An invitation to transform your vision of the cultural mobility ethic from an African perspective

A place for cultural mobility justice that centres an ethic of care on the social justice agenda for alternative world building

BY UKHONA NTSALI MLANDU

On the Move is the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 66 members from 24 countries. Since 2002, On the Move provides regular, up-todate and free information on mobility opportunities, conditions and funding, and advocates for the value of cross-border cultural mobility.

Co-funded by the European Union and the French Ministry of Culture, On the Move is implementing an ambitious multi-annual programme to build the capacities of local, regional, national, European and international stakeholders for the sustainable development of our cultural ecosystems.

On the Move regularly commissions researchers to investigate different themes closely related to the network's activities and the work carried out by its members. Reflecting on transversal concerns and key areas of artistic and cultural mobility, the network tries to establish a clearer picture of the current movements and trends while formulating policy recommendations.

https://on-the-move.org

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Mlandu also has a special interest in the politics of public space and place-making, spatial and gender justice (including the concerns of cultural workers who are mothering – in the fullest, most inclusive sense of the word), heritage, and memory. All her work is concerned with decoloniality and a black radical feminist position as central to the transformation and imagining of justice, repair, care and equity. This includes using and developing a healing justice framework to address social justice. She has curated a number of festivals, programmes and public art interventions including the public art live installation #100AfricanReads.

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Foreword

by Marie Le Sourd

An invitation to an invitation

This publication is not the usual kind co-produced by On the Move. This is not a guide; it is not an advocacy paper nor a piece of academic research. What Ukhona offers us instead is an invitation in response to an invitation of our own. The process began when Ukhona was invited to write a document addressing the issue of cultural mobility in an African context – as while many studies exist on the topic of cultural mobility these relate more closely to a European context. From the original commission and brief: 'This research is expected to focus on definitions and motivations behind mobility patterns in Africa while referring to mobility funding schemes and practices not "under the radar" in an African context, as well as to approach the complexities linked to visa processes or refusals between Africa and Europe.'

This invitation was answered by another kind of invitation from Ukhona – an invitation to change our mindsets, particularly for those of us in the more privileged Global North, and to transform our ideas and assumptions about the reality of cultural mobility when rooted in an African context.

Ukhona's invitation can be read as a protest, as a reflection, as a manifesto, and above all as a real attempt to shift our understanding of the human, economic, political, societal and environmental realties that underly the idea of a more ethical mobility for artists and culture professionals, and to place at the core of this idea the notions of solidarity, care, hospitality, and mobility justice.

You may be challenged by the format of this document, but this is a crucial part of it. This invitation to transformation does not have to be read in a linear way or in one sitting. Instead you can use it as a reference, as a basis for discussion by taking its definitions and points into your own programmes and schemes, or as a catalyst for an unlearning process that challenges your assumptions.

We are therefore grateful to have this invitation supported under the **Deconfining project**. This EU co-funded initiative aims to create improved and fairer cultural ties between Europe and Africa by developing a sustainable reference model of cooperation that will later be extended to other regions of the world. This invitation to transformation can be seen as a less formal, more personal piece of writing to complement this reference model of cooperation.

Ukhona's writing complements an initial, data-led advocacy report focused on Schengen visas and the practical obstacles faced by artists and culture professionals in Africa.[1]

Thank you Ukhona for this tremendous and human-centred work, which has continued through discussions that started in Tunis,[2] through meetings in Prague, Bratislava and Belgrade, and through the many challenges of your life in your village.

This report is dedicated to Art Moves Africa, one of our dear On the Move members, which currently faces challenges in sustaining their work to support mobility within the African continent and to provide in-depth research on cultural mobility in Africa.[3]

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[1] Schengen Visa Code and Cultural Mobility: Latest Insights with a Focus on Artists and Culture Professionals from the African Continent, October 2023:
https://on-the-move.org/resources/library/schengen-visa-code-and-cultural-mobility-latest-insights-focus-artists-and

[2] Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu was one of the speakers of the Cultural Mobility Forum held in Tunis on 9-10 May 2023.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WDAwjLZkoo&t=1966s

[3] **https://artmovesafrica.org/en/home-english-version/**
Direct weblink to the researches: **https://artmovesafrica.org/en/about-amas-research-program/**

Foreword

by Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu

I had intended to do this research with a colleague who is based in Zimbabwe who seemed not to have received any of my messages inviting them to collaborate on this project. In previous collaborations we had encountered connectivity as one of the challenges that stood as a barrier to our ability to dream and imagine together. We have nevertheless achieved things together in spite of this. This time around, my travelling schedule, their connectivity issues, and my return to a South Africa plagued by power cuts made this co-creation impossible. I share this to say something about the digitisation of processes, and how there is an assumption about the extent and swiftness and seamlessness of the internet and other supporting mechanisms which in reality is not true for everyone.

As such, this work has taken longer than anticipated to finish. For one, I was overwhelmingly exhausted after a month in Europe for some speaking arrangements related to the same topic. The trip was well supported. My various hosts were incredibly supportive and proactive in making sure I was comfortable. I felt seen. There were numerous moments throughout the planning of the trip where all involved recognised the opportunity to practice the solidarity that we have spoken about to create an enabling environment for another to facilitate the kind of mobility justice we want. A huge thank you goes out to the Embassy of the Czech Republic, the entire team at the Prague Quadrennial,[4] my dear friend Kataria Fagula who was my host in Slovakia, the team at transit.sk under the leadership of Judit Angel, the team at the University of Arts in Belgrade,[5] and lastly to On the Move for being so humane in the ways they have facilitated and activated support, as well as for the grace that they

have shown to my writing, creative and spiritual process, all of which play a role in how I show up in the world for the work that calls me.

Having said all that, I do want to put to you that the embodied reality of moving through the world as a black woman with my passport – even though the South African passport fares better than most African passports – took its toll on me. I was also navigating parenting digitally for the time I was away. This is a reality for most whose work requires mobility. It comes at a cost. I returned to a level of disconnection with my children which, although not catastrophic, needed me to recognise it and give time. Parenting teens is its own genre of having multiple things to navigate. It is work. It is work that those who do it carry out with great invisibility to the true extent of the labour.

As if to say this next season would be for family, my family experienced a few losses of life, as did my village of Goshen where I am based. In my culture this means time was needed to be present to witness my own grief and that of others through observing the grief rituals. I could easily have excused myself from all of these on account of work and would have been met with great compassion. That is however not in line with the kind of presence that I am pursuing for my own life. This presence is part of the healing justice that I owe to myself, and that I feel owed by the world if I consider the full spectrum of all the traumas that have been and continue to be visited. Taking the time to not cheat the grieving rituals and process is something I can no longer live without. It has reached a point where my faculties shut down to make accommodations for what is. The season that is.

