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FOREWORD

African cinema emanates from the realities experienced by ordinary Africans. This practice of witnessing and representation molds and manufactures a cultural context to tackle the colossal failure of decolonization and policies of development that the African filmmakers have identified as the necessary outcomes of rapacious and predatory neoliberal practices and authoritarian politics. This statement of artistic sovereignty and experimental ethnographic practices are a powerful expression of aesthetics and political choices in resonance with the resurrected spirits of the African archives. Consequently, there are notable counterarguments that decades of a concatenation of woes cannot be reduced neither to a culture of permanent crisis nor the predicament of catastrophic determinism in a global climate of unrest exacerbated by authoritarian nativist regimes and the Covid 19 pandemic.

African cinema makes a distinctive contribution to the field, with a unique exposition of the neoliberal genealogy and opposition to its ubiquitous logics that serve only to validate injustices and regression made in the name of managerial liberalism and to combine globalization, free-market fanaticism, corporate greed, and its asymmetrical economic dominance that naturalizes a global caste system. A strong rebuke against neoliberalism's global dominance that generates shrinking security, multiple recessions, endless austerity, and a culture of permanent anxiety and precarity. In addition, the poverty of the neoliberal legal tradition is now being challenged by the revival of the African archives and the right of necessity as a demonstration that crises are not simply forms of catastrophic determinism. Hence, the necessity to appreciate creative responses to crisis and survival strategies that are urgent in order to overcome creating possibilities out of constraints at a time when there are complaints that critical works have either ran out of steam, or are too complicit or too distant.

African cinema is an important cultural activity and the contributions of African filmmakers' comprehensive worldview are vital to understand: a materialistic and selfish culture embedded in the circulation of capital and the geography of mobilities; the capacity to deliberate between real and fake experiences; the crucial question of how to live a productive and fulfilling life outside of the nihilism of the hegemonic corporate order; and bringing

to the fore the question of authenticity and legitimacy reflected by the power of consensual narratives.

In fact, a cinema that is important for producing from the margins an understudied but vital exceptional knowledge on African lives, builds assets from lived realities that reflect authentic African images and values against neoliberal policies, financialization, and disposability, instead of connections and care, which result in hierarchies between winners and losers. This is particularly so for an economic system that requires the oppression and exploitation of labor to create values for outsize profits.

In the process, images are also tied up to the valorization of human capital and an intersubjective experience of ethics in synergy with national sovereignty as a form of economic asset, which is often devalued by neoliberal policies that profess to value it with their neoliberal pieties. On aggregate, the economy is based on conflicts, and winners and losers, where neoliberal policies serve as an instrumental power, not to solve social problems, but to its own finality and trading human futures in the process.

The point is that this cinema demonstrates its crucial role in the politics of decolonization and development beginning by refusing to accept the failures of these processes as its own with a magistral demonstration, in the following pages, how systems of oppression are not only creative but also tightly embedded in one another. In practice, consequently, its major contribution is the knowledge that national sovereignty is an economic asset and state power is essential to economic development, because the absence of state power to assert national sovereignty and economic control can condense into a failed state and civil war. African filmmakers, at the same time, produce a new knowledge economy that accounts for the colonial logics and racial capitalism to redefine precarity as a feeling of exclusion and lack of access to basic rights and agency, and a question of untapped potential. In practice, the power of creativity cuts through the neoliberal policing of information systems and the mantra that there are no alternatives to capitalism, emphasizing an often-neglected history of liberatory power from below.

Just to be clear, this book focuses on Djibril Diop Mambéty, Abderrahmane Sissako, Jean-Marie Teno, Neill Blomkamp, Moussa Touré, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun to shine a bright light on an African cinematic tradition that foregrounds the question of artistic sovereignty, and African subjectivity and presence in the world, reconciling the living with emancipatory forms of fictions that rupture the mirage of neoliberal governing tropes and corporate interests. In short, it emphasizes the right of necessity over capitalist necessity, where nature only serves as a resource for epic

materialism and human conquests, foregrounding short-term interest and superficiality over long-term historical and social processes.

The filmmakers do this in conditions of extreme conjuncture that they face, dominated by neoliberalism, to explode modes of fabrication and recurring governing tropes of neoliberal fictions that commodify and organize African lives to enshrine the supremacy of the market order over democracy and democratic values. These filmmakers indicate that this is not simply about politics and economy but a real cultural and anthropological revolution. This explains why African cinema serves as a site of radical resistance, and archival repository of scenes from African archives and social life, where the African filmmaker constantly connects the past, present and the future across space and time as commitments to historical truths and wisdom that solidify the public trust that informs indigenous social lives. Added to that, archives function as resources for a radical rupture to reenchant a world demystified by the failures of neoliberalism with social realities entirely informed by critical perspectives of African subjects.

To be more specific, the current tensions on neoliberalism highlight the knowledge that neoliberal capitalism is a form of recolonization of the Global South, where Africans are not simply the passive victims of history but actively participate in the shaping and making of it. It also displays a historical agency that renders relevant the evolution of neoliberalism as a concept and a practice with causal implications to the lives of ordinary Africans who are caught within these coded processes and spaces. These are implications as seen through the motion pictures selected for this work, exposing a different anthropological order where people understand the need to be part of a collective that is flourishing under social institutions.

This is the function of the artistic sovereignty and creative ways that the African filmmakers craft and frame a radical agenda, and work within agency and oppressive structural forces to reorient the gaze and fight back against neoliberal ideologies and its tentacles, in terms of accepted knowledge, injunctions, tropes, and dogmatic mantras entangled in the lives that are captured on film, while cutting through neoliberal forms of simulacra. This action demonstrates the need for the democratic ownership of cultural apparatuses.

In so doing, the filmmakers participate in leading collective action against the techno-capitalism and neoliberalism of our era buried into a post-Fordist economy and its labor regimes, and show how present conditions that are dominated by finance, a mainly services-based economy, pandemic, and radical precarity are replacing the welfare state, politics of human development, redistribution, and solidarity. To be more specific,

there is the knowledge that the notion of a 'free-market' does not exist because the government, through laws, administrative agencies, and the court, is responsible for the rules that are needed for the market to operate. The real question becomes: Who has the most power to influence market rules?

