment blocks, many unsold flats were offered to the designers, firms, and building crew as payment for their work. These were personnel that largely lived in other regions of Morocco and thus did not occupy these flats or know quite what to do with them. In many instances they were availed to migrants from other parts of Africa, until their density exceeded levels deemed acceptable by other residents, and so these migrants were forcibly evicted in 2015. Increasingly deprived of stable emplacement, this nevertheless has partially fueled a growing trade in availing temporary quarters at inflated prices for them, instantiating a captured market whose proceeds contribute to the eventual finishing of projects (Bajalia 2021a).

Some, more upscale projects, are intended to refigure the geopolitics of the city itself. While the formerly European districts of the city have been increasingly turned over to the speculative elaboration of a new Miami Beach geared to foreign visitors and MRE's on vacation, this unsettling of an older, entrenched commercial power needs to reterritorialize itself, and this is taking place in Branes and Moudafine with large swathes of apartment developments geared for upper-middle-class consumption, but more immediately are instruments to constitute a new "center" for the city, yet to come. Standing within an intersection with blocks of newly built but largely unoccupied twenty-five story buildings in every direction, a constant stream of people passes taking cell phone pictures of the signboards placed outside the sales offices. Here the "not yet" seems to prevail but with the trapping of inevitability, just as similar trajectories are being replicated in other parts of the city, attempting to lure attention and investment.

What prevails in all of these dispositions is the sense of dissimulation, bluff, opacity, and the simultaneity of diverging temporalities. They unsettle the dominant trope of inhabitation as that of continuous residence by nucleated families, couples and single individuals, and an expected trajectory of starts resulting in inevitable completion along a time line of progressive stages. The resultant picture is much more blurred, particularly in the way in which these seemingly diverse dispositions offer a certain resourcefulness to each other. Occupancies can be postponed because the opportunities for auto manufacturing are unabated and wage labor, while increasingly dominant, has nowhere near displaced the city's reliance upon popular econ-

omies deeply imbricated in the thick entanglements of residencies collectively enacted across most of Tangier's neighborhoods (Bajalia2021b). The affordable availing of land and housing to the large numbers of MRE's who often face increasingly precarious circumstances in European cities, yet who largely remain there, expands opportunities for labor but also fuel the elaboration of an urban fabric that is available to flexible experimentations because it is not yet definitively settled with specific vested interests, consumer demands and expectations. Indebtedness is a fungible status often able to be passed along, deferred, and hedged in creative accounting measures, particularly given the synergistic relations between large volumes of liquidity generated by illicit transactions seeking more formalized "narratives" of origin.

Intricate grassroots information networks are capable of detailing the varying genealogies of specific projects, about who is in need of what, and under what circumstances particular affordances could be attained by lending some kind of hand, or extracting favors, trading obligations, or channeling influence elsewhere. Vacancy and under-capacity are not simply signs of failure, hesitation, blockage, or hedging but become instrumental in other ways in terms of how they can defer surveillance, embody compromises among antagonists, stake a claim on a future or hedge against the oppressiveness of a present past. There is a widespread sense in Tangier's working-class districts, for example, that they are being surrounded by concerted efforts to not only eventually displace them but to discipline them. They sense that there are systematic attempts to turn them away from their religious or cultural preoccupations, and to shift the locus of moral authority toward the active shaping of more cosmopolitan individuated districts that, while being populated by those coming from all over Morocco and sometimes beyond, will constitute the real ethos of the city.

As such, these districts actively try to become a surround themselves. In other words, instead of retreating further inward into the dense matrix of lanes and steps on steep hillsides, they find ways of extending themselves into the newly constituted districts and large-scale apartment blocks through improvised markets (Ben Hamouche 2009). They become mobile service providers undercutting the prices of more formal commercial ventures, spread rumors about djinns and dirty money and bad construction practices, raid construction sites for materials to advance their own incremental additions to bare brick homes, but above all offer their attainments over time—their food and clothing markets, associational life, protection services, and welfare guilds. As indicated earlier, vacancy often signals the possibility of experimentation. Not so much with the vacant space but across the surrounds

in which it is located. The not yet settled becomes a locus for unsettling sometimes overly sedimented commercial and familial relations. It is a space opened to try something else not yet encumbered by the consolidation of a fully occupied new neighborhood.

