"The Old Man is Dead": Hip Hop and the Arts of Citizenship of Senegalese Youth

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Abstract: The 2012 Senegalese presidential elections engulfed the country in unprecedented controversy, violence, and protest. Urban youth in Dakar animated the massive opposition movement that eventually led to the incumbent's defeat through voter registration, public critique, and mass mobilization. Two prominent factors fomenting youth action were the direct engagement of a host of well known rappers and the pervasive power of hip hop culture. This article probes the valence of the globalized art form of hip hop as a medium of political identity formation and a language of resistance in these elections through considering the spatial practices and imaginaries of rappers and their followers. It argues that hip hop fosters new geographies of citizenship inspiring urban youth to transgress prescribed boundaries in allowed speech and political behavior to make new claims on their city and nation. Insight is drawn for understanding youth politics, the power of music, and questions of urban citizenship.

Keywords: Dakar, Africa, youth, hip hop, citizenship, democracy

Résumé: L'élection présidentielle sénégalaise de 2012 a englouti le pays dans une controverse de violence et de protestation sans précédent. Les jeunes en milieu urbain à Dakar ont animé le mouvement d'opposition massif qui a finalement conduit à la défaite du titulaire par le biais de l'inscription des électeurs, la critique publique, et la mobilisation de masse. Deux facteurs importants fomentant l'action de la jeunesse étaient l'engagement direct d'un groupe de rappeurs connus et le pouvoir omniprésent de la culture hip hop. Cet article interroge la valeur de cette forme d'art globalisé du hip hop comme un moyen de formation de l'identité politique et une langue de la résistance dans ces élections à travers une considération des pratiques spatiales et des imaginaires de rappeurs et leurs public. Elle affirme que hip hop facilite de nouveaux espaces de la citoyenneté qui inspirent la jeunesse urbaine à transgresser les limites prescrites dans les discours autorisés et le comportement politique afin de faire de nouvelles demandes de leur ville et de la nation. Un aperçu est offert pour mieux comprendre la politique de la jeunesse, le pouvoir de la musique et les questions de citoyenneté urbaine.

Mots clés: Dakar, Afrique, jeunesse, hip hop, citoyenneté, démocratie

Introduction

On the afternoon of Thursday, 23 February 2012, thousands of youth from across Senegal's capital city Dakar gathered in the streets surrounding the city's Independence Square[1] in protest of the elections to be held that Sunday. Waving national flags, wearing political t-shirts, and chanting at the top of their lungs, the crowd's energy was tense and frenetic as everyone braced for the inevitable teargas and rubber bullets that would soon be fired to break up the rally. When the mobile sound system blared the rap songs which

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had become anthems of the massive opposition movement, the intensity of the protest reached a crescendo. Almost on cue, their caustic chants in Wolof, "*Góor gi doy na, Góor gi dee na, soul na nu ko*" ("Enough of the old man, the old man is dead and buried") and "*Góor gi: Na dem, na dem, na dema dema dem*" ("The old man must go, he must go go go") were interrupted by shots and stinging clouds of teargas.[2] Within minutes, the streets had been cleared. Though on this day the dispersal left no fatalities in its wake, other days had ended on a more somber note.

The chants animating the opposition movement that was spawned during the troubled year leading up to the elections were directed at the elderly[3] incumbent, President Abdoulaye Wade. By 2012, Wade's popularity had declined dramatically owing to economic stagnation, extensive political scandals, and curbs on democratic practice which led observers to characterize his presidency as increasingly patrimonial, autocratic, and even authoritarian (Bingol and Vengroff 2012; Kelly 2012; Mbow 2008). In the direct lead up to the elections, Wade had galvanized the country's opposition movement by insisting on running for a controversial third term, attempting to make significant changes to the constitution, and aggressively cracking down on peaceful protests (Kelly 2012). Violent street clashes between youth and police shocked the nation and sent a message to the international community that Senegal's reputation as a beacon of peaceful democracy in West Africa was critically threatened. On election day, 26 February, youth protesters laid low, quietly surveying some neighborhood voting booths in an effort to ensure against any foul play in what was turning out to be one of the country's most dramatic electoral test. After at least 10 people had died in the protests leading up the elections, the voting was tense but peaceful and young people jubilantly claimed their share in the victory when Abdoulaye Wade failed to win the first round.

When, on 25 March 2012, Abdoulaye Wade definitely lost the election in the second round of voting[4] to his rival Macky Sall, many international observers hailed the outcome as a solidification of Senegal's reputation as one of Africa's strongest democracies.[5] Offering stark contrast to the previous week's coup in neighboring Mali, the Senegalese elections of 2012 were seen to represent the second major democratic changing of the political guard since Independence in 1960—the other taking place in 2000 when, ironically, Wade was first elected. Echoing the sentiments of many, one young Dakarois told me after the elections: "Botswana has diamonds, Nigeria oil, and Senegal—we have democracy. This is what we do well."[6] But what had they done and how?

Central to the defeat of President Wade was the audacious mobilization of youth in Dakar, critically incited by rappers and moving to the rhythm of hip hop through Senegal's urban landscape. Through activating their networks in virtual, audio, and urban space, rappers catapulted themselves to the center of the political stage in not only the wave of protest leading up to the elections, but through inspiring a deeper public reflection on citizenship and democratic practice. The youth group, *Y'en a Marre* (YEM) (French for "Enough is Enough" or "We're Fed Up"), in particular, emerged at the forefront of youth contestation and mobilization, crystallizing the grievances of young people in the form of an action-oriented, decentralized network rooted in Dakar but operating across the country.[7]

Though the role of youth and the ubiquity of rap during these elections can be denied by few, the power of this globalized art form as a force of youth critique

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and mobilization demands closer attention. The article seeks to explain why rap emerged as a key medium of protest of a generation of disaffected youth during the 2012 elections in Senegal and how it was mobilized to create new claims to voice and spaces of citizenship. Specifically, it examines how rap music and hip hop culture act as a locus of political identity formation for youth through offering a language of geographical critique and a spatial practice of alternative place-making.