What is more, these filmmakers have established themselves as organic intellectuals, and leaders at the forefront of collective action against the alliance between authoritarian politicians and corporate dictators and the resulting worsening of the economy, and social unrest alongside increasing government repression and authoritarianism, tinged with anxieties and apocalyptic paranoia that threaten to engulf African lives.

African cinema does so with a distinctive resonance countering powerful global techno-capitalist signifiers as deficient expressions of emancipatory politics embedded in the resurgence of xenophobic, anti-politics populism and post-democratic practices steeped in Kafkaesque bureaucratic and unassailable logics aimed at making ordinary Africans depoliticized and helpless in the face of our cold, mechanized, and bureaucratic modernity, disarming from them the expressive capacity to be effective citizens. The point is that African cinema is a companion project in the African emancipatory struggle for self-determination and social responsibility. Hence, it is a cinema that highlights how ordinary Africans exist in the public and private spheres, shaping and reflecting fundamental African social values through a direct engagement with social realities.

Added to this dreadful situation are the two overlapping pandemics in the name of a failed decolonization and COVID-19, where populations deemed to be superfluous are at high risk of contracting the virus and dying from it, and turning essential workers into sacrificial lambs foregrounding a market capitalism that thrives on death. Consequently, the virus functions as an Anthropocene geographical agent, precipitating and accelerating mutations in a globalized, interdependent world where the virus spread throughout, even putting the winners of globalization in a vulnerable position. Now, with the potent forces of globalization and the spread of the virus, the world has to face a global neoliberal system, where politicians and supranational financial institutions are not responsible to the people but to the circulation of global capital that undercuts any form of redistributive policies and egalitarian social justice principles. This is how the democratic civil order is made to be expendable, because the necessity to secure legitimacy is not essential to the implementation of neoliberal policies, facilitated by the invisible hands of the market and divine providence, rather than national sovereignty and the collective rule. In aggregate, it is how lives and politics are indissociable, and how these contingency call for the right

of necessity and the idea that no one must be subjected to extreme forms of deprivation. This is important because neoliberalism introduces a messianic time and a standardized, disciplinary time wrapped around capitalist production that destruct and disorient indigenous time. It demonstrates, however, that in times of crisis, religious discourses are as rational as any other.

This book highlights a set of African filmmakers—Djibril Diop Mambéty, Abderrahmane Sissako, Jean-Marie Teno, Neill Blomkamp, Moussa Touré, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun—who meet the challenge of the weight of the cultural zeitgeist, turning cinema into a model of self-realization and organization as an instrument of infinite possibilities through the liberatory potential of history from below, and bringing checks and balances on the collusion between authoritarian governments held hostage by corporate interests. This involves championing the struggle of ordinary Africans over values, identity, and common-sense ideologies taking over the media in a global context dominated by neoliberal governing tropes affirming a sense of modernity and progress through its consumerist dream machinery where material needs cannot be fulfilled. Most significantly, this assemblage coalesces into a sort of matrix that functions as a powerful engine of exploitation and stratification linking up racialized bodies to economic possibilities. In aggregate, it is a technology that imposes its own finality, linking up notions of knowledge-power and biopower. Ultimately, this is how the fetishization of technology can be turned into a Promethean curse that burns humankind within its own pride. A similar argument was developed by Max Weber, with his concept of the iron cage of progress.

A demonstration of the resilient power of hope and integrity in the face of not only economic devaluation but also the devaluation of black lives. They do so through an archival recovery of African's indigenous cultural logics to examine African lives in their wholeness and not simply confined within the bounds of the pressures of the contemporary moment, to emphasize the possibilities of subversive practices and radical forms of sociality under globalization and neoliberalism.

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CHAPTER I

NATIVE CONTEXT: AFRICAN CINEMATIC COUNTERCULTURE AND THE CLASH OF FICTIONS— BREAKING DOWN THE HAMSTER WHEEL TO NOWHERE

The genesis of this project lies in the recognition that African cinema is a collective experience of thought and a pedagogical resource that produces a knowledge economy outside of the state captured by the global forces of corporate interests The African filmmakers are de facto agents of the liberatory power of history from below. A cinema that is embedded in social realities and consensual narratives entirely informed by the critical perspectives of African subjects, bringing to the fore the question of how to process realism and imaginative possibilities to fight the hegemony of the corporate order, managerial liberalism, entitlement, and superficiality.

In fact, there is a sharp contrast between short-term expediency and long-term sociohistorical processes with a common cause, that comes down to self-determination and a right of necessity that prevent a human from being taken out of the human condition because of debt and subjected to a form of human deprivation.

In practice, a cinema of action where images and sound become tools to elevate consciousness and achieve a culture of dignity, authenticity, and legitimacy is consequently reflected by the power of cinema.

Specifically, there is the recognition through African cinema that the commodification of life experiences is indissociable from politics and neoliberal capitalism. In doing so, the economy is not simply an automatic process disconnected from everyday life, signaling the importance of values and culture wars in our politics. This cinema consequently exposes the myths behind neoliberalism, and the fictions that naturalize and normalize the disproportionate power and influences behind rules that govern the market and organize and commodify life experiences. African cinema is able to do this because it is a marginalized and understudied cinematic work

outside the influences of big corporate power and the state, with a consciousness in the name of the right of necessity that cuts through neoliberal forms of simulacra which distract from the truth by producing dystopia where material needs cannot be fulfilled in this sort of matrix. This is where Isabelle Stengers recognizes the power of artifice and experimental fabrications, which, as she describes, are more enticing than the "truth".