All of this does not mean that the uninhabitation ceases to be a problem, that it is never an instance of failure, that it does not represent an intensely skewed and unjust housing market damaged by speculation and overproduction. It does not mean that the strong conviction in the eventuality of “usefulness” will inevitably come to fruition. Substantial expenditure is placed in cultivating residencies that are not readily on the horizon, and an often debilitating urban politics is played out in overstretched accommodations and land distributions, where everyone is assured their piece no matter its viability. The majority of Tangier’s residents remain ensconced in over-dense, under-served neighborhoods increasingly subject to internecine contestations about religion, illicit economies, ethnic division between Arabs and Berbers, and everyday moralities. Despite the significant expansion of labor markets in new factories and ancillary services, youth face increasingly precarious employment prospects that continue to fuel aspirations to leave the country, particularly when faced with the conspicuous display of money on parade every summer on the part of some MRE’s on the city’s waterfront.

Still, everyone seems to participate in a kind of lunging forward across emptiness, across some interstitial gap in time and space. The gap points to a zone beyond inhabitation; not only where inhabitation is not normatively seen as possible or probable, but where the question of inhabitation itself is suspended as a matter of “life’s priorities.” This is life always veering off the charts, zigzagging its way through enactments that would seem to undermine its prolongation, neither in a desire for termination nor the declaration of some super-immunity, but simply the magma of living with its errant flows and total irresponsibility (Tonda 2021).

Empty lots become thriving cafes for factory workers on break. Almost all buildings in the “favela” Bir Cherifa remain incomplete, often windowless, scattered across the large streets the municipality introduced to help, according to one official in the planning department, “straighten out” a “wayward” population of determined Islamicists posing as gangsters posing as Islamicists. Where at one time residents in the El Mer district circulated through each other’s homes to keep the secret police at bay, and at one point spread out across the city leaving the neighborhood virtually empty for days. In Quartier Innache, a guardian showed me an otherwise empty apartment block completely loaded with Zara imprinted clothing lines, all in perfect

condition, all awaiting some uncertain fate. Emptiness is instrumentalized to do something else.

Tangier demonstrates itself as a “region of blackness.” Not in the sense of demography or racialized capitalist topography, but in the sense that an *everywhereness* is embodied in its built environment. Again, not in the terms of architectural vernaculars or logics of construction but in the proliferation of specificities regarding the state of existence of its manifold building projects. What looks generic, standardized, hastily conceived, or the fractal replication of overly familiar forms indeed may be just this, but also can, not inevitably, manifest a specificity not easily translatable into or captured by a familiar language of value or efficacy. While we might try to trace what that specificity does through a detailed genealogy of how it came about, these are insufficient in accounting for exactly why this particular disposition took place, why this particular instance of vacancy exceeded its apparent terms. That in all of the efforts to render the city according to well established ideas of profitability, affordability, and availability—to narrow the registers of functionality and use—there remains and proliferates at atmosphere of multiple specificities, of uses that can go any which way, of outcomes that at least for momentary periods are not definitively settled.