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4   With the Arts and Theatre Institute, partner of the Deconfining project: https://pq.cz/pq-2023-info/projects-2023/pq-talks-curated-by-barbora-prihodova/artists-mobility-in-connected-to-africa-realities-challenges-and-positive-practices/

5   Part of the ERASMUS+ project, Shakin: https://www.arts.bg.ac.rs/en/conference-call-in-from-the-margins-sharing-footnotes-of-subaltern-knowledge-and-practices-questioning-north-south-relations-and-ethics-of-international-collaboration/

As this was happening, I also watched the developments and tensions with France, Niger, and the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) region. I wrote parts of this as the media, within their limited and selective attention span, were giving some airtime to this crisis. I will never have the words to explain what that feels like on an embodied level. To be writing to cast a light, to add your voice to something while you watch further injustices being perpetuated. It is incredibly triggering and overwhelming, crippling and anxiety inducing. And at times I have known in retrospect what was behind the feelings of chronic fatigue and demotivation.

If you write and research, you will know about the moments when you cannot bear to face your own work, the topic, because everything just looks and sounds like a blur.

I have sat with and lived through all these but I am still very glad that life chose me for this work, as hard as it has been. I would continue to do work that contributes my voice to this important area of what we do. I would hope for conditions to do this work that only grow from the support I have experienced in this process. It makes a world of a difference. And what follows below will give you a better sense of why in this foreword I spill out my full self unapologetically because I need to be seen in my fullness with all my intersecting struggles and triumphs, to feel truly seen lest I become an object who only has certain aspects of my selfhood that are commodifiable and extractable.

With that said *makwande* (may it grow, expand, be enriched) to that which has been generative about this process and journey, and I wish the same expansion for all those who made it so. *Camagu!* (may it be so)

Definitions and key terms

Equity: 'The term "equity" refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality: Whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. The process is ongoing, requiring us to identify and overcome intentional and unintentional barriers arising from bias or systemic structures.'[6]

Redress: Remedy or set right (an undesirable or unfair situation).

Institutional Racism: 'Institutional racism (or systemic racism) describes forms of racism which are structured into political and social institutions. It occurs when organisations, institutions or governments discriminate, either deliberately or indirectly, against certain groups of people to limit their rights. This form of racism reflects the cultural assumptions of the dominant group, so that the practices of that group are seen as the norm to which other cultural practices should conform. It regularly and systematically advantages some ethnic and cultural groups and disadvantages and marginalises others.'[7]

Intersectionality: 'Intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked. More explicitly, the Oxford Dictionary defines intersectionality as "the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage". Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, etc.'[8]

Mobility Justice: Mimi Sheller defines it as 'an overarching concept for thinking about how power and inequality inform the governance and control of all forms of movement'. This umbrella term 'can help us connect personal embodied experiences of injustice with neighbourhood scale, national scale, and global scale injustice'. The capacity to self-determine one's movements is dependent on intersecting systems of oppression like racism, sexism, classism and ableism.[9]

Solidarity: Support by one person or group of people for another because they share feelings, opinions, aims, etc.

Allyship: 'Is a lifelong process of building and nurturing supportive relationships with underrepresented, marginalized, or discriminated individuals or groups with the aim of advancing inclusion. Allyship is active, not passive. It requires frequent and consistent behaviours.'[10]

Reciprocity: The practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit, especially privileges granted by one's circumstance, positionality, country or organisation to another.

African Hospitality: A distinct texture of hosting and welcoming guests from a perspective that recognises their presence and choice to grace with

6   https://www.naceweb.org/about-us/equity-definition/

7   https://racismnoway.com.au/about-racism/understanding-racism/institutional-racism/

8   https://www.womankind.org.uk/intersectionality-101-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-important/

9   https://fri.ucdavis.edu/news/working-toward-mobility-justice

10   https://hbr.org/2022/11/7-ways-to-practice-active-allyship#:~:text=Allyship%20is%20a%20lifelong%20
       process,fears%20of%20engaging%20with%20DEI

their presence your home, space, country, territory, etc. as an honour not a burden. This honour is met with warmth, generosity, and good faith that the visitor has come in peace. It is the default position to assume everyone to be of integrity and good intention until proven otherwise. The generosity is extended from a belief system that life and resources are regenerative, and this regenerative logic is beyond logic. It is spiritually generous and is rooted in a generosity of spirit. It is the polar opposite of a scarcity mindset which breeds self-preservationist behaviour based on paranoia. It is rooted in an ethic of collective care and sharing.

Feminisms: While feminism can, according to bell hooks, loosely be defined as 'a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression',[11] it is important to note that African and Black Feminism addresses the specificities and nuances that are introduced and applicable through the past and current lived experience of colonialism, slavery, racial discrimination, neoliberal realities, and all intersecting struggles that emerge from various forms of marginalisation and marginalised identities, including the LGBTIQ communities. African feminism and Black feminism demand an alternative-world-building to end all oppression in response to and as an alternative to the obvious failures of the current neoliberal, patriarchal, racist, heteronormative, capitalist, ableist world order and project.

Collective Care: Collective care is about seeing wellbeing as beyond just the responsibility of an individual, and as something that all members of a collective can contribute to and shape together. Collective care contributes to the growth and sustainability of individual members and of the movement itself. Self-care and collective care are closely linked, because self-care cannot be sustained if collective care is not maintained. And collective care is hard to imagine when one doesn't prioritise and understand self-care.[12]

Iterative Process: 'The practice of refining and improving a product, process, idea, or initiative through multiple iterations. These iterations are part of a cyclical process where steps are repeated, rather than a linear process where each step happens only once.'[13] This practice also takes into consideration that contexts are not static and unresponsive, and that processes and interventions therefore need to be dynamic and malleable.

Structural violence: 'Structural violence describes the ways in which social structures are designed to stop certain individuals and groups from reaching their full potential.'[14]

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[11]   *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate Politics* by bell hooks.

[12]   **hhttps://www.tarshi.net/selfcare/collective-care/**

[13]   **https://www.techtarget.com/searchsoftwarequality/definition/iterative**

[14]   **https://www.jstor.org/stable/422690**

Introduction

In response to the brief shared by On the Move as part of the Deconfining project, I was commissioned to write a document that would address the issue of cultural mobility in an African context, as while many studies exist on the topic they more often relate to a European context.

This research was expected to focus on definitions and motivations behind mobility patterns in Africa while referring to mobility funding schemes and practices not 'under the radar' in an African context, as well as to approach the complexities linked to visa processes or refusals between Africa and Europe.

The EU-funded project, coordinated by International Theatre Institute - German Centre, 'Deconfining Arts, Culture and Policies Europe and Africa',[15] aims to create improved and fairer cultural ties between Europe and Africa by developing a sustainable reference model of cooperation that will later be extended to other regions of the world. Building on the close collaboration between the two continents and the integration of their Capitals of Culture programmes, this project brings together cultural practitioners, policymakers, performing/media/ visual artists, regional universities, and audiences from both continents to explore and demonstrate new ways of intercontinental artistic and cultural (policy) cooperation, while contributing to a better understanding of confinement patterns from different points of view within an intercontinental perspective. All this in order to break free from paternalistic and colonial views in favour of a strong participatory attitude that provides better access and information for intercontinental mobility and transnational co-creation.