Consequently, this impetus comes from the films selected in this work coming to a crescendo as a vital platform to communicate, with a particular energy and bright light, a granular and radical ethical readings and critique, aligning the constellation of neoliberalism's master tropes, conceptual logics, and founding myths as templates. These have concrete shaping effects in ways to govern and order forms of lives under neoliberalism and its aesthetic categories, by which social lives are represented. In practice, an organizational logic of capitalist accumulation and exclusion where lives are produced and determined, under a neoliberal regime, following arbitrary decisions about repartitions of capacity of productivity assigned in a top down approach according to arbitrary categories, as instruments of control. An economic model produced by the chief demons locked inside neoliberalism's consumerist dream machinery to encode and propagandize a sense of modernity and progress based on sociopolitical secular theology, where the invisible hands of the market and divine providence order self-worth and market outcomes. As a result, a theological time is introduced, coupled with the standardization and discipline of capitalist production that function as structuring apparatuses governing and ordering lives based on the constant production of the new where the past is always absent.

Similarly, an ethos grounded within the mechanics of its consumerist dream machinery, which, together, work to replace the notion of the self with a neoliberal subjectivity based on enterprise where income becomes the measure of one's market worth that is as natural as it is inevitable. This is compounded with the idolatry of innovators within institutional frameworks only concerned with the production and reproduction of market competition, creating a perpetual tension between authoritarian liberalism and the will of the majority; more precisely, creating problems that only the market order can fix.

In concrete terms, a *Homo economicus* whose life and productivity are defined and controlled by the market. In practice, it is a life that only makes sense in an interconnected and overlapping networks of enterprises, commodification, and consumption. In aggregate, it is a world driven by economy rather than history, social trends, dominant cultural ethos, or personal histories, which are conventional rules and forms that ordinary people rely upon to evaluate a productive life.

And by the same token, a radical ethical critique of the homology between the invisible hands of the market and divine providence. It features, neoliberal practices as the highest expression of free will and free choice, and that people engaging market exchanges can only be held accountable and punished according to Christian divine justice turning our politics and economy into a form of secular theology, where market competition creates winners and losers, and where the winners represent the elected few and the losers only have themselves to blame. In the process, neoliberalism abdicates all responsibility through a punitive vision of social welfare. The same applies to the states that are labelled "shithole countries" through neocolonial, demonic rhetoric steeped in racist colonial stereotypes. [1]

It is perhaps needless to add that this form of secular theology and fundamental belief creates institutions that reflect these beliefs and sustain them, to awaken consciousness on systemic economic problems and thereby creating an economy of permanent precarity while entrenching the privileges of the few.

In focusing on neoliberalism's consumerist dream machinery, African cinema turns into a ritual of truth telling, where this work refers to the 'Camera-Eye.' The Camera-eye is an embodied reality and embodied sensemaking against a techno-rationalism that reduces lived experience to the conscious brain without considering what Pierre Bourdieu defines as habitus. In Bourdieu's words, habitus refers to "a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and actions common to all the members of the same group or class (Bourdieu 1977, 86). These "internalized structures" and "schemes of perception" structure the subject's (shared) worldview and their "apperception "of the world in which they supposed to exist (Bourdieu 1977, 86)

The Camera-Eye closes the gap between people and their own images. It is a moment of truth where the filmmaker finds the forms within the un-forms and delineates a regime of authenticity from simulacrum and is based on political and historical truths rather than codes established from a genre. This is compounded with the knowledge that the burden of representation and homegrown truth disproportionally fall on the shoulders of the African filmmakers, considering a century of prejudices and the brutality of racist caricatures that have informed black representation in film history. What follows is that the African filmmaker is always engaged in a project of

[1] President Donald Trump referred to African countries, Haiti and El Salvador as "shithole" countries. Trump was meeting with lawmakers at the White House on January 11, 2018 to discuss a bipartisan immigration deal when he reportedly grew frustrated at the suggestion that immigrants with protected status would need that status restored.

counter-archive, filling the gaps from centuries of black omission and erasure. An existentialist and mystical engagement foregrounds the context of action outside of the mechanisms of global capital. This existential and mystical engagement seeks to recreate the connective tissue that binds the community together. The big picture is a transcendental experience where a group of people becomes a community. Specifically, it is when the lived experience of the community turns into a ritual and acquires a meaning that goes beyond the materiality of the experience. It takes the power of predictive vision and complot, where the camera serves as a mechanic of solutions that reconcile the living with new forms of fictions. Then fictions turn into a form of providential history, where the community comes together to feel something larger than themselves. The originality, here, is that by coming together, the community finds ways to integrate people from the outside within the group, giving them a new legitimacy.

Here, the camera functions as a magic lantern throwing a bright light into the long and dark tunnel of African history. In practice, the camera neither absorbs nor consumes the gaze but serves as a pedagogical resource to create images that the filmmaker wants us to see. It is a camera of the primal scene, the origin and the trace that signals the role of technology in the hominization of humankind through the production of language, rituals, and the ethos of life. Therefore, from an anthropological standpoint, it shows how technology is a homology with the emergence of humankind.

And that is how cinema is driven by life, by filmmakers who represent the age they live in, and the result is a strong critique of a paradigm where society and human behaviors are hegemonized and dominated by the master tropes and conceptual logics of the market economy as enabling conditions of globally integrated enterprises driving processes of globalization and running roughshod over any indigenous politics of development. This is because of the rise of geo-centric multinational corporations and monopoly over information, lack of transfer of technology and protection of competitive advantage, drying up of sources of investment and integrated industrial or technological cooperation.

What is more, this cinema unpacks with a forensic ferocity a neoliberal system of representation that structures a contemporary set of values through a flow of ideas, symbols, and sacred cows that accumulate as a string of signifiers. These allow ordinary subjectivities to map out their streams of desire, effects, and contagion as evidences of social engineering that call out a particular strain of social pressure, proof, and ultimately conformity, to strongly indicate a chasm between images and social reality.

The goal of the current work is to provide a critical introspection on neoliberalism's perverse ability to play both a utopia and dystopia,

balancing out the violence of racialized capitalism, abject inequality, and the utopian myth of productive and enlightened aspirational modernity driven by social possibilities.