After briefly historicizing youth and hip hop in Senegal, the paper makes three interconnected moves. First, I discuss the radicalizing discursive geography of rap as democratically accessible, unbridled critique which shatters traditions of propriety and rules governing who is allowed to speak for the community. Second, I explore how rappers and their fans engage in resistance that is geopolitically diasporic while rooting their identities deeper into the neighborhood to critique geographies of exclusion and forge alternative visions of place. Finally, the last section details the material spatial practices of the Y'en a Marre youth movement during the elections as both outcome and extension of the spaces conditioned by rap and its history. Bringing together these threads, I aim to illuminate some of the arts of citizenship[8] pioneered by Dakar's youth in a time of great socio-political transformation—as well as their limits. The wider implications have to do with how we understand the nexus of space, identity, and music and the spaces of citizenship in an era of urban youth protest.

Theorizing the Spaces of African Youth

Drawing from Deborah Durham, "youth" in Africa is best conceived as a relational, historically constructed social category that is context specific (2000). This understanding emphasizes that youth, as a category of persons, is deeply tied up with power, knowledge, rights, and notions of agency and personhood. Generational struggles have long been a driver of politics on the African continent, so the question of youth and their power is not new to studies of socio-political change. However, Honwana and De Boeck (2005) argue that youth rebellion in the African setting was until recently embedded in social dynamics that did not threaten fundamental power structures. Whereas in the immediate postcolonial period, young African nations made youth the symbol of their future and attempted to channel their involvement in building the nation, African youth have emerged as rebellious "makers and breakers" in the wake of the failure of the nationalist project and the rise of the neoliberal era (Honwana and de Boeck 2005).

The disproportionate impact of economic crisis and neoliberal reform on African youth has been the subject of a growing literature over the last years. Excluded from education, healthcare, salaried jobs, even access to adult status, marginalized youth find themselves literally out of place: permanently straddling social categories and lingering in a state of "waithood" (Honwana 2012) when "becoming somebody can no longer be taken for granted" (Cruise O'Brien 1996:58). Gerontocratic power structures join with the power of millennial capitalism's material fantasies to intensify youth's marginality (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). Young men, in particular, face the strains of shifting formulas of gender power and the threats to masculinity posed

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by their impotence in economic and family life (Ralph 2008). Youth are, then, an ambiguous social force: in some contexts, they express themselves through desperate attempts at migration or acts of violence, while in others, they have emerged at the heart of democratic movements.

One key mode of expression for African youth to emerge since the 1980s is the explosive influence and popularity of hip hop culture. Paralleling a global explosion of hip hop (Alim *et al.* 2009; Basu and Lemelle 2006; Mitchell 2001), rap has evolved as a kind of lingua franca for disenfranchised youth across the African continent (Charry 2012; Saucier 2011). In a number of African settings, including Senegal, South Africa, and Tanzania, hip hop artists have fostered political critique of existing or challenging political entities (Charry 2012; Saucier 2011). However, though there is a burgeoning literature on the rising global influence of rap and a budding interest in its role as the new "mixtape of the revolution" (Fernandes 2012), limited attention has been paid to the political implication of rap music geographies in fomenting protest even revolution. Furthermore, precious little focus has been extended to the spatiality of urban music geographies in the tectonic transformations under way in African generational politics and democratic contests.

This article is premised on an understanding that youth is a social category particularly associated with circumscriptions in allowed spaces and territories of influence, for "the control of spatiality is part of the process of defining the social category of 'youth' itself" (Massey 1998:127). Generational struggle, as a result, is deeply inscribed in border crossings or the rooting of contestation in the production of transgressive spatialities—imagined and practiced—especially in the context of the new geographies of identity associated with globalization.

There is a growing scholarship examining the way that spaces of youth are being reconfigured in a globalizing Africa (Diouf 2003; Katz 2004), with increasing attention paid to the role of popular media (Barnett 2004a; Dolby 2006; Wasserman 2011) and, particularly, youth music geographies in resculpting citizenship and the public sphere (Barnett 2004b; Hansen 2006). Without presuming that music and its situated practices are necessarily liberatory, youth music geographies can, nonetheless, provide vital arenas for the negotiation of political identities through offering possibilities for rebellion or contestation, a claim to voice, group membership, or a place in the city (Kong 1995; Hudson 2006). Originally the voice of disenfranchised African-American youth, hip hop is particularly associated with its valence as a medium through which to oppose domination and authority. Given the particular power derived from its rooting in geographical critique, hip hop offers a key site for social struggle through alternative spatial imaginings and practices (Forman 2002; Woods 2007). This article examines the geographical critique embedded in Senegalese hip hop to explore the role of rap in shaping the spaces of citizenship during the recent Senegalese elections.

Trajectories of Youth Activism in Senegal

Youth in Senegal have a long history of involvement in the political process, but they erupted with particular force during the controversial elections of 1988. In the wake of those troubled elections, Dakar youth endeavored to cleanse the city

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and with it, the social and political ills they believed were corroding the nation in the now famous youth clean-up movement, *Set-Setal* (Diouf 1996). Increasingly since 1988, youth—especially Dakarois youth—have been key actors in electoral contests. Indeed, youth mobilization was central to Abdoulaye Wade's election to power in 2000 in what was then considered a landmark turning of the political tide after 40 years of Socialist Party rule (*Alternance*). By the elections of 2012, given this history, the rising precociousness of youth culture in the public imagination, and the even more weighty demographic majority represented by youth and their simultaneously declining economic positions, they were poised to be chief players.