This invitation renders it important to state that this extensive piece of writing is not an academic research paper that seeks to satisfy academic research conventions and methodologies. But rather that it forms part of a series of what ought to be dynamic and evolving contributions to a perspective that has been otherwise marginally examined and considered. It therefore deliberately uses a framework and a flow of ideas that is intuitive.

'From the very onset of this research report, it is evident that as its author, I am not a dispassionate observer of the subject matter that I investigate and that the writing style I adopt blends "theoretical analysis with storytelling and the content of life" (Allen and Piercy 2005: 162) [...] This approach is also located within feminist autoethnography which is an "explicit reflection of one's personal experience to break outside the circle of conventional social science and confront, court and coax the aching pain or haunting memory that one does not understand about one's own experience" (Allen and Piercy 2005: 159). The heart, in many ways, is not left by the wayside in order to produce a report associated with an "authoritative academic style" (de Careret 2008: 238) or writing that is "removed from human experience...eviscerated – disembowelled of passion" (Allen and Piercy 2005: 163). As the author, my "emotional presence" reveals itself on several occasions in part because reflexive writing is a healing process (Allen and Piercy 2005: 162).'[16]

The resistance to a formulaic academic presentation of this knowledge is also to recognise that the aim of this exercise is to generate knowledge in a way that centres meaning-making that has emerged from engaging with material and lived experience in an iterative and dynamic process and manner. It is unapologetic in disrupting the ways knowledge is produced, organised, consumed and applied as it holds to practice what it means to be decolonial and disrupt what we centre as legitimate ways of meaning-making. This disruption seeks to

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[15]   http://deconfining.eu

[16]   From Black Blackwash Dream to the SNI nightmare?: A study of the shifting position of Black Women within a Black Consciousness Movement, Ncebakazi Manzi.

prioritise a non-linear Pan-African relationality and reciprocity (including a spiritual dimension) that is intersectional, decolonial, and African feminist.
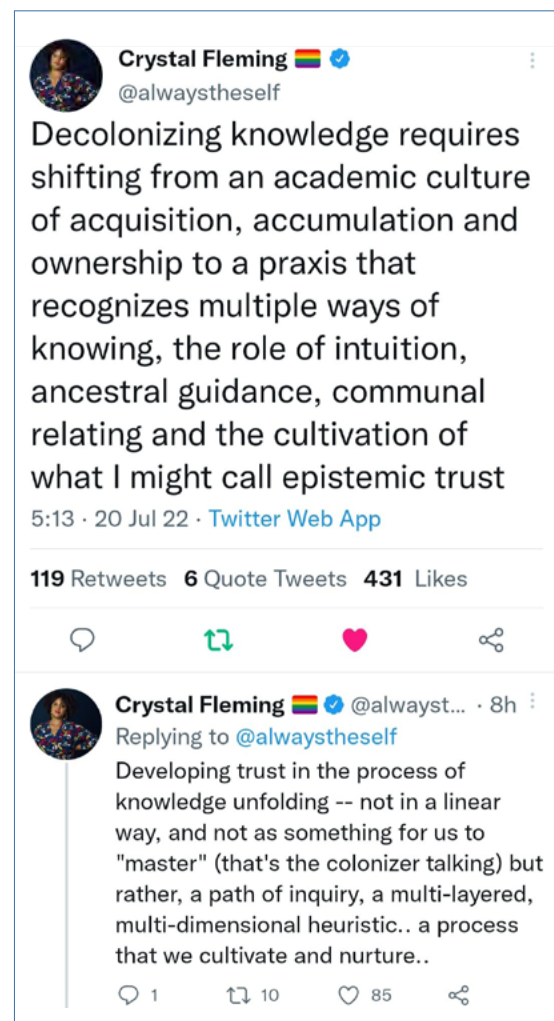
Furthermore, Ruha Benjamin asks critical questions on the actual and perpetual role of research states: 'We should ask ourselves whether research is serving as a stall tactic so we never collectively act on what we already know when it comes to engendering health and well-being [...] I refer to the datafication of injustice – the hunt for more and more data about things we already know much about [...] The research community needs to reckon with how our work contributes to structural gaslighting [...] I'll say it again: the facts alone will not save us.'[17] This is also to say that 'pathologizing the victims of unjust systems' exacerbates the harm caused and the embodied trauma.

Epistemic violence goes hand-in-hand with the over-obsession with **naming and framing** as a means to contain what is understood to have potential for 'chaos' if not 'contained', and with the self-obsessed need to invent new knowledges instead of engaging with ideas from a place of humility.

'By epistemic violence, I understand the very contribution to violent societal conditions that is rooted in knowledge itself: in its formation, shape, set-up, and effectiveness. [...] Epistemic violence is deeply embedded in our knowledge as well as in the ways on which we strive towards it.' (Claudia Brenner, 2015)[18]

'I have thus defined epistemic violence as a forced delegitimation, sanctioning and repression [...] of certain possibilities of knowing, going hand in hand with an attempted enforcement [...] of other possibilities of knowing.' (Sebastian Garbe, 2012)[19]

'Epistemic violence, that is, violence exerted against or through knowledge, is probably one of the key elements in any process of domination. It is not only through the construction of exploitative economic links or the control of the politico-military apparatuses that domination is accomplished, but also and, I would argue, most importantly through the construction of epistemic frameworks that legitimise and enshrine those practices of domination.' (Enrique Galván-Álvarez, 2010)[20]

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17   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022

18   **https://epistemicviolence.aau.at/index.php/en/home-2/**

19   **https://epistemicviolence.aau.at/index.php/en/home-2/**

20   **https://epistemicviolence.aau.at/index.php/en/home-2/**

It is for this reason that I do not wish to position this contribution in any kind of methodological research, nor do I feel the need to seize the opportunity to invent a name, category or framework for the intuitive methods employed here over and above what is already stated above. This is instead an invitation to employ all your faculties when engaging with material all at once, interchangeably, in a convoluted non-linear manner as long as some aspects of it land and prompt something in you towards regenerative action.

An invitation to the knowing that 'Transformation is a process: come as you are, transformation is a must.'[21] The times demand it. You have to be wilfully blind to be oblivious and to not recognise or feel this at an epistemic and embodied level.

'Operating from a place of woundedness also means that we are constantly triggered by the work.'

Panel discussion part of the Prague Quadriennale, 14 June 2023 (Deconfining project).

© touring artists

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21   https://blackfeministfuture.org/about-us/

Contexts and definitions

BASIS FOR CERTAIN ASSUMPTIONS

'Africa and Europe: a joint vision for 2030

The aim of the Africa – Europe partnership is to create a space of solidarity, security, peace and sustainable prosperity...