This is a unique moment for African cinema, dismantling these constellations of neoliberal master tropes to shine a spotlight on contact zones where neoliberalism and African culture meet and clash. This reveals gaps between neoliberal ideology and discourse and the sociological realities on the ground, which are made irrelevant by neoliberal logics. These gaps allow for insights parsing how neoliberalism operates, the multiple crises and lines of exclusion it generates, and the need for a representative democracy to handle social conflicts in a productive fashion. In practice, this shows how social laws and the laws of the market operate and clash through relationships of power in spaces where everything is mediated by capitalist commodities and poses the crucial question of where reality ends and fiction begins.

Most importantly, storytelling practices engaging with compelling narratives that unravel agency give voice to open zones of transgression for ordinary Africans to demand responsibility and accountability from their leaders. They also emphasize the need for a new social democratic pact for a free market that is failing to meet both the desired outcome of its ideology and its stated productive social outcomes through a trickle-down economy, emphasizing equality of opportunity and social justice, and a modicum of wellbeing for all the polity.

More precisely, this means reconciling a history of material forces with democracy through the making of an 'architexture.' Architexture is an ensemble of surface and deep textures seared into indigenous archives and values-mediated production, firmly ensconced in Africa's narrative of repairs and reconstruction. This is achieved through an archive of Africa that functions as a bridge to revisit and reconcile the past, present, and future where these multi-temporalities are unified through a synchronicity between history, nature, man-made disaster, and culture. It shows the gap between modernity and authoritarian corporate reality through the distance between formal and real sociopolitical rights to escape what François Hartog calls "presentism" (Hartog, 2015).[2] The danger of presentism is the failure to consider the failure and ruins of the past. It is the reign of the status quo and oppressive conformity based on non-contemporaneity and commodity fetishism. In practice, it is a form of perverted utopia driven by a nostalgia of present images manufactured by corporate advertising propaganda

[2] Hartog, François. Regimes of historicity: Presentism and experiences of time. Columbia University Press, 2015.

machines and the urgency to pay attention to the recurrence of fascistic political projects.

African cinemas are both cinematic texts and paratexts, where the latter do not simply serve as extensions of the text but help shape the context of our first and formative encounters with the text; specifically, highlighting the need for introspection to understand how racialized oppressive economies are perpetuated in the present, while opening zones of transgression against routinized of thinking in the continent. .[3]

African cinema functions as a renewable and self-sustaining resource. On reflection, what drew and compelled this work on African cinema and the topic of neoliberalism is the power with which the former shines a bright light on the latter's processes that resonate with an ideology and aesthetics of the *Homo economicus*.

To put it bluntly, a world where conventional rules and behaviors are lifted into a state of exception that hegemonizes and renders socially acceptable some radical forms of structural dysfunctions, commodifying subjectivities and behaviors converted into a zero-sum game where forms of rapacity, predation, plunder, and money personify social status, enrichment, recognition, and the quest for power. These personifications are paramount where the consumption of the spectacle of black death is normalized, balancing out both black death and black performance, which is strongly criticized in African cinema.

In practice, this neoliberal system of exchanges that does not produce moral agents but confuses unconscious obscenity, sabotage, and the infallible instinct to do the wrong thing, resulting in the promise of freedom and wealth that triggers troubling consequences in terms of psychic dimensions, as well as the production of a litany of psychopathic and sociopathic characters. These are the embodiment of the neoliberal individualism's winner-takes-all ideology, often leading to regressive perversion and deadly illusions, proving that economic conditions can have devastating consequences on human nature. Thinkers such as Isabelle Stengers, moreover, have pointed out how the sacred right of the entrepreneur creates its own human nature (Stengers, 2015, 63). This is how neoliberalism institutes a new 'natural' order. In this case, it is about changing human nature, where the individual and a culture of autonomy supersede society. As Margaret Thatcher once said, society does not exist—there are only individuals, and the free market is the instrument and the invisible hand that allows interactions among people through a new natural

[3] For further reading, Gray, Jonathan. *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts*. New York: NYU Press, 2010.

order where free people follow their own objectivity rather than a form of general will.[4]

Indeed, neoliberal fictions drill deeper into human cognitive processes, desire, and emotions to trigger the dark side of human nature. In the process, human costs are ignored, the social contract is damaged, and fortified lines of exclusion are created, preventing the rest of the population finding their place in a world where a functioning and productive democratic civil order is made expendable. Furthermore, a politic of precarity and disposability is enshrined, where the state is privatized alongside clientelist patrimonial networks rooted in traditional patriarchal networks. Here, the laws serve plutocrats who have captured the state and there are no such things as public good, social justice, and redistributive practices in these privatized and closed networks where all safeguards to guarantee free care are eliminated.

For starters, the works of Djibril Diop Mambéty, Abderrahmane Sissako, Jean-Marie Teno, Neill Blomkamp, Moussa Touré, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun selected for this paper feature a cinema from the margins that strongly communicates a local counterculture seeped into anti-corporate and anti-authoritarian politics, to reset the terms of their own culture that is often understudied in cinema studies. These filmmakers do so by signaling a strong indication, to those who pay attention, of a renewed African social life that foregrounds autonomous spaces and collective structures for the mutualization of vital resources, to show a local version of the right of necessity that fundamentally resists the excesses of neoliberal individualism for a new social and democratic contract.

So, this cinematic production challenges—front and center—received assumptions about neoliberalism and the law. More precisely, it challenges the power of the law and its civilized function, and the self-regulatory power of the market to regulate itself. These received assumptions about the modern liberal order, law, and self-regulatory practices are ensconced in the notion that the modern subject is a responsible citizen bounded by his recognition of the appropriate civil order and the power of the market to regulate itself. These principles go to the heart of ideas of equity and equal opportunities under the law which is degraded in films selected for this work, primarily because of a litany of technocratic authoritarian regimes installing a rent-seeking economy alongside patrimonial and clientelist networks embedded in traditional primordial patriarchal values.