One of the key elements of youth culture and politics during this time has been the central influence of hip hop. Hip hop culture, which includes rapping, breakdancing, graffiti, DJing, and fashion, emerged in Dakar in the mid to late 1980s as breakdancing emerged into the clubs and rap became more widely available (Herson 2011; Niang 2006). The context of its emergence was the social dislocation caused by the early years of structural adjustment, the profound turmoil surrounding the elections of 1988, and rapidly expanding access to global media. During the political crisis of 1988, major student strikes led the whole school year to be invalidated (*Année Blanche*). With youth out of school, disaffected, and searching for new outlets for expression, Dakar's own hip hop scene took root. Consistent with subaltern rap elsewhere (Alim *et al.* 2009), at first Senegalese rappers patterned their music directly after rap emerging from the US and France. Soon, their art began to take on its own distinct flavor, combining elements of local musical traditions, indigenous languages, and messages that resonated with Senegalese youth. Hip hop has since exploded in popularity and now is considered to be the premier music for young people in Senegal, with an estimated 4000 active groups, mainly in Dakar. Though the founding fathers of Senegalese rap hailed from middle-class central Dakar families who had privileged access to imported records and technology, the central pole of the scene is now concentrated in the city's poor outskirts or *banlieue*. A pioneer in the history of African rap, Senegal is now considered to have one of the largest and most influential hip hop scenes in Africa (Charry 2012).

Born in the context of political crisis, much of Senegalese rap has been highly politicized from the beginning. Senegalese rap founding father, Didier Awadi (originally with Positive Black Soul) has been known for his smart, contestational lyrics for going on 25 years. Other notable foundational groups include WA BMG 44, Rap'adio, and Pee Froiss, all of whom rapped critiquing political corruption, bribery, and the general delinquency of the country's leaders, as well as conditions of economic hardship, legacies of colonialism, and youth struggle. Building on this legacy, in the elections of 2000, rappers emerged as a major force mobilizing the youth and bringing about Alternance (Herson 2007). In 2007, however, in the context of political scandals and a faltering economy, rappers began to critique Wade. Despite this, the election was peaceful and Wade was re-elected by a surprising landslide in the first round. By the elections of 2012—in which the legality of Wade's candidacy was in question and political scandals had reached their apogee—the rappers were poised to take center stage in political contest and debate. Some even opted to join the campaigns of individual opposition politicians—notably Daddy

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Bibson supporting Ousmane Tanor Dieng and Makhtar le Cagular supporting Ibrahima Fall—however, most rappers endeavored to preserve their reputation as independent critics.[9] The larger spaces they fostered in public critique and the embodied practice of ethical, neighborhood citizenship were, as we shall see below, central to the opposition movement.

The most visible, innovative, and important form of political contestation to emerge from the hip hop scene in the context of the 2012 elections was Y'en a Marre. Coordinated by the journalist Fadel Barro, the group is led by the rappers Oumar Cyril Touré (aka Thiat ["Junior"]) and Landing Mbessane Seck (aka Kilifeu ["Senior"]) of the group Keur Gui 2 Kaolack, Simon Kouka (aka Simon), and Malal Almamy Talla (aka Foumalade) in addition to other friends who help coordinate (notably Alioune Sané, Sophia Denise Sow, and Mohamed Seck). In January 2011, YEM was formed by Thiat, Kilifeu, and Fadel Barro, who were friends hailing from the city of Kaolack, to protest declining public services and generalized political negligence, as symbolized by the rolling black-outs. Quickly emerging as a major outlet to voice youth discontent, they then played a central role in the massive protests on 23, 26 and 27 June, which successfully thwarted President Wade's proposed constitutional reforms. The amendments to the constitution—reducing the percentage of votes required for a first-round victory from 50% to 25% and creating the position of vice-president—were highly unpopular because of fears that they would allow Wade to ensure his re-election against a split opposition and to make his highly unpopular son vice-president. After huge riots organized around the slogan "Don't Touch My Constitution" took place all over Dakar, with hundreds injured, widespread damage to property incurred, and over 1000 people arrested, Wade backed down and withdrew his proposed amendments. These events galvanized the opposition coalition of political parties and a wide diversity of citizen groups, including other youth movements, which was thereafter known as M23, for the Movement of the 23 June.

In the months to follow, YEM and its grassroots network of youth chapters across the country conducted widespread voter registration drives, awareness-raising campaigns, and protests. In the direct lead up to the elections, YEM was a central agent of dialogue and opposition, fomenting vociferous debates in the press, online through social media, in the airwaves, and in the streets through their various awareness raising activities, publicity stunts, and demonstrations. Indeed, YEM activists consistently helped drive the protests leading up to the elections and many of the chants animating the protest rallies drew refrains originating with YEM rappers and singles. YEM became the barometer of youth agitation and the primary expression of youth mobilization. When the former Nigerian President Obasanjo came to Dakar as a delegate of the African Union to observe the elections, in addition to his talks with official candidates, he met with YEM twice.

The YEM basic platform throughout the elections was due process under the constitution and political independence. They refused to endorse candidates, and instead, focused on encouraging voters to resist voting pressure (including *marabouts* [religious leaders[10]]) and vote with their conscience. When they disagreed with political developments taking place, they immediately took to the streets. Though YEM always encouraged peaceful protest, faced with repression by Wade's security

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forces (especially after Wade's bid for a third term was validated on 27 January 2011[11]), some of the protests turned violent.

In many important ways, YEM and youth protest during 2012 can be seen to stem from and tap the power, philosophy, and ethical practice of hip hop. The following sections will explore the geography of hip hop music and culture in Senegal in order to explain its role in enabling the radical possibility of speaking out of turn and its embodiment in the emergence of YEM.