- Partnership for migration and mobility
- Cooperating more effectively to combat people smuggling and trafficking
- Addressing the root causes of irregular migration
- Identifying pathways for legal migration opportunities
- Commitment to multilateralism

Working together to:

- strengthen the multilateral trading system
- climate change...'[22]

'In this context, the two continents agreed that the Joint Vision for 2030 should consolidate a renewed Partnership for solidarity, security, peace and sustainable economic development and prosperity for our citizens and for future generations, bringing together our people, regions and organisations.'[23]

'This renewed Partnership will be founded on geography, acknowledgment of history, human ties, respect for sovereignty, mutual respect and accountability, shared values, equality between partners and reciprocal commitments.'[24]

This vision comes from the 6th European Union-African Union Summit in February 2022, held in Brussels. It joins a number of other contextual agreements, strategies, etc., which, at intercontinental, national, governmental, institutional, organisational and even interpersonal levels, form the basis for the arts, culture and creative sectors to engage with and make real these assertions and commitments. These assertions also suggest an interest in cooperating between African states and European states across the board.

It is therefore natural and reasonable to expect a commitment to collectively determine what this should look, feel, smell and taste like. This expectation must be viewed within the context of a non-linear view of historical, present and future realities to form part of a cyclical understanding of how these interweave and move, in ways that are interconnected, to give us the tools to imagine emancipatory cultural mobility futures for all. The reason for calling for non-linearity in our view of history and the present and futures is that the past has an influence on what exists in the present and what can be dreamt into a future. Neoliberalism carries mutated attitudes of a colonial past and impacts the potential of a future.

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22   https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/africa-and-europe-a-joint-vision-for-2030/

23   https://www.africaeuropefoundation.org/areas-of-action/building-a-prosperous-and-sustainable-partnership:-one-year-after-the-6th-au-eu-summit/

24   https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20220218/6th-european-union-african-union-summit-joint-vision-2030

SOME CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONTEMPLATING A DYNAMIC DEFINITION OF CULTURAL MOBILITY

'As a concept, mobility captures the common impression that our lifeworld is in constant flux, with not only people, but also cultures, objects, capital, businesses, services, diseases, media, images, information and ideas circulating across (and even beyond) the planet. The academic literature is replete with metaphors trying to describe (perceived) altered spatial and temporal movements: deterritorialisation, reterritorialisation and scapes; time-space compression, distantiation and punctuation; the network society and its space of flows; the death of distance and the acceleration of modern life; and nomadology...'[25]

'During the colonial era, for example, degrees of mobility were used to differentiate people with and without culture: cultured people appeared "sedentary and rooted in their particular niches," uncultured people were "idealized as nomadic, rootless, and absolutely mobile" (Rosaldo, 1988: 80). However, the discourses of globalisation and cosmopolitanism that became dominant towards the end of the Cold War period shifted the pendulum in the opposite direction. In the 1990s, globalisation – theorised in terms of transborder flows – was often promoted as normality, and too much local place attachment as a digression or resistance against globalising forces. Cultures were no longer seen as separate entities, but as hybrid forms that are always involved in a multidirectional process of interchange with other cultures.'[26]

The above emerges from a specific normativity and a particular location in Eurocentricity.

A more Afrocentric understanding of a relationship with movement is informed by a regenerative relationship with the environment that necessitates movement in ways that are responsive to the restoration and preservation of a harmony with the environment. It also encompasses concepts of **African Hospitality** and **Collective Care**. It is a practice of collective witnessing and making-meaning. However, the risk of homogenising an African perspective remains active, and an ethical responsibility that needs to be taken seriously in this grappling with ideas. As such, this cannot not negate how in an Afrocentric perspective there may also have been shifts over the centuries. The role of Eurocentric and Western-dominant worldviews imposed by colonialism on the African continent and diaspora at large has had an influence. And of course, there is a general influencing that happens across cultures as a natural instinct and that impacts every aspect of environments and adaptability, for better or worse.

Given a number of factors such as the lessons that the Covid-19 pandemic ought to have taught us, the sustained instabilities and inequities caused by ongoing war and conflicts across the globe, and the obvious failures of the neoliberal, capitalist, patriarchal, heteronormative, racist, sexist and ableist world order, the current reality is evidently no longer sustainable. It is threatening our future in every intersecting sphere of sustainability.

Theoretically, there seems to be a critical mass movement that agrees that it is time to make space for alternative thoughts, ideas and actions. The paradigm is shifting. The world is shaking. The African continent is having a spiritual revolt against Western paternalism that can in isiXhosa language be called *uvuth'ondaba*, which can be inadequately translated to mean *the reaching of a boiling point*. A *rapture!* The splitting of the European heavens of impunity. The rendering irrelevant of a sustained lie. A refusal. A refusal to continue the collective amnesia and selective application of logic in the analysis of the status quo and the action around it.

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25   Salazar and Coates 2017.
26   **https://kulturanova.hr/file/ckeDocument/files/IPH_V1.pdf**

Imagination and re-imagination are the cornerstone of what is needed to continue the momentum of the world's cypher in ways that are regenerative. Intellectually speaking, to quote French poet Victor Hugo, 'Nothing else in the world [...] not all the armies [...] is so powerful as an idea whose time has come.'

Humility of perspective and making space for voices that have been relegated to the margins by the instinct of domination and imperialism is a moral obligation and an opportunity for the pursuit of collective sustainability. It is an opportunity to use the resource of time in ways that are constructive and momentum-building by acknowledging that which exists that can be useful and imagining and reimagining futures from alternative centricities that are collaborative and collective in instinct, orientation and commitment. This is to say that a Eurocentric, capitalist and individualistic worldview and value system is no longer useful nor adequate to be centred for what we need to co-create. There are other centres with valuable mechanisms of meaning-making and world-building that exist and that can and must emerge.

GLOBALLY EMERGING NECESSITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

'Just Transition is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. After centuries of global plunder, the profit-driven, growth-dependent, industrial economy – rooted in the myth of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, consumerism, and ableism – is severely undermining the life support systems of the planet. *An economy based on extracting from a finite system faster than the capacity of the system to regenerate* will eventually come to an end—either through collapse or through our intentional re-organization. *Transition is inevitable. Justice is not.*

A Just Transition requires us to build a visionary, regenerative economy based on caring and sacredness of relationships to each other and the world upon which we depend. This calls for strategies that **democratize**, **decentralize**, and **diversify** economic activity while we **damper down** consumption, and **(re)distribute** resources and power. Just Transition initiatives shift the economy from dirty energy to energy democracy, from funding highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from gentrification to community land rights, and from rampant destructive development to ecosystem restoration. Core to a Just Transition is deep democracy in which workers and communities have control over the decisions that affect their daily lives.'[27]