Given all this, it cannot be repeated strongly enough that this project is being caught within a devastating global pandemic that will enduringly

[4] For further reading, Berlant, Lauren. "Cruel optimism." *The Affect Theory Reader*. 93-117, 2010; Stengers, Isabelle. *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the coming barbarism*. Open Humanities Press, 2015.

affect lives and modes of living by worsening an unfettered neoliberalism, which was already laying bare the dramatic consequences of failed decolonization, and the perpetuation of lethal structural inequalities and postcolonial disparities framed in neoliberal deregulatory economic policies. These allow foreign transnationals to vacuum up local resources while imparting crumbs to the corrupt local elites, but nothing to the disenfranchised natives, and thereby creating a radical transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. In the process, this displaces all forms of democratic politics and public deliberation, and installs precarity, in order to justify market supremacy as an effective and efficient order to sort out the productive population from the unproductive population, and to justify neoliberalism's brutal exclusionary policies developed by scholars such as Saskia Sassen (2014).[5]

In short, a demonstration of the collusion between capital and the formation of the modern European nation-state ensconced in a long history of colonialism and imperialism, and the continuity of power relationships and historical and legal claims that must be considered to understand the global making of neoliberalism, which in turn complicate the notions of geography, borders, and sovereignty claims.

Equally, much of what animates this work is the circulation of satellite concepts and the ramifications of neoliberalism, and it structures globalization, environmental crises, forced migration, pandemics, biopower, technocracy, and the consequences of a strident chauvinistic nationalism connected to populism that African cinema addresses.

In effect, these neoliberal policies are now aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic as viral forms of an emerging system that completely transforms space and time in a negative way, rendering even the powerful victors of globalization vulnerable. This vulnerability can be the starting point to making different policies to states that have been rendered subservient to market forces, under-investing in public services and unable to perform functions such as social justice. The subsequent collapse of assets, such as education, healthcare, and the environment, is generating a precarious system and traumatogenic institutions colluding with reactionary political regimes, to produce schizophrenic subjectivities captured by the movies of Djibril Diop Mambéty, Abderrahmane Sissako, Jean-Marie Teno, Moussa Touré, Neill Blomkamp, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun. These movies are an African expression of technology of knowledge that I will develop in the following pages as the Camera-Eye. More precisely, it is a set of movies that is immediate and authentic, and constitutes an indigenous

[5] For further reading, Sassen, Saskia. *Expulsions*. Harvard University Press, 2014.

discourse of technology mapping onto a site of radical resistance and archival repositories of African life, championing the emancipatory struggle of ordinary people against a powerful neoliberal ideology that assimilates and coopts all social forces, and turns them into production and commodity. Redefining domination and emancipation become complicated by constantly blurring the line between freedom and domination. The task here is to develop new forms of subjectivity that go beyond a neoliberal *Homo economicus* determined solely by the forces of the market and the danger of exploitation.

Consequently, the cinematic authors and films selected for this work exemplify the Camera-Eye as a technology of knowledge for their forensic research into the roots and outcomes of neoliberal ideology and fictions on the African continent that explode the cognitive frames imposed by this ideology and these fictions. These filmmakers highlight the reality that neoliberalism might not have started as a self-serving racket, but it has become increasingly difficult for the state to deal with market forces and the ensuing political crises that have objectified life into a commodity to be exploited and discarded. In the process, this has brought to the fore a powerful contradiction at the heart of neoliberalism, which in fact has worked to diminish the values of human capital rather than raise them. This knowledge comes packaged with a cinematic originality that unveils how cinematic fictions, political theory, and political economy are so intertwined.

These filmmakers, moreover, have been selected for the ways in which they understand that opposing a broken system is not enough. They are aware of the power of their artistic sovereignty, and use it to showcase local experiments and models in radical resistance politics that deserve to be scaled up for productive emancipatory politics, allowing future lives to inhabit the planet in harmony with the environment. In this sense, economic salvation is not simply the realm of the few aiming to secede into the world of corporate sovereign power and gated communities, while subjecting the rest of the 'unwashed' masses to biopolitical disciplinary forms of surveillance and control, mainly for exploitative labor. In practice, cinema is turned into an instrument of liberation, using a set of Camera-Eyes to demonstrate that life cannot be reduced to just an economic problem, but human life is also the product of different politics and aesthetics inhabiting the Earth.

Amid these dire conditions, my interest for this project stems from the failure in Africa of, first, modern statecraft and, second, economic development theories and ideologies. My contention is that through a rigorous investigation and unpacking of the effects of this failure, traced and framed through the lenses of African cinema, it will expose the reality that

the greater the failure of neoliberalism, the more extreme its ideology and fictions become.

This, of course, engages with ideological interpretation and challenges our basic assumptions with which we understand economic signs and fetishes. Particularly, it looks at the homology between economy, fiction, monetary signs and fetishes, and cosmopolitan aesthetics and dynamics, which are integral to the organization of modes of production, the value system, and its domination over private lives. This is where competition becomes the defining characteristic and citizenship is reduced to consumption, or the lack of it, as the market only delivers benefits for the few while the masses have only themselves to blame, through this naturalized formation of winners and losers where the market makes sure everyone gets what they deserve.

To begin, an examination is made of the role of the cultural repertoire to provide conceptual resources and pedagogical tools to evaluate economic policies and the possibilities of a more equitable society through a shared reality and a productive social consensus reconnected to the indigenous philosophy of the Ubuntu, rooted in the basic wisdom that human agency is collectively produced through productive interactions and intersubjectivity.

Consequently, this work problematizes notions of tontines, *Djeu'kom*, or *N'jangui* as structures that organize and determine outcomes creating a homeostasis that fight against drastic inequality and political polarization. In practice, a sort of utopian liberalism inseparable from a set of traditional organic organizational values featured in social epistemologies and processes that are context-dependent and -specific. These social epistemologies and processes are also based on a system of interactions and exchanges embedded in a spirit of equality, social trust, enfranchisement, transparency, and mutualization of resources underlying a culture where people understand that the collective agency is conflated with culture as the effect of values-mediated production. In effect, the tontines are indigenous markets immersed in indigenous currencies and multiple forms of democratic exchanges. They are also sites of the commonality of bio symbiosis that recognize and guarantee the rights to breathe, security, and basic social needs to all, with the understanding that human beings experience situations of dependency that require positive support. This is the difference between flourishing and merely surviving, and the recognition of social nature as a human right that cannot be revoked.[6]

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[6] For further readings, Brownlee, Kimberley. *Being Sure of Each Other: An Essay on Social Rights and Freedoms*. Oxford University Press: USA, 2020; Mbembe, Achille. "The universal right to breathe." *The Moment* (Critical Inquiry blog), April 13, 2020.