Rebellious Youth: Rapping Truth to Power

Consistent with the original radicalism of early hip hop in the USA, one of the reasons why hip hop has served as a language of contestation globally is through facilitating new discursive spaces of self-expression for those who may not otherwise enjoy such outlets. This is a central element of why hip hop has become a voice of resistance in Senegal. Otherwise disenfranchised from political power and sidelined from traditional avenues of political dialogue and critique, underprivileged urban youth in Senegal find a mode of democratic expression in hip hop. Rap's wide accessibility—all one needs is a voice and an audience can be found and a message conveyed, with no requirements for formal musical training, expensive instruments or equipment, or even literacy—has resulted in its dramatic proliferation across the country.

Through rap, young men, especially, are able to assume the role of spokesmen for, not only their generation, but their communities, city, even nation.[12] In a country with a strongly hierarchical age-power system, youth's taking the floor in political critique is radical in two important respects. First, it constitutes, a transgression of conventional delineations of who is allowed to speak for the community because it usurps gerontocratic traditions of public discourse. Second, this new discursive space constitutes a rupture with inherited conventions of propriety in indirect comment, through involving a direct and uncensored mode of public moral critique. In this way, rap—as a mode of speaking out of turn—embodies a rejection of the status quo that is at the core of a sort of generational revolt. Veteran rapper Keyti[13] (originally with Rap'adio) sums up the impact of rap as direct critique as follows:

> It's about the way Senegalese people can talk about certain things now – naturally ... Before hip hop, it was not here. Traditionally the structure of this society is: the elders talk ... and the youth they listen and do. But ... rappers they broke the rules. [They said] enough of the social structure, enough of the social ladder, we are all citizens. We've got our word to say. And ... little by little, people are accepting that a 12 year old can write a rap song and talk about the president. Even though the president is 86 or 90.[14]

Rap gains its power, therefore, from its biting, caustic quality, which supplants traditions of deference. In the refrains from the rap songs quoted at the beginning of this paper, for instance, the use of "goor gi", which literally means "adult man" or "elder" instead takes on an ironic and pejorative connotation of "old man", the object of ridicule. The frequent references to the president by his first name in these and other rap songs convey a clear message of disrespect. These critiques reached their apex on election day in the surprise acerbic booing by young onlookers of President Wade when he cast his vote. The event perhaps best manifested the crumbling of traditional rules of propriety in public comment and the systems of power they uphold.

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A number of rappers legitimate their claim as the voice of their communities through their role as modern day *griots* (Appert 2011; Tang 2012). Griots are the endogamous caste (*géwél* in Wolof) of traditional praise singers, musicians, counselors, and oral historians that date back to the pre-colonial West African kingdoms. Far from disappearing, Senegalese griots have been savvy at adapting their trade to contemporary contexts and pioneering lucrative niches within politics, religious, and cultural spheres. Rapper Baay Bia explicitly connects his music with the training in "deep Wolof" and historic responsibility to be the voice of his people that was bestowed upon him through generations of family griots.[15] He and other griot rappers trace the origins of rap in West African oral traditions in order to justify their authority as its primary spokesmen. One does not have to actually be from a griot family, though, to draw on and perform the function and legitimacy of the griot's role in society. Many other rappers claim the griot's historic responsibility to—in the words of rapper Waterflow's myspace bio—speak "truth to those in power"[16] in functional rather than genealogical terms (Appert 2011). This historical and geo-cultural claim to authenticity works to assert the authority of African knowledge systems and traditions of orality.

Whether as griots or not, central to rappers' imagination is their self-identification as positioned at the edge of society, looking in. For rapper Foumalade, whose rap name literally means "sick, crazy person", this means rejecting societal rules regarding allowable speech through acting crazy and, thereby, freeing his words. Hailing from the poor district of Guediawaye on the outskirts of Dakar, Foumalade studied at the University of Dakar, but is quick to assert that intellectuals "of the street" are just as important as intellectuals "of the classroom".[17]

The YEM movement has been deeply shaped by—and derives much of its power from—its connection to rap music and culture. Aside from Barro, the key spokespeople of YEM are rappers who have been involved as critics of social institutions and the political process for some time. These artists draw from the long tradition of "hard-core" political rap that has placed rappers as organic intellectuals to whom the youth look for analysis of controversial issues in society. In particular, the construction of the movement as a "sentinel" to the political process is deeply resonant with the role that the rappers have played over the last couple of decades. During the elections, Foumalade and others used this positionality to offer razor sharp criticism of the president and the democratic process that exceeded the constraints on free speech and democratic debate.

YEM refused to enter the fray of party politics and instead focused on fostering substantive dialogue about key issues at stake. One of their strategies was to release rap songs and videos geared towards fomenting debate and action among the youth. A few scathing lines from the *Faux*!!! *Pas Forcé*[18] single released just a couple of months before the elections are illustrative (here rapped by Kilifeu):

Too much is too much, there is no more to "polish"
President of scandals; you have dashed the dreams of a whole people
You divided the brotherhoods, you no longer have an exit
You made the church cry, that will come down on you
We will be present, you old thug
You won't be able to face a people standing
You have plundered all of our property and you want to carry away the last penny
We'll uproot you before you fleece us[19]

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In just this short segment, YEM is raising a critique about a number of scandals under Wade. Of particular importance is the accusation "*You divided the brotherhoods*" that Wade had politicized the country's Sufi brotherhoods. For many, this signaled a grave shift in what had been considered a key ingredient of Senegal's recipe for stability. Furthermore, the line "*You made the church cry*" accuses Wade's administration of negligence and mismanagement that resulted in the sinking of the *Joola* government ferry in 2002. With almost 2000 deaths (a large proportion of whom were minority Christians from Senegal's southern region), the tragedy was one of the worst maritime disasters in history and was widely viewed as a symbol of the corruption in Wade's regime. Furthermore, as can be seen from the tone in this excerpt, rap channels youth vitriol with intensity. When asked in a TV interview why they launch their critique through such harsh and violent language, Foumalade explained that a language of contestation must match the power of the injustice being contested.[20]

Through such dialogue, rap can be seen to offer youth a way to widen and navigate the public sphere. In light of Wade's limitations on the press (Havard 2004) and underprivileged kids' limited access to avenues for political debate, political rap has created an increasingly important and provocative set of discursive spaces—rooted in new media—which generate "innumerable, dispersed dialogues about issues of broad public concern" (Barnett 2004b:262). It opens up the field of democratic communication to those positioned on the outside of legitimate knowledge and public debate.