27   https://movementgeneration.org/justtransition/
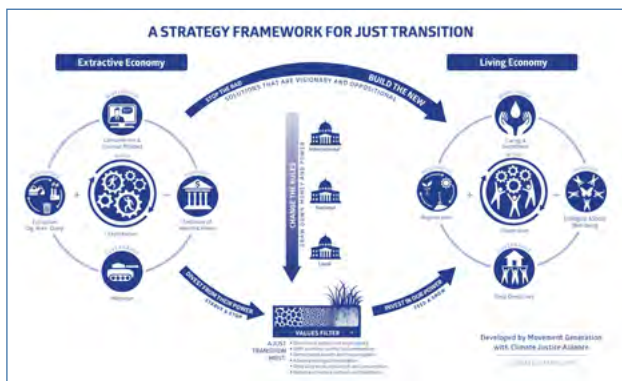
SOME RESPONSES TO EMERGING NECESSITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

The United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) states as its vision:

'We are moving forward to transform the social contract by developing caring societies based on the provision of local services. We are moving forward towards a new feminist way of doing politics – one that, through empathy and solidarity, fosters social justice and equality as the indispensable building blocks of any just, sustainable and thriving society. We are moving forward to protect and convey the wellbeing and aspirations of present and future generations, defend the rights of our communities, and leave no one and no place behind.'[28]

It further states the following in its pledge:

'To put care at the center of our efforts moving from equality to a new, feminist, way of going about politics: caring for our communities, and they care for those who are caring for us.

To address how our cities, our territories, are going to be planned for the future.

To rethink what role public space will play in including all people, and also in the future of physical, digital and social environments.

To adopting people-centered planning we will be able to foster solidarity, well-being and dignity for cities and territories for all.

To shift the narrative around migration and deliver a world that considers all humans, all neighbours.

To highlight the important role that culture plays in the wellbeing of our communities, supporting cultural rights and heritage now and towards the future.'[29]

For your notes and comments:

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[28] **https://uclg.org/wecare/people/**
[29] **https://uclg.org/wecare/people/**

SOME AFRICAN RESPONSES TO EMERGING RESPONSES FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

'Connected to the global UCLG initiative is the UCLG – Africa chapter which met in May 2023 in Rabat, Morocco. Rabat has been named the African Capital of Culture. An agreement to adopt the Manifesto for the Renewal of African and Afro-descendant Culture on the following commitments:

1. Consider culture and its various forms of expression as an inseparable form of African identity, which should be strengthened by promoting the memory, spiritual and intellectual capital of Africa, the knowledge and recognition of Africa by its children and the promotion of the contribution of the African continent to universal values of Humanity.

2. Place culture at the heart of national and territorial policies as the fourth pillar of sustainable development alongside social and environmental pillars and advocate to include culture among the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Participate in the work of the UCLG Africa which places development, innovation, and creative strategies in Africa among the priorities of its interventions, based on cultural cooperation and diplomacy.

4. Consider the African Diaspora and Afro-descendant populations as an integral part of African culture and the expression of its international dynamics by taking advantage of their expertise and know-how.

5. Give special attention and primary role to traditional authorities as guardians and guarantors of traditional and memorial issues, and stakeholders in the process of promoting culture in Africa as a source of conviviality and harmony between populations and communities conducive to intercultural dialogue.

6. Use education policies as one of the melting pots for the formation of African identity, in particular through introduction of African languages into education and research programmes as well as knowledge of history and African traditions; the development of educational institutions, training programmes and research; the exchange and dissemination of good practices; taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies and digital innovations.

7. Promote, encourage and support cultural professionals at the level of each country, each territory and the continent as a whole, through the organising of events, residencies and artist tour exchanges; access to the culture market; access to finance; and fair compensation for their work.

8. Work collectively to develop common, harmonised regulations standards at the pan-African level, with a view to creating the conditions and frameworks guaranteeing the protection of African cultural artworks, productions and their authors both nationally and internationally.

9. Carry out the census, inventory, safeguarding and preservation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Africa with a view to its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage Register and to advocate for the acceleration of restitution of cultural works of Africa.

10. African Capitals of Culture programme of UCLG Africa as an instrument for promoting the excellence of African culture, a factor in regenerating the feeling of belonging to the African continent, a factor in attractiveness of local authorities in Africa and creator of job opportunities, particularly for African youth.'[30]

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30   https://www.uclga.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/manifeste-EN.pdf

HOW DOES THIS EMERGING RESPONSE REFLECT THE AFRICAN POSITION ON CULTURE?

The above manifesto gives a view of all the dynamic and expansive ways in which a definition of culture can be gleaned from an African perspective. UCLG Africa's understanding of culture and its role provides a glimpse of a perspective of how culture operates, is articulated, and is viewed from the African continent's perspective.

FRAMING AFRICA WITHIN A GLOBAL SOUTH FRAMEWORK OF SELF-DETERMINATION IN CONVERSATION WITH DOMINANT GLOBAL WORLD VIEWS AND SYSTEMS

'This process has also been an invitation extended from the Global South, understood as the political place from which we are located. It is a perspective for the action and analysis that challenges the colonialist scope, shifts the experiences and stories to the periphery, promotes leadership from the Global South and language justice. It moves at different rhythms and timeframes, and it incorporates ancestrality and spirituality as an integral part of its being and doing.'[31]

The importance of de-centering Europe and the Global North as the space that sets the agenda, the pace, the language, the benchmark for legitimacy, eligibility, and compliance cannot be reiterated enough. It perpetuates a power dynamic that is neoliberal. It is one that must be shifted. Space must be made for knowledge production, application and consumption to move in different patterns that reject notions of what constitutes peripheries and margins. Culturally hegemonic attitudes are no longer desirable, welcome nor productive.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE POTENTIAL PROBLEMATICS OF ESSENTIALISING AND HOMOGENISING AND INSTRUMENTALISING AN AFRICAN IDENTITY

While celebrating the expansive nature of this manifesto, it is however very important to note the silence of the African Capital of Culture pledge on gender. There is a correlation between anti-gender work and the instrumentalisation of culture in pursuit of endorsing beliefs that justify patriarchal domination and the maintenance of imperialistic and culturally hegemonic tendencies, violation, and the repression of dissenting voices. It is a circumstance and contextual consideration upon which the Global North has a hand. This reasoning will be further elaborated in later sections, which will expand on the vulnerability that sits at the intersection of activism, artists, socially engaged cultural activity, art, heritage, and particularly gender in all its intersecting and expansive conceptions, articulations, and applications.