### Rethinking Urbanization South of Any Border

All of these (re)arrangements underway in Tangier inscribe residents in an ongoing series of interactions, forms of witnessing and gathering, and modes of “being together” that construct a particular kind of exposure to the larger world. It is an exposure that ensconces them in materialized sensibilities of encounter that are specific to the immediate environs in which they operate. The borders between territories constantly shift between administrative designations, zones of social intimacy and emotional attachments, circuits of everyday mobility and shifting forms of authority. Yet, the intersections among conduits of movement, spaces of relative domesticity, the modulations of public and private interaction, the routines of everyday social reproduction, and the vectors of sensation marked out by the materials and designs of built forms generate a specific orientation and capacity. They make a specific imprint on the larger urban surrounds. This is not the only orientation nor the only impact. But it is something *specific*, immeasurable, and untranslatable that these arrangements make possible. It constitutes what could be called a form of *material resistance* to the discursive-oriented domains of policy and design that seek to outline *relational frameworks*,

which seek to attribute particular values, positions, and measures of efficacy to a particular territory.

It doesn't mean that these frameworks are superseded by these specificities, only that another, albeit tacit, dimension of collective agency is materialized. Such specificity of a material resistance can be important in terms of engaging the potential trajectories of territories that otherwise might look similar, be subject to basically the same array of conditions yet diverge in terms of how they do or do not endure. Here the South instead of connoting a specific political geography is a process of reterritorialization across bordering, a process that might take place in any locale. It is a profusion of inoperable specificities not easily "framed" in any language or calculus of power relations. As such periphery everywhere does not so much make the designation of the South irrelevant but rather resituates it as a mobile operation, a precarious potentiality that can show up anywhere.

These arrangements occasion and precipitate *navigation*—a practice of finding one's way, rather than assuming a fixed position. Or, where such an assumption of anchorage can never be taken on its own terms but only in relation to what surrounds it, as wherever or whoever one may be is moved across a multitude of external witnessing, impacts, and uses. The entire environs is sensate in that all materiality pays attention to what it "touches," and every material, and thus project, is a conduit of forces and histories passing through. Whatever exists in place is a product of things being carried and displaced, and every place is a node from which lines of flight ensue. The matters of where to go, what to do, how to do it, while embodied in a series of routines and culturally sanctioned practices are not only being incessantly even if only slightly revised in terms of responding to new contingencies. But they are also being retailored to provide options and alternatives when familiar conduits begin to decay or need to be repopulated by new personnel or techniques.

Perhaps more importantly, such navigation is driven through an active unknowing or social distancing from established familiarities and assumptions. It is an act of deferring any definitive "settling in" of a dominant mode of valuation or ways of attributing significance and authority. Hedges against debilitating uncertainty have to be balanced with the warding off of entropy that comes from overly static orientations. After all, the density of materials, social compositions, livelihoods, and performances always suggest a wide range of possible inclinations and ways of doing things whose curtailment requires excessive expenditures of effort. The costs and advantages of holding things down must constantly be weighted with those of letting things



go. This is the case even if people face operating completely in the dark, or at least feeling as if they do so. This is reflected in the increasingly common practice of working-class residents of popular Tangier neighborhoods to both shore up their claims on land and local belonging while at the same time engaging in what might seem to be frivolous expenditures to acquire property far removed from their familiar stomping grounds, less as speculative investment but more as possible lines of flight and reorientation.

Given the production of ambiguity, ambivalence, dissimulation, and transparency in varying rhythms, and sometimes all at once, continuous questions are raised for residents about what to show and how, what to make available and in what degrees of exposure. A sense of commonality is often tacitly affirmed through a shared series of problematics and everyday exigencies. The information required for styling everyday performance comes only through social exchanges that continuously hold something back in order to elicit the inquisitiveness and inquiries of others, which are taken as demonstrations of intent (Jiménez 2021). Thus, arrangements of built environments are not only manifestations of property relations, policies, and affordability but are materializations of navigational circuits, of all the concrete histories of residents making themselves available in specific ways to each other. Construction workers, material suppliers, bureaucrats, financiers, bank officials, land brokers, guards, and enforcers are constantly being reshuffled in Tangier's enlarging peripheral developments, with a panoply of favors and obligations being offered, repaid, deferred, or resituated. Any crystallization of property often seems to suggest the question: property of whom and what? Whose properties are entailed, and how are they related in shifting ways beyond property's intended role to stabilize and fix?