Placing Identity on the Edge: Claiming Space Between Ghetto and Globe[21]

If rap as a mode of speech allows the youth of the hip hop generation to occupy more radical, uncensored spaces of critique which are inscribed within generational power struggles, it is also deeply caught up in the production of alternative geographies of the city and the nation, and youth's place within. Drawing from Lefebvre, Arun Saldanha describes music as the embodied production of space: it "does not just exist 'in' space and refer 'to' space, the space of music is produced and produces identity and politics through its *corporealization*" (2002:348). In this light, a key element of the way that rap music and its followers reconstitute the democratic public sphere is through producing alternative representations of space through their conjured imaginaries and material practices. It is thus through reconfiguring the space of the city and the nation that hip hop youth forge a radical politics.

Though all music can be spatialized, "[i]n hip-hop, space is a dominant concern, occupying a central role in the definition of value, meaning, and practice" (Forman 2002:5). Hip hop has always been known for its intense association with urban places, notably the ghetto and "representing" specific neighborhoods. This has certainly been the case in Dakar, where identification with one's neighborhood—especially for those hailing from the poor banlieue—looms large in rap group identities. In their vision, the city fades into the background and the neighborhood takes center stage as the key locus of identity and collective responsibility.

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Especially in the poor periphery of the city, notably in the sprawling unplanned districts of Pikine and Guediawaye, the soundscape of rap music becomes a key ingredient of the "urban ethos" (Krims 2007). At the hands of the artists and their fans, place is conjoined with the sound and aesthetics of hip hop (including fashion, multi-media arts [Rabine in press], and graffiti) to color the neighborhood with a youthful, urban vibe. Within these neighborhoods, moreover, rappers own the street. Resonating with hip hop narratives in many other locales, most songs make reference to the street as a *way of living* or code of behavior. Far from denoting a sort of gang lifestyle or delinquency, this signals ownership over the neighborhood, a claim to the rights and rewards of the city through occupying its physical space and the space of public dialogue. Whether through the constant boom of hip hop emanating from radios or the sounds of groups on street corners practicing their art, these youth displace the traditional space and volume of the *penc*—the meeting places where elders discuss neighborly matters—with that of the *banj*, the benches on which young men practice their iconic pastime of tea-making to "kill time" (Ralph 2008) and compose their lyrics. Given the sheer number of rap groups in Dakar, most young people know at least one rapper, if they are not a rapper themselves. Broadcast into the air, the sound and meaning of their craft cannot be contained. It takes possession of the street, grounding youths' claim to voice and authority.

In these neighborhoods, responsibility to remake the "place" in line with hip hop's aesthetics and ethics is taken extremely seriously. Resonating with the wider understanding of hip hop as lived culture, many of Dakar's hip hop generation derive from hip hop an obligation to give back to their neighborhoods and their fellow disadvantaged youth. Central to the neighborhood imaginary is an assertion of the values of "social living" or the ethical obligation to take care of one's own in the face of the state's disregard. Legendary "hard-core" rapper Matador's urban media arts and education center in Pikine, *Africulturban*, has been a pioneer in community building through hip hop since it was founded in 2006. Africulturban has over 1000 youth members and fosters a range of activities from free concerts to classes offered through its *Hip Hop Akademy* in music production, dance, and web design geared towards cultivating marketable skills and creatively empowering underprivileged youth.

Similarly, Foumalade has long been involved in community activism dedicated to reforming literacy education, treatment of the mentally ill, and especially, improving prisons and the status of prisoners. Reminiscent of African American blues and hip hop musicians, for Foumalade, "the imprisoned are not discarded as outcasts; rather they are often considered witnesses to, and students of" particular geographical conjunctures and their violences (Woods 2007:72). Through his prison hip hop education programs and rap songs on prison reform, he aims to reconfigure the inside and outside of whose speech is rendered legitimate and authoritative. Building on this and other community-building work, Foumalade recently joined up with some other local rap group collaborators to launch the GHip Hop community center in Guediawaye in April 2013.

Though their spatial imaginaries and practices are deeply rooted in the neighborhood, hip hop youth are also profoundly implicated in literal and symbolic border

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crossing. Locating themselves at the edge of the city and its poor banlieue, they take ownership over their neighborhood spaces while reimagining the space of the city with the ghetto at its center. Their strategies of mobility and transgression defy the division between city center and periphery, much in the same way that Teresa Caldeira's (2012) taggers in Sao Paolo inscribe the center with their *favelano* images. Rap and its messages are profoundly mobile in Dakar, traveling through urban space in graffiti, airwaves, t-shirts, and protest chants.