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31 **https://rootingcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAU_RootingCare_en.pdf?utm_campaign=meetedgar&utm_ medium=social&utm_source=meetedgar.com**

Complicating, nuancing and expanding the understanding of definitions of cultural mobility
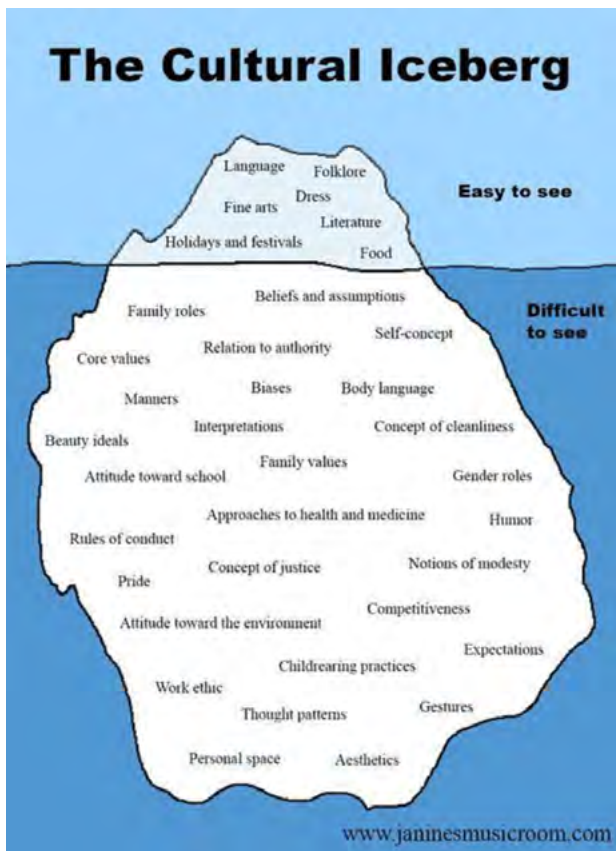
There are many definitions of cultural mobility that are evolving in order to accommodate its nuances and changing nature. Some notions that are needed to make room for a full cognitive apprehension are contained in the above Cultural Iceberg by Edward T. Hall. Some key words and ideas that cultural mobility language needs to include but not be limited to:

- Heterogenous
- Fluid
- Non-static
- Iterative
- Responsive
- Evolving
- Different things to different contexts at different times and simultaneously.

The UNESCO global report *Re|Shaping Cultural Policies for Creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good*,[33] is part of a series of studies to monitor the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, as well as progress towards achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within and with the cultural and creative sectors.

[32]   https://study.com/academy/lesson/culture-iceberg-theory-model.html
[33]   https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en

Below are the key findings of the chapter 'Re-imagining mobility for artists', written by Anupama Sekhar:

- 'A progressive understanding of mobility as a fundamental part of the professional trajectory of artists and cultural professionals is steadily growing among governments and funders.

- An increasing number of States – both developed and developing – are supporting the outward mobility of artists under the principle of internationalizing the arts in cultural policy strategies and legal frameworks.

- **Global inequality in freedom of movement persists due to unequal distribution of funding and burdensome visa regulations.**

- In the last four years, no preferential treatment measures for artists and other cultural professionals from developing countries have been implemented, except a few actions triggering positive but unintended collateral effects. As a result, the ability of cultural professionals from these countries to access markets in developed countries remains extremely weak.

- Transnational mobility in the cultural sector is one of the policy areas in which civil society organizations are more actively contributing to the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

- The number of Mobility Information Points has increased in Europe and North America, while advisory services are increasingly in demand – suggesting growing complexities in mobility.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has heralded a seminal shift in mobility. While rising costs and health certifications create new access barriers, there are renewed opportunities to re-imagine

mobility in more digitally accessible, sustainable and environmentally friendly ways.'[34]

In response to the challenges in the status quo as stipulated above it becomes important that 'committing to deep equity includes recognizing privilege and oppression present in society; understanding one's relationship to privilege and oppression; and forming authentic alliances among people who experience both oppression and privilege to transform society, recognizing the centrality of the leadership of people who are marginalized in that process. There are **multiple levels of transformation necessary** in advancing deep equity: internal/individual change; interpersonal relations; institutional (including cross-institutional and network) change; and systemic transformation.'[35]

In later sections the notion of an ally is examined further to examine the instinct of *white savior ship* and its refusal to recognise the interdependence that often comes with co-existence. 'The term **white savior** is a critical description of a white person who is depicted as liberating, rescuing or uplifting non-white people; it is critical in the sense that it describes a pattern in which people of color in economically under-developed nations that are majority non-white are denied agency and are seen as passive recipients of white benevolence.'[36]

'The COVID–19 pandemic and the many transformations it triggered, different in every context, have prompted reflection and conversations about care, perhaps more than ever before. Care, in its various conceptions, intentions and scopes, began to gain increasing prominence in daily life at the personal, family, professional and community level, related to how we think and feel as human beings and in connection with nature.

Care, from the perspective of prevention, is connected with awareness before taking political action, and is related to the possibilities of acting in this context. Some of the risks can clearly be mitigated, but others

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[34]   From page 143 for the article by Anupama Sekhar: **https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en**.

[35]   **https://changeelemental.org/advancing-deep-equity/**

[36]   *Blindsided by the Avatar: White Saviors and Allies Out of Hollywood and in Education*, Julio Cammarota.

are very difficult to control. So, care is wrapped up in how we place ourselves with respect to external circumstances that we cannot change, and what decisions we make, individually and collectively, to improve our way of being in this situation.

For some [...] the discussion about material conditions and the distribution of resources is also part of the political dimension of care and protection [...] [applying the] word political about care and protection means two things: one, it means publicness, it means that we can't be silent about tiredness, we can't be silent about conflict and tension. The other thing is resources, whatever types of resources, whether it's personal skills, money, investment, whatever it may be [...] The politics of care and protection involve strategic publicness, and a better public relationship and conversation [...] as well as more deliberate, scaled up allocation of resources.'[37]

The above is to preface an ethical obligation towards a conceptual framing of cultural mobility that considers an expansive understanding of what is meant by culture, to include an ethic of collective care as a culture in and of itself. Especially when considering the perspectives on what culture and mobility mean from an African perspective, as revealed by how culture is understood in the manifesto for African Capitals of Culture as well through the contemplative perspectives Edward T. Hall offers in the Cultural Iceberg. It calls for the acknowledgement of intersections in the conceptual

framing, and in the understanding and application of, what role an ethic of collective care – whether absent or present – can play in influencing our collective stance on and experience of cultural mobility.

As such *cultural mobility justice* becomes a necessary ideological framework that commands its own space on the social justice spectrum, to be viewed as a critical intersecting necessity.