Fundamental questions about where we are located and what we can do with each other, what is relevant to consider as a plausible factor in determining what we can do, how broad or narrow should the frame of reference be in considering the viability of any course of action, what can we reasonably attribute to be a cause of any particular situation, and who are "we" to begin with, are all questions that instigate contested decisions that affect how any urban space is perceived. The structuring impetuses of culture—the ways in which it represents questions of circumscribing fields of value, membership, obligation, and vectors of affordance—are thoroughly intersected by apparatuses of calculation and representation capable of traversing conventional boundaries of all kinds. Thus, the figuring of territories of consideration, of institutionalized relationships among actors, agents, and things, in order to produce specific meanings associated to specific actions

are always potentially *unsettled*. They are both by the unanticipated ramifications of the very enactment of culture in any particular instance *and* by the enfolding of culture within a multiplicity of computational domains or regimes (Citton 2017).

This does not mean that “cultural practice” needs to assume some kind of integral structure. It does not require homogeneity of orientation nor risks a wholesale loss of specific ways of valuing things. As the sustainability of any cultural orientation depends upon how it operates through the differences it is capable of producing in the thoughts and behaviors of individuals associated to it, the integrity of practice is not dependent upon simply repetitive sameness. For, we know that the performance of orientations always generates slippages, elisions, and error that generate compensations and new behavior (Butler 2009). Here, we return to the point made earlier about differences being *different*, in that there is no ready language to account for and incorporate them, and so they are marked initially by intensities and thresholds rather than conceptual categories.

So then how to explore “Black” orientations to urban spaces that treat them not as residual, ruined, obdurate, or emergent. But rather all of these trajectories simultaneously, according to varied rhythms of intersection where it is not possible or even useful to measure proportions, i.e. the questions of how much. While many spaces in a region like Tangier might clearly be viewed as “marginalized” or “left behind,” we ask, “left behind what”? Particularly as they often seem suspended in time, neither awaiting an inevitable disappearance nor eventual renewal or remaking. While tracing genealogies of development or appropriation may have important use, the complexions of these spaces seem detached from any inheritance nor suggestive of any judicious objective. While they may exude an atmosphere of haunting, of something not put to rest or foreclosed of fulfillment, they exist as a specificity that refuses relations that would accord them some value. Such might apply not simply to Tangier, but a “third world” in general.

The spectral appearance seems more a kind of bluff, a way of not taking themselves seriously. Instead these spaces seem content to remain detached, full of things that no longer connect, a scattering neither in nor out of place. Excused from the mandates of property, of having to constantly do something to prove their worth, these spaces are available to feral, weak uses. Their endurance depends on a turning away from assessment, where the process of being forgotten combines with the confidence of stillness—quiet and being “still there”—to bear witness to the often frenzied materialization of accumulation. Spaces may be the purview of a single person, human or extra-human,

for decades, while contiguous spaces may be occupied by a different cast of hundreds on a daily basis. There is something always just out of view, and while spaces may fold in upon themselves occasioning strange and even repressive forms of authority, strange dialects and deformations, this turning away is often a turning to, a way of affiliating with things that need not impose any obligations or expectations of reciprocity.

Across all different geographies, the South may partly remain as full and empty warehouses, housing estates boarded up and overflowing, the small cafes that have seen only a handful of customers for years, the farmhouse standing solitary in the midst of logistical zones, or the massive boulevards with overgrown vegetation. These are some of the obvious signposts of just how much of the urban has become peripheral, covered with something indecipherable lacking any desire for redemption. Inviting and foreboding, signaling all kinds of possibilities but often bewilderment as to why something else has yet to happen, the South here is the possibility of things being together without the hint of a system or framework, that things can be with each other without being subsumed into an imaginary of a larger totality, which always proves itself a prison. Rather the prefiguring of abolition here is a landscape that is both useless and makes use of everything.

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