Some of Wade's most controversial acts had to do with marking, assaulting, or privatizing public space through building elite toll-highways that could only be used by the rich, making street vending illegal, and probably the most symbolic: building an offensive, and now roundly despised "African Renaissance Monument".[22] Through occupying public space through sound and spectacle, hip hop youth contested this assault on public space; and they often launched their critique in spatial terms. The group Keur Gui (the founders of YEM), directly contest the privatization of public space in their song *Coup 2 Gueule* ("Outburst") taking on the failures of the Wade years. In the video, they provocatively juxtapose intensely urban scenes of Dakar (including toll highways) with lyrics describing the city as "our rural world", the poor banlieue of the globe. Thiat and Kilifeu's identities, moreover, as refugees from their city of origin, Kaolack, which is depressed due to its failing agricultural base, add another dimension to this critique of geographical inequity to highlight the struggles of the non-Dakar, "rural" world. Their art directly repudiates the geographies of exclusion they witnessed in Wade's development agenda but also connects this to a wider critique (common in Senegalese rap) of global uneven development. The ending refrain, "I don't even feel Senegalese any more", suggests that Wade had actually managed to erode the foundations of national identity. In this sense, their imaginary is postnationalist: they draw from global membership to bring into relief the failures of the Senegalese nationalist project and thereby register their distain for the vision of the nation as conceived by their "elders".

In addition to reimagining the borders of the city through deploying the ghetto and embodying the street, Senegalese rap is thus also centrally preoccupied with working the borders of the nation through geographical imaginings of global citizenship. Rap music has taken root as a key voice of political protest in Senegal because it offers a language that is both anchored in local oral traditions and linked to a global diaspora of youth protest, past and present. The contestation implied in rap, in other words, embodies the desire among young Senegalese for a voice in their own societies as well as their assertion of membership within the global community. Rappers' imaginaries endeavor to reconstruct the space of the nation through domesticating the foreign in order to question a national imaginary from which they feel excluded. Thus, in contrast with *mbalax*, the "national" music of Senegal associated most directly with the international superstar Youssou Ndour,[23] rap gains traction for youth in Senegal precisely because of its diasporic links to multiple elsewheres. Through straddling the border between ghetto and globe, rappers and their listeners use the globalized art form to interrogate and rework the space of the nation. In this vision, moreover, the city stands in for the space of the nation.[24]

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Central to this global imaginary is an identification with the black Atlantic and common legacies of struggle within global black history and culture. Senegalese rap is inscribed in the space of the black Atlantic both literally—owing to rappers' explicit identification with a global black diaspora and their geographical practices beyond Senegal—but also historically, in legacies of movement, border crossing, and traditions of cultural production within the Atlantic world (Gilroy 1993). Through grounding themselves simultaneously within the local space of the city and transnational diasporic networks, Senegalese rappers thus "reaffirm a transatlantic connectivity grounded in commonalities of racialized socio-economic struggle" (Appert 2011:16). The origin story that rap was born from diasporic connections in the South Bronx including West African oral traditions and then returned to Senegal as a sort of "boomerang"[25] is a foundational instance. However, Senegalese rappers do not take these diasporic connections uncritically. Though they identify with Western rappers and feel part of a global movement of "voiceless" youth, Senegalese rappers are often quick to distance themselves from American rap through asserting that their music is more "authentic" to its original radical roots. They take the high ground when comparing their music to that of gangsta, mainstream, or mysogynistic rap. "We can't rap about money, girls, bad behavior in that way!" Mass of Black Diamonds explained to highlight the important moral underpinnings of Senegalese rap. "It's not our reality, we are Muslims."[26]

The spatial imaginaries of the hip hop generation provided the backdrop for much of the discourse of protest during the 2012 elections. YEM's international connections—including travel abroad to mobilize diasporic groups, strong social media presence, extensive international journal coverage, and an open door for international observers at their headquarters in Parcelles Assainies in Dakar—allowed them to convey the global significance of the movement and tap into the legitimizing force of international visibility. This was, moreover, pre-conditioned and legitimated by their renown in international circuits as rappers. Their global imaginary, in other words, allowed YEM to take on the role of sentinel to the world through straddling international borders as interlocutors with the West. Through inscribing their movement within global youth and democracy movements, they fostered a sense that the whole world was watching which gave extra force to the protesters and buttressed their pride in the election outcome.

Y'en a Marre's Arts of Citizenship and the Elections of 2012

A central feature of Senegalese hip hop is its deep embedding in urban space—its grounding in intimate geographies of place-*making* (not just representing) in Senegal's urban neighborhoods. YEM built on the tradition within hip hop culture of publically performed ethical action in their campaign during the elections of 2012. Through their innovative education and direct action initiatives—like the *ElectoRap*, *Das Fanaanal*, and the *Foire aux Problemes* campaigns—they channeled transgressive speech and action into a savvy program of social mobilization. For instance, in the Das Fanaanal campaign, which was launched in April 2011 to foster voter registration, YEM urged youth to "protect" themselves, to prepare their

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weapons for the battle to come. What weapon were they referring to? The vote. The associated slogan, “my voter registration card, my weapon”, became a common refrain in protests. Importantly, like the hip hop movement in general, YEM’s approach was grounded in a young, information technology-oriented culture. The networks were rooted in new media, much of which was pioneered by online hip hop communities and Facebook pages, which served to get the word out. The mixtape of the movement—or the biting, “hardcore” rap songs released with specific initiatives—became instantly popular online and on the radio.

YEM was, moreover, immediately visible and accessible to young people who saw many of the nation’s most celebrated and famous rappers suddenly taking the microphone to talk about politics—live, in their neighborhoods. The rappers of YEM were always front and center at rallies and protests, wearing their characteristic shirts (with Y’EN A MARRE in large block letters) and, as such, were often caught in the cross-fire when the protests went sour. In the major protests on 23 June, rappers Thiat, Simon, and Foumalade were arrested for peacefully protesting—catalyzing youth outrage and action. A crowd of young people held vigil outside the city prison, demanding the rappers’ release and due process under the law. Two months later, when the sentences were due to be released, huge crowds again gathered at the courthouse, in what many feared would become a violent protest. In the end, both rappers’ sentences were commuted but the arrests had bolstered the cult of personality surrounding YEM.