It is a fundamental building block of meaning-making that centres collective witnessing and the liberty to move with agency as a critical component of self-actualisation. The opposite of that is structural violence or a tool for structural violence. Unfortunately, this self-determined need to be liberated and to have the liberty to witness and be witnessed is not a possibility for all on an equitable basis. The dominant African experience of this is not overall positive and can be described as unjust, discriminatory, frustrating, etc. This has harmful consequences on collective wellness and sustainability that are not often enough examined or articulated. It is Africans' bodies, minds and souls that are on the line and at the receiving end of the discrimination that must accompany these unequal power relations. Redress is due as a matter of urgency as a form of **reparations** and as a collective care imperative. 'For those who want to construct a different social reality one grounded in justice and joy, we can't only critique the world as it is. We have to build the world as it should be to make justice irresistible.'[38]

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37 **https://rootingcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAU_RootingCare_en.pdf?utm_campaign=meetedgar&utm_medium=social&utm_source=meetedgar.com**

38 *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

The technical limitations of cultural mobility that inhibit and harm africans

THE VISA APPLICATION SYSTEM AS A FORM OF WEATHERING

'But what does it take for our bodies to remain cool when our spirits are burning with rage and grief?'[39]

VULNERABLE TO A 'PROCESS'

'In this here and now, there are risks. Thinking about the risks means being aware of the likelihood that something or someone might hurt us [...] The risk level, in turn, depends on many factors, for example, on the conditions that create vulnerability and on the abilities, we have to respond to threats. The risks are situated in specificity.'[40]

The visa process is instrumentalised as a tool to mete out structural violence against marginalised groups. 'Structural violence describes the ways in which social structures are designed to stop certain individuals and groups from reaching their full potential.'[41] 'Violence here does not solely refer to physical violence, but to the "avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or [...] the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible.'[42]

WHAT IS WEATHERING?

'Arline Geronimus coined "weathering" as a public health concept [...] to underscore how we embody stressors and oppressors in the broader environment and how this process causes preventable illnesses and premature death. While the scientific establishment prefers to focus on genetic rather than socio political explanations for racial health disparities, proponents of weathering and other kindred concepts are fighting to get us to consider the structural determinants of health – the institutions, the processes that cause health disparities.'[43]

39   *Viral Justice: Howa We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

40   **https://rootingcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAU_RootingCare_en.pdf?utm_campaign=meetedgar&utm_medium=social&utm_source=meetedgar.com**

41   **https://www.jstor.org/stable/422690**

42   **https://www.uaf-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/An-African-Feminist-Exploration-of-Healing-Justice.pdf**

43   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

NAMING THE HARM

'In the United Kingdom, they just call it what it is. Former prime minister Theresa May's "hostile environment policy" was rolled out in 2012 as a set of legal requirements and administrative practices designed to make living in Britain for a subset of immigrants as burdensome as possible so that they "voluntarily leave" [...] But even in places without an explicit policy, hostile environments are made and remade daily through the machinations of institutions and individuals alike.'[44]

This is not to say that immigration or immigrants are synonymous with cultural mobility, although there are obviously intersections. The same principles and tactics described here apply to cultural mobility in its expansive and dynamic definition. They form a significant part of why the assertion that the visa application system is a form of weathering holds water. This system:

a) is administered via the same bureaucratic systems at national, regional and international levels,

b) involves processes that employ the same logic of determining legitimacy, eligibility and compliance. It is based on a set of implicit biases that are Eurocentric and the political Global North centric and that pertain to policing movement.

The world demographics being what they are, with the African continent made up of what is known as a Black African majority, applying a critical race theory to examining mobility politics when offering an African perspective is not far-fetched and neither is it to disregard the presence of white people who move through the world with African passports. It is rather to:

a) Take on a Pan-African view of what is meant by an African perspective, and to know that the global majority demographic is not only that of black people, but of a people who also happen to sit at the bottom of the ladder in terms of the hierarchy of being afforded liberties. Black people experience racism. Racism is one of the tools used to inflict a set of intersecting discriminations, of which mobility, and more specifically for this purpose cultural mobility, is one.

You can imagine how this process compounds existing traumas and if you cannot you are fortunate and privileged to not be able to even fathom this correlation. Your inability to do so also speaks to the kinds of protections that your particular identities and positionality affords you that you have no capacity to conceive and comprehend another's suffering.

We who live this reality know that: 'In a society that fetishizes individual responsibility – where even the scientific establishment prefers to focus on generic rather than social or political explanations for racial health disparities – the concept of weathering is battling its own version of (antiblack) climate denial.'[45]

Beyond the physical, 'Spirit murder' is a term invoked by law professor Patricia J. Williams to remind us that racism has never simply enacted physical harm but also continuously robs people of dignity and self-worth, wounding us emotionally, 'physically'. Racism is injurious not only in the immediate moment but also in the aftermath, when people are forced to 'prove that they did not distort the circumstances, misunderstand intent, or even enjoy it'.[46]

b) An alternative world-building requires us to view this matter from the perspective of those most vulnerable to discrimination in our societies so

44   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

45   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

46   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

that we can have a full picture of the extent of the harm in order to be able to imagine possibilities that centre equity and justice. The black, African experience is a particular experience that carries multiple vulnerabilities in this context, and these can be compounded by possessing a gender identity that is marginalised, such as being womxn or gender queer, or being disabled, economically disadvantaged, etc. to compound and intersect struggles.

c) To understand that whiteness never carries the same degree of 'stress of vigilance' in these situations because of what white lived experience means in the global politics of vigilance and how vigilance is used as a tool for asserting dominance in a white supremacist, neoliberal, patriarchal, heteronormative and ableist world order. For this reason Black African feminism becomes a point of departure and tool with which and from which to adequately seek to examine and understand how the process of obtaining a visa becomes one of the forms of weathering.

All of these carry intergenerational traumas and histories that continue to be perpetuated in the present in various mutations. This needs to be understood as such because it is a real thing!

'[...] mobility justice concerns the scale of the nation state, and the control of borders, migration, refugee, and citizenship. It includes visas and passports, interception, securitization, detention, deportation, and wall building, which we have seen in full force recently under the guise of the "refugee crisis" around the world. As more and more people are displaced around the world, both by warfare and scarcities of food and water exacerbated by climate change, these mobility injustices become ever more urgent.'[47]

'Operating from a place of woundedness also means that we are constantly triggered by the work'[48]

By 'we', I refer to those whose bodies carry the engineered stigma of undesirability, criminality, inconvenience, etc.

LIVED EXPERIENCE AS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE

'Problems occur frequently during the visa application process and come in multiple forms. When asked which problems they had faced with visa applications made since June 2019, the two top problems for individuals were: difficulty scheduling appointments, and requests for non-compulsory documents. Other problems included lack of a relevant national embassy/consulate in the applicant's home country, and, in the case of rejected visas, refusal on grounds of "lacking financial means for subsistence" or "insufficient proof of commitment to return". Among individual respondents to have experienced a visa rejection, 29% indicated that they had had problems qualifying their trip as for "cultural purposes".'[49]

'Successful visa applications are no different – 76.7% of individual respondents experienced problems during the application process. Asked how many times since June 2019 they had encountered problems during a visa application process when the process still led to a successful result, 76.7% of individuals had experienced problems at least once. For organisations, this figure was 100%. The types of problems encountered largely mirrored those for unsuccessful applications, reinforcing that these problems come from the application process itself, not from failures of compliance.'

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47 *Theorising Mobility Justice*, Mimi Sheller, 2018. h
     https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327385759_Theorising_mobility_justice

48 https://www.uaf-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/An-African-Feminist-Exploration-of-Healing-Justice.pdf.