In the same vein, it is the production of oppositional subjectivities against primitive accumulation, rugged individualism, short-term wins, rent seeking, and rentability, with the knowledge that economic and social salvation are the same, rather than the privileges of the elected few. In practice, this means reclaiming forms of sociality and relationships that preceded the colonial experience, and these forms of decolonial practices are highlighted by the African filmmakers selected in this work for the ways in which they address African local homegrown epistemologies and practices, to demonstrate local agencies outside of organizations and normative institutions of power.

Still, with concepts such as tontines, *Djeu,kom*, or *N'jangui*, African cinema signals an interest in harmonizing the poetic and the Africans' temporality that is specific to the region, to renegotiate our relationship between (a) neoliberalism's teleology and linear history, and (b) the Africans' time. In particularly, there is the knowledge that neoliberalism's teleology does not constitute a cultural horizon for African thoughts. There is, indeed, a temporality rooted in distinct ontologies and a worldview that are specific to Africa. More precisely, it is a temporality that resists giving primacy to individualism and the free market and demonstrates how the searches for status and respectability often contradict the practices of equality and social justice that bring stability to African communities. At the same time, there is the danger of collusion between the state and corporate autocrats, and the erasure of African history and symbols. In aggregate, human agency and contingency both play a role in contradicting notions of historical determinism.

To this end, this is how the formation of economic totems and symbols and its auratic power, credibility, and social acceptance are fashioned, through a network of values, confidence, and desire in monetary exchanges, transactions, consumption, and circulation of goods. By contrast, African cinema decenters notions of center and periphery in economic narratives and existing geopolitics, providing and expanding narrative possibilities as a deep history of ordinary Africans and their conflicting embodied experiences as the most important informants on neoliberal metaphoric frameworks and rationalization at the site of this failure of development.

In this respect, the African filmmakers are spearheading an ongoing project to challenge rigid and exploitative assumed hierarchies of knowledge, such as the neoliberal episteme, that Mike Davis (Davis, 2006, 202) calls "epistemological walls," while foregrounding unlocked African knowledge and economic tradition. This becomes most evident in the formation of foreign and bureaucratic models of economic development as supranational performative expressions of financial institutions and state

power, to incorporate organic and localized complex systems of vernacular knowledge, methodologies, and practices that are often eclipsed at their peril.

This underscores the knowledge that economic practices are not only aesthetic experiences but also sites of legitimate political contestation, resisting market subjectivity and rationality from displacing democratic politics and public deliberation, and foregrounding issues of ethics, choice, context, and social bonds. It also demonstrates how epistemic battles converge, hybridize, and recirculate into a productive interdisciplinary form drawing from religion, economy, sociology, ethnography, and cinema as suitable tools to discuss motion pictures, emancipatory civic practices, and economic salvation through constant redefinition of public interest from the grassroots, to forge a new productive social contract. This grab bag of disciplines demonstrates that, in times of crisis, religious discourse is as rational as any other.

Subsequent to this analysis, this work probes the intersections of African cinematic aesthetics and politics, art and capital, and literary and financial realism. Furthermore, it probes the finance in fiction and the fiction in finance, and how the interaction between fiction and capital is equally intertwined, to understand the logic of the capital and its concrete and tactile consequences, highlighting the radical possibilities of the ordinary. Taking this all together, it is how African cinema operates within Jacques Rancière's notion of the "ignorant schoolmaster," which is that of an educator who refuses a position of mastery over his students to permit epistemological equality and equal participation in a pedagogical exchange (Ranciere, 1991). [7]

Equally, this work extends these ideological economic practices into arguments about the right of necessity to claim that the opposite of a neoliberal economic agenda is not a progressive economic agenda but democratic reengagement. It defines the market as an interaction between social capital and well-informed players to regulate exchanges of services and goods in good faith. Consequently, it is not a place where ordinary people are forced into disciplinary biopolitical relationships and denied physical and financial security, or where disposability is normalized.

It may seem strange that an economic philosophy promoting freedom and choice also teaches us that there are no alternatives. This leads to the need for democratic reengagement against a neoliberalism that has taught us *there is no alternative* to cutting taxes, cutting services, and letting the

[7] Rancière, Jacques. The Ignorant Schoolmaster, Vol. 1. Stanford University Press, 1991.

banks treat us as they see fit. The point is that the process of governing should not carried out by one ruling party with everybody else in opposition, but a working together for the betterment of all the people and all the country. The neoliberal project was always a philosophical cover for crony capitalism that betrays the public interest by rewarding vested interests for their patronage, perverting democracy and serving as a mechanism for perverting the natural function of an economy—to fairly distribute goods, resources, and services throughout society—to favor the welfare of the few over the many. To that extent, consequently, neoliberalism is not simply an economic agenda. From the beginning, it was conceived as much more than that and then constructed to be so—it was in fact as much a pedagogical-cum-psychological operation to change minds across generations with regard to free-market capitalism and, for that matter, to orient all thinking in that direction, as it was a matter of simple monetary or trade policy. Of course, this had to be done with a good deal of repression and oppression backing it up, here and there. As such, neoliberalism is an effect of this pedagogy over time—we are all schooled in its 'normality'—and not a reflection of either some natural desire for it or an educated choice.

To do so, there is an emphasis on fictions and a strategy of ethical self-fashioning by addressing technologies of representation, neoliberal narratives, and the power of self-representation. This is as a practice of political and social engagement to reconfigure postcolonial amnesia, structures of silence, and predatory models of governance that were imposed on the continent by colonization and neo-colonization, and by the destructive integration of the continent into the world economy and into what the Nigerian scholar Biodun Jeyifo has called "arrested development (Jeyifo, 1990)."