Beyond their tireless press conferences, rap songs, and front and center role at the protests, YEM’s most powerful mobilization strategy was its intimate spatial practices in urban neighborhoods throughout Senegal. The following interview with Barro illuminates the way that YEM drew on and extended the power of hip hop:

> When we launched the movement, we built on the “apparatus” of the hip hop movement. It’s a huge scene. In each locality, even the most remote, if there is not a rapper than there is at least a fan of rap. And we built … on this representation of hip hop across the country, to create the network of Y’en a Marre … We produce a lot of music, host a lot of … “pedagogical concerts” where the public comes to take the floor, ask questions and we respond to bring light to questions of citizenship … So, we use the strategies of hip hop to reach a large audience (Haeringer 2011).

In certain ways harkening back to *Set/Setal* in the late 1980s, YEM formed a vast decentralized network of local associated spin-off groups at the neighborhood level, called *esprits*, or “spirits” of YEM during the summer of 2011. Though there are no formal membership cards, the esprits have representatives who interface with the YEM headquarters and de facto members who go to meetings and plan specific activities.

Initially, the leaders of YEM hosted “caravans” to spark more than 300 local esprits across the country. During the caravan, they worked with the local esprit members to hold a community-wide meeting in a public square. YEM leaders would then make presentations on the vision of YEM, answer questions, and lead brainstorming sessions with local community members about local problems. Though hosted by the local youth esprits, these meetings often attracted a wide cross-section of the community,

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from women and children to older men, including local community leaders and imams. Though the debates took on the flavor of the specific context, common issues of concern included garbage and sanitation, electricity cuts, crime, education, unemployment, and of course, the elections. During voter registration, the esprits played a key role in mobilizing their neighbors to vote. After that time, they worked to resolve specific local grievances while fomenting protest on the national stage.

Though the immediate impetus for forming the esprits was to mobilize youth voter registration, the broader vision was to catalyze active citizenship practices. Building on the tradition within rap of sustained dialogue on broader social and religious issues, YEM also took on a whole set of larger conversations regarding the Senegalese moral universe and quotidian life challenges. The movement proposed no less than a *Nouveau Type de Sénégalais* (New Type of Senegalese person) (NTS) as a credo for improved individual behavior as citizens (*Don't sell your vote*!), urbanites (*Don't throw trash on the street*!), presidents (*Don't abuse your power*!), disciples (*Don't be fooled by corrupt religious leaders*!), and so on. In this light, they aimed to make "politics" relevant by fostering a provocative dialogue on issues central to the lives of everyday Senegalese they saw as elided by politicians and other musical genres.

In the tense weeks leading up to the elections, the NTS was interpreted in many ways by different esprits across Dakar. In the protests, sometimes it meant contesting the assault on public space through forcing entry into a blocked-off Independence Square, or demonstrating at the foot of the African Renaissance Monument. When provoked by Wade's acts of violence, it often meant defending specific symbolic spaces, for instance, in shielding a mosque that had been sacrilegiously tear gassed[27] or even "protecting" residential neighborhoods. The 5 h, live-broadcast stand-off between police armed with rubber bullets and youth armed with stones in the neighborhood of Cambérène, over the government's inaction in repairing a broken sewer main which flooded the neighborhood, for instance, was one of the most dramatic of the violent clashes. As a potent symbol of state negligence, the insalubrious sewer overflow took on particularly acute meaning in Cambérène, which is considered a sacred locale within the Layenne brotherhood.

The NTS invoked an entrepreneurial morality that was envisioned as a long-term transformative project that would animate the YEM movement well beyond 2012. Leading up to the legislative elections held in July 2012, they continued their caravans around the country. It remains to be seen what role YEM will continue to play now that the electoral crisis is over, but, though less visible on the public radar, they were still able to gather large groups of young people in "brigades" to clean up the city in recent months. The leaders stand resolute that they will not give up the fight to unleash no less than a social transformation, or the emergence of the NTS on a grand scale. Our battle has just begun, Fadel Barro told me recently, "the elections were the easy part".[28]

Conclusions

In 2012, after 12 years of corruption scandals, economic stagnation, and neoliberal reform, youth in Senegal had had enough of all that was represented by President

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Abdoulaye Wade. Wade's age had become a metaphor for how far out of touch he was with the realities faced by the nation's youth. I've argued here that the opposition movement should be viewed as primarily an expression of generational revolt where the radical flavor of protest stemmed from the spatial claims-making influence of rap and hip hop culture. Building on the legitimacy of rappers as border-hopping organic intellectuals and tapping the transgressions intrinsic to politically engaged rap, Y'en a Marre youth stoked vitriolic critique and a protest movement which proved crucial to bringing the opposition to power. Paralleling the growing role of hip hop as a language of contestation for subaltern groups across the globe, the specific valence of rap in Senegalese politics derives from the particular historically and culturally relevant spaces, imaginations, and practices it inspires on the streets of Dakar.

Though fractured and multivalent, rap music has emerged as the language of Senegalese youth's dispossession, as a powerful mode of direct comment through which young men contest their marginality to assert new logics of debate and action. Hip hop simultaneously fosters a highly developed geographical critique of uneven development while offering an epistemology of place-making for youth in their endeavors to voice and forge alternative imaginings of their city. Through provocative territorial practices, Senegalese rappers and their fans re-imagine their place in Dakar and the world in order to stake claims as global citizens to the rights and rewards of their own city. Sometimes peaceful and others violent, they boisterously occupy and re-appropriate the city, from its edge, thereby upending spatialized control and (re)instilling of notions of duty to neighborhood and country. By deploying alternative representations of space through owning the street and embodying the diaspora, these youth position themselves as whistle blowers to the political process and witnesses to the world. This emphasizes how material spaces and practices work in concert with discursive and imagined ones, or how spatial representations operate as strategic sites for the contests surrounding communicative power and citizenship.

This analysis highlights, furthermore, the critical pedagogical work of a globalized art form such as hip hop in its vernacular forms as a political language of speaking out of turn. YEM harnessed the important contestational legacy of rap to widen the public sphere and provide new fora for political debate. Rap and the esprits it spawned can be seen as fostering a sort of democratic communication through which young people could become aware of, negotiate, and articulate their political identities. This draws attention to the deliberative processes of democracy while emphasizing its performative nature. It also highlights the importance of new media, music, and popular culture in providing new arenas for political deliberation and change.

But while membership in Dakar's hip hop culture is framed in cosmopolitan terms, we also have to ask what is elided by the movement's projected space of unity. An attention to the multiplicity of publics reveals the elision of women's voices in rap and its so-called democratic spaces. Though young women were very present numerically in the opposition movement overall, behind YEM's proclamations of egalitarianism, their voices are almost non-existent in rap and limited in the wider spaces of democracy and protest fostered by the movement. This resonates with observations citing the male "privilege of revolution" in Egypt and elsewhere

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(Winegar 2012). If the future social critics are going to emerge from this scene in Senegal, women will most likely not be among them, highlighting the limitations within YEM's lofty goal of total social transformation.

Finally, it is also important to probe the implications of these new spaces of citizenship in exerting real political economic change and reforming the Senegalese state. The limits of their discourse and practice as independent observers who refuse to enter the fray of party politics will be key questions going forward. The fact that the new President, Macky Sall, was originally part of Wade's party, calls into question the type of substantive political economic transformation to remedy the plight of youth that might come from the top. Only time will tell what the full implications of the artful, rowdy citizenship practices unleashed by the YEM movement will be going forward, but it is clear that the time for youth to quietly wait their turn is over.

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Endnotes

[1] Despite official rights of assembly, opposition protests in downtown Dakar were effectively banned from Independence Square through the unlawful denial of permits (Kelly 2012). As a result, protesters congregated behind police barricades in the streets surrounding the square.
[2] Both songs "Na dem" and "Goor gi dee na" are by the rapper Red Black.
[3] Abdoulaye Wade was officially 85 at the time of the elections but estimates put his real age near 90.
[4] In Senegal, presidential elections consist of two rounds: multiple candidates run in the first round and if no single candidate gains over 50% of the vote, a second round is held later between the top two candidates. In 2012, 14 candidates ran in the first round, with Wade winning 35% and opposition front-runner, Macky Sall, winning 27%. In the second round of voting on 25 March, Macky Sall won 66% of the vote against Wade's 34%.
[5] For a sample of international press coverage, see Nossiter (2012) and Hirsch and Bojang (2012).
[6] Personal interview, 27 February 2012, Dakar.
[7] For a journalistic history of the movement in French, see Savané and Sarr (2012).
[8] This is drawn from "The Art of Citizenship in African Cities" conference that was held at Columbia University in May 2011 and the two edited volumes that followed based on papers presented: Diouf and Fredericks (2013) and Diouf and Fredericks (forthcoming).
[9] Although the vast majority of rappers identified with the opposition movement, some rappers have supported Wade. The rapper Pakoti famously supported Wade in 2007, only to be widely criticized for "selling out". No big name rappers came out for Wade in 2012.

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[10] There is a long tradition in Senegal of directives (*ndigël*) by marabouts instructing their disciples to vote for specific candidates. Though there has been no serious *ndigël* since 2000, YEM's direct manner of critiquing marabouts for meddling in politics was fresh and controversial.
[11] Wade supported the implementation of a two-term limit on presidential mandates in 2002, but later argued that his first term did not count towards this limit. A controversial constitutional committee reviewed the legality of his bid for a third term and declared it legal.
[12] The overwhelming majority of rappers in Senegal are men. Although it was out of the scope of this article to deeply analyze the gendered implications of rap, a few questions are raised in the conclusions.
[13] Keyti is one of Senegal's original veteran rappers. Although he is not one of the founders or leaders of YEM, he is considered an "advisor" to the movement.
[14] Personal interview, Liberte 6 Extension, Dakar, 22 February 2012.
[15] Personal interview, 28 May 2010, Harlem, NY.
[16] Waterflow is a member of the hip hop group Wagëblë (http://www.myspace.com/waterflowwageble).
[17] Personal interview, 21 June 2010, his home in Guediawaye.
[18] Like much rap, the title is a play on words. The immediate meaning is "Don't Force It" but "Faux" is spelled to mean "false" or "fake", lending the statement the meaning "Forced mis-steps".
[19] The author provided a translation of the French lyrics.
[20] Interview on *Le Grand Rendez-Vous* show, broadcast on 1 December 2011.
[21] This title is drawn from Simone (2001).
[22] The monument was despised because the family it portrays is viewed as culturally inappropriate, the cost of its production was exorbitant and did not rely on local labor, and all visitation proceeds went directly into the President's pocket.
[23] Rappers often identified their music explicitly *against* mbalax, which many consider apolitical and old-fashioned, and felt that Ndour's political activism unfairly profited from their work.
[24] Hip hop's urban, Dakarois imaginary dovetails with the dominance of the capital in social, economic, and political terms to often eclipse the rest of the country.
[25] This is a common metaphor referenced by Senegalese rappers. The internationally known group Daara J famously titled one of their albums "Boomerang".
[26] Personal interview, 16 June 2010, Dakar.
[27] Police fired teargas into the El Hadji Malick Sy mosque on 17 February 2012 in downtown Dakar after protesters took refuge inside. The incident precipitated a violent standoff between protesters and police and was seen to symbolize Wade's favoring of the Mouride brotherhood (the mosque was Tijani).
[28] Personal interview, 2 July 2012, YEM headquarters.

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