After all, faced with multiple crises, artistic power does not stop where the real world begins. More precisely, ordinary people negotiate fiction and reality to find solutions to real problems, ranging from the economy to climate change. To be sure, therefore, there are possibilities to appreciate the surface and deeper truths, and the centrality of subjectivity, interactions, and social trust in emancipatory politics.

In doing so, this author argues that the African films participate in a set of indigenous practices, and the filmmakers selected in this work—Djibril Diop Mambéty, Abderrahmane Sissako, Jean-Marie Teno, Moussa Touré, Neill Blomkamp, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun—overlap in their work in terms of hyper mediation of indigenous ontological autonomy, thematic echoes, shared worries and hopes, and the more complex facets of African identity. These facets are not simply the products of imaginary mediation but of collective citizenships, where equality is not abstract but set within

networks of filiation, reciprocity, and productive effects where social utility and social usefulness are indicators of values, rather than dog-eat-dog, cut-throat, lethal competition and endless consumerist incentives.

For a start, that discursive logics seared into the dialectic between tradition and modernity; the belief in technocratic and biopolitical forms of management based on algorithms, numbers, and impersonal rules, and secular dogmatism versus everyday life practices and relationships and who gets to decide the foregrounding of notions of public morality, democracy versus redistributive neoliberal practices. This is where African cinema turns into a form of public square, where ordinary people refuse to be ignored while emphasizing that the many crises facing the world have to do with the tragedy of the commons. The tragedy of the commons is a resource dilemma concept in a world where resources are finite and some people are overconsuming at the expense of others, leading to a general depletion of resources. The answer to this tragedy is not to be found in neoliberalism, which only uses crises to further consolidate its power as Naomi Klein demonstrates in *The Shock Doctrine*, where neoliberal theorists advocate using a crisis to install unpopular policies while people are distracted. African cinema, however, demonstrates the need for the fundamental extension of democracy, public morality, and the right of necessity based on global solidarity and cooperation.

Within this context, this collective of African filmmakers are redefining the notion of cinematic mediation by capturing, with anthropological precision, energetic indigenous African forms of organizational and social complexities, where those private actors build up networks of support systems to raise their profiles and standing. This redefines notions of the global neoliberal symbolic order and the role that ordinary Africans play amidst institutional brutality and decay, economic stagnation, and intellectual and cultural exhaustion that come packaged with the failure of neoliberalism and the politics of modernization on the continent. In doing so, those ordinary marginalized Africans are experimenting and refining modes of symbolic and economic engagements and building assets to not only resist these failures but also to challenge and outlive repressive and predatory powers through a constant and consistent process of creativity. This process absorbs crashes, developmental, business, and financial model failures, and technocratic and bureaucratic institutional decay foregrounding the knowledge that the social democracy—the social logic of investments and credit, of social needs and social cohesion—overrides short-term selfishness and instant gratification served by extractive and predatory capitalist practices. In short, it is the knowledge generated by the awareness and consciousness that the frantic race for competitiveness that has been

worsened by a system that seems to work only for those at the top, which undermines its democratic legitimacy. In the process, African cinema strongly criticizes that the allocation of resources through domination and opportunism is not only illegitimate but also prevents the proper functioning of a public sphere. Consequently, this cinema demonstrates forms of organized responses to neoliberal catastrophes and existing global geopolitics. This comparative and transnational analysis exposes the global consequences of the crisis of globalization and the significance of local actors in Africa, and the role of transnational actions and solidarities in turning unlivable conditions into something livable.

Most importantly, this work of cinematic mediation is important because it shows marginalized ordinary Africans who are strongly refusing the decadent culture ushered in by the deceptions of capitalism in the epoch of high consumption. Plus, it is the resulting disembodiment and disconnection from the real, and the resignation fueled by nothingness, ennui, and the void where reality has completely disappeared under the heavy weight of spectacle and deceptive publicities, creating a seductive hyperreality blocking any form of reciprocity of symbolic exchanges and paving the way straight into Babylon where people keep trying to summon something, anything, beyond the material world rather than living in oblivion. Therefore, it is about the nature of the real, ushering in the reign of simulacrum where nothing is real. Most importantly, there is the loss of an eschatology where history gets crushed under the weight of excessive reality in a world that has now become opaque and resistant to any kind of meaning. African cinema, on the other hand, explodes these oppressive and discursive economic norms, to restore a form of historicity where reality and opportunities for reciprocal symbolic exchange and sociological analysis can take place, following an eschatology based on the right of necessity where no human being must be subjected to any extreme form of hardship or deprivation. This right of necessity is also a form of enforced cosmopolitanism, where the notion of cosmopolitanism must take an ethical dimension; particularly, the demand for hospitality.

At the core, it is a foundational anthropological contradiction that indigenous people were ‘primitive’, ruled by instincts, and that Western culture, neoliberalism, and the modern nation-state have largely been a process of lifting humans out of those base instincts. African cinema, however, claims that indigenous cultures are still alive and well, and are very civilized in the best sense; they are sophisticated and ethical. The real problem, however, is that we have large societies that are inevitably structured by impersonal technocratic rules rather than by relationships. That is a problem that modernity is still struggling to solve.

Furthermore, we seem to live in a postmodern era when the grand narratives of religion and political ideology seem to have collapsed. Through the right of necessity, however, African cinema claims that religion and political narratives are still potent forces, and play a significant role in the backdrop to the rise of illiberal populist forces braced by a dystopian illusion, to discuss the notion of the right of necessity as a pretext to engage the place of the political theology and the sacred in our contemporary secular political context. In this, there is the recognition that substantial works—for example, the work of thinkers such as Carl Schmidt, Max Weber, Wendy Brown, Achille Mbembe, Jacques Derrida, Patrick Boucheron, and Giacomo Todeschini—have addressed the role of the sacred in secular democracy, and issues of identity politics and radical individualism. Finally, democracy's past reveals its future in the work of Jacques Derrida's notions of "democracy *a-venir*" and Giorgio Agamben's notion of the "coming community," which is the power to keep the spaces of positive affirmation and future revision open.[8]

These notions of "democracy *a-venir*" and "coming democracy" highlight the role of cinema, its contribution to the debate about the condition of habitability, and the difference between notions of fatherland and the home as spaces as imaginative and material. This complicates notions of binarism and symbiosis, durability, exploitation and fair reparation of wealth, ideology versus lived realities, the concept of the master of the universe, differences, and agency.

This is where Achille Mbembe argues that these socioeconomic processes are neither inevitable nor fatal, and the African continent is also a laboratory where the opportunities for creative metastasis are the ripest and where, for centuries, we had to "recreate the living from the un-livable". This is the relationship with the living can be a source of inspiration at a time of economic and climate crises. Where the relationship to objects perceived as entities with talismanic power and vitality that could help to create new relationships between humans and objects, while technological tools become extensions of ourselves. And, finally, it is where the concept of commons existed in precolonial societies and assumed that certain goods are inappropriate because they participated in the regeneration of the life of more than one.

Consequently, there is strong evidence that African cinema is a regime of practices, a ritual pact, a protected discursive space of artistic sovereignty, and a privileged, insightful site of expertise that constitutes a

[8] For further readings: Fritsch, Matthias. "Derrida's democracy to come." Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory 9, no. 4: 574-597, 2002; Agamben, Giorgio. The coming community. Vol. 1. U of Minnesota Press, 1993.

discursive community challenging neoliberal narrative orthodoxy. It examines this community through an exhaustive ethnography, highlighting the knowledge that the economy is a social system fixed in specific usages and practices. These cinematic representations tackle how these social systems clash with the normative power of neoliberal market rationality that incorporates monetary, fiscal programs and practices, and circuits and flows of power. That focus features a media-making practice integrated into a collective action, to unmask and unravel a real project of antidemocratic practices and production of precarity through unprecedented policies of austerity in which many generations of Africans are sacrificed by neoliberal global forces without proper recourse. This systematic framework exposes the knowledge that coercive politics, more often than not, align with *laissez-faire* capitalism in places where the privatization of the state is imbricated in structures of dispossession and expropriation aligned with structures of profit and disinvestment of public resources and services, to enforce a neoliberal order while decimating all forms of collective resistance. Indeed, without the administrative state as the ultimate enforcer to lock in the dominance of the rich, the codes of neoliberalism are simply fleeting and ineffective, which emphasizes the idea that political freedom does not correlate with economic freedom. In the end, the need for institutional power to restrain the more destructive forms of greed and aggrandizement. Unfortunately, today's institutions have lost their corrective, soul-forming power on the continent. This institutional decay is the byproduct of cynical and authoritarian politics, and a belief in the power that our institutions should be formative.

For one thing, the African cinematic narratives constitute attempts to reflect on the post colony and the notion of historical materialism; or more precisely, the idea that history is a totalizing experience, often embedded in the tyranny of the present that clouds any form of historical perspective. This work, however, draws from the films of Djibril Diop Mambéty, Abderrahmane Sissako, Jean-Marie Teno, Neill Blomkamp, Moussa Touré, and Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, highlighting the genuine contexts of artistic sovereignty and introspective narratives, to challenge grand historical narratives and notions of values and belonging. The author refers to this as the Camera-Eye to emphasize the materiality of indigenous cinema, which cannot be simply reduced to the production of imaginary mediation but is more of a communal form of cinematic aesthetics that makes the transcendent look routine. At the core, the Camera-Eye calls into question the labor of visibility/invisibility, and the chains of production and values that make up the infrastructure and energies that support the production of images. As a result, there is a need to demarcate aesthetic forms from the

anthropological and the documentary perspective. Furthermore, it is the relationship between images and forms of critical ontology that resist neoliberal ideology in an economy where not all transactions are even visible, highlighting the invisible circuit of capitalism. This dynamic occurs alongside an understanding of the correlation between speed and economic transactions, as the latter cannot be tracked with the naked eye. Indeed, in this economically turbulent era in which value and product feel cleaved from one another, the bitcoin boom saw billionaires created overnight, implausibly rich off the back of an intangible currency. Amid this economic chaos, faith in labor and a knowledge of how surplus values are created makes abrupt sense, and this responds to the need and ability to differentiate between idealized forms of authenticity and inauthenticity, commodity fetishism, and destructive efficiency versus real needs.

Eventually, the Camera-Eye makes space for an economy of images that challenges flows of capitalist imagery, its infrastructure of the visible and the invisible, and the subliminal voodoo crammed into neoliberal commodity branding and information manipulation that shape the geography and flows of these capitalist infrastructures, creating perceptions that often override reality. This author, on the other hand, makes available homegrown African counter-narratives that validate collective political and social liberation steeped in humanism, and a universalism that is unafraid of differences. They display forms of accommodative wisdom through a unique symbolic economy of human relationships and transactions, via communal banking systems called tontines, *N'janguii* or *Djeu'kom*. The legacy and intellectual muscles of these African local banking cooperatives, in which there are African modes of sociality, come packaged with a sophisticated economic philosophy based on the knowledge and the practices that social investments, social needs, and social cohesion override short-term selfishness and instant gratification.

African cinema consequently practices an indigenous technology of the Camera-Eye to point to the missing images and the absent reality that resist neoliberal rationalities and practices. This is through the exposition of the operational ritual-based economy built on reciprocity, exchanges, and mutual dependency at the foundation of the communal societies that display forms of conceptual imagination and highly developed philosophical systems based on horizontal ethical commitment to the finitude, fragility, and mutual dependence as foundations of social life. This is a form of secular religion based on the right of necessity and the idea that no one must be subjected to extreme forms of depravation. For sure, these communal forms of cooperative financial systems are not simply the products of human rights idealism but also the creators of precarity and insecurity. They are not