49 https://on-the-move.org/sites/default/files/library/2023-10/OTM_shengen-visa-code-cultural-mobility.pdf

'4 in 5 individuals described the visa application experience as stressful. Asked to select up to 5 words to describe the process of mobility including their visa application, there was a heavy slant towards negative terms, with "stressful" and "anxiety inducing" the most common descriptors.'[50]

BUT FIRST, A IS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY – MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

In an online panel hosted by the Heinrich-Boll-Stiftung on 19 June 2023 titled 'Transcontinental Mobility: How much encounter does decolonisation need?',[51] Prof. Dr. Albert Gouaffo (Université de Dschang, Cameroon), Dr. Mahret Ifeoma Kupka (art scholar/curator, Museum für Angewandte Kunst), Wale Lawal (Editor-in-Chief, The Republic Magazine, Nigeria), and Tiaji Sio (Diplomats of Color, Federal Foreign Office, Germany) raised a number of important points including but not limited to:

- The time it takes to engage in the process of a visa application, which is burdensome.

- The physical labour, and I would like to add the emotional labour that goes hand-hand with the anxiety caused by uncertainty, performing of self, passport control anxieties and vigilance, the financial aspects of the process, dehumanisation.

- The invasive and discriminatory nature of the demand for financial declaration as a benchmark for eligibility.

- What it means to expect one to demonstrate family ties and reason for return, and I would like to add the ways in which that comes from a trust deficit that is based in an inhospitable and paranoid view of the visit which is different from what African hospitality uses as its assumption.

- The visa fees and costs associated with the full process, including the need to travel to a different locality for interviews, etc. and the policy that denies reimbursements.

- The extractive elements associated with the visa costs and the lack of accountability about where the visa costs go. I would like to add the normalisation of this without the call to question the morality and ethics of this practice. I would also like to add the double standard of knowing this and taking part in this as if it is unchangeable and God-ordained with immunity to the judgement and conclusion of corruption and greed that is so easily meted out to Africans.

- The unquestioned moral high ground and purity of Europe and the political Global North.

- The need to call for more audits into where these funds end up, quantifying the amounts and where they end up.

- The expected lead time for application and processing that does not take into consideration other travel obligations.

- Suspected and undesirable inconvenience versus welcomed visitor stance.

- Conscious and unconscious bias through biased criteria and a series of unspoken discriminatory practices, and I would like to add structural exclusivity using institutionalised violence.

- Polarisation, paranoia, and a scarcity mentality.

- I would like to add whose globalisation? What and who does it centre? On whose terms?

- Language as an instrument of dominance and exclusion.

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50   https://on-the-move.org/sites/default/files/library/2023-10/OTM_shengen-visa-code-cultural-mobility.pdf
51   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GwRXkhmDnE

- Language centres as sites for looting, as they establish themselves as the only legitimate providers of training which loops back to eventually collecting fees even in the absence of alternatives in host countries. I would like to add the arrogance of this level of bullying in countries where you are a guest.

- Visa policy as neither naïve nor happening in isolation from other forms of discrimination.

- The need for cooperation and international cultural relation – transcontinental ways of working.

CONTINUED… LIVED EXPERIENCE AS EVIDENCE

On a personal level I share with you an email I penned to organisers of the Global Atlantic Fellows Convening, which, though not taking pace in a Schengen area, reveals the impact and strain that these processes contribute to weathering and the losses associated with it:

'Dear all,

I hope you are well amidst the business of this current period.

I wanted to share that between my travel to Europe in the last month and previous travel to Tunisia before then I have not, despite my efforts, managed to secure a visa.

I could only travel to PE (Port Elizabeth now known as Gqeberha) last week for an appointment to have my biometric test, interview and passport on Friday as this was the only available date and time all things considered including my family responsibilities. I was advised that the only option left is Super Priority Services at a cost of 956 pounds. This supposedly guarantees a decision in 24 hours.

At this point I fell into an exhaustion and despondency over what has been an extended period of negotiating borders and the emotional violence of these processes of applying for visas. This coupled with the fact that I currently do not have the means to front a payment of this magnitude because of cash flow limitations due to similar arrangements that are based on reimbursement has led me to understand the trip to not be possible. Consequently, these uncertainties have meant that I am not able to move ahead with other moving parts related to the planning of my live art installation.

I am deflated and disappointed as I was looking forward to this gathering.

Best,

Ukhona'[52]

In a conversation via WhatsApp with world acclaimed dancer and choreographer Mamela Nyamza, after sending her the link for the visa application survey, she says the following:

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[52]   An email return by Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu to the Global Atlantic Fellowship in July 2023.

'Ok, tried. Some questions were kind of in between than direct answer but I tried. Thanks 😌 this is very important. The money we use to enter these countries and when they refuse the visa, you still apply with more money. I haven't had refusals per say, but the process is hideous. Sometimes you give them your year calendar and they still give you the exact dates, which means you must come back again when you come back to apply for another Schengen country, which is time consuming, stressing, more money. (*this is followed by a crying emoji) ...I know we are there to make money (to not try and stay unwanted under fault pretences and indefinitely)...sometimes if I travel with another artist, they expect us s/he to have money in their bank accounts in order for them to travel but the same artist hasn't been working and is going there to make money. Its tedious.' I then respond saying: 'It's violent, it's humiliating, it's traumatic, it's exclusionary, it's discriminatory. The process is deliberately complicated.' To this Nyamza responds: 'Deliberately but they come to our countries without this (*insert an exhausted and defeated emojis) humiliation. Sad indeed.'[53]

All of the above signals a frustration with navigating a system and process that on the one hand postures to apply meritocracy while at the same time being erratic and random and devoid of accountability. First of all, meritocracy is myth if you consider all that has been said around implicit bias, intersecting struggles, barriers to entry, etc.

The visa application process (when successful) for culture professionals and artists is perceived with a condescending tone that says: 'Yes, you are worthy. But you are also very lucky. *Lucky*. Not a word one hears often enough in elite spaces. Being lucky doesn't mean you are not qualified. It just means many others could have been in your shoes but they were not chosen, and there are many more besides who might have qualified if given the same opportunities. Luckiness does not negate worthiness. It negates entitlement. Luck is kryptonite of elitist delusions of specialness. And even then, the language of luck doesn't do justice to the sheer organisation selectivity – a key dimension of elite spaces – as a process.'[54]

Secondly, how arrogant and self-important do you have to be to appoint yourself (in a one-sided fashion) the determiner of another's mobility possibilities while you enjoy greater liberties and mobility, including in their country? This is while

you in the same vein speak of international cultural relations and having also established embassies and in some cases cultural agencies such as the Goethe-Institut, Alliance française, Pro Helvetia and the like to foster mutual understanding through cultural exchanges in the very countries whose citizens you structurally keep out of yours. This level of hypocrisy that goes unchallenged needs to come to an end if we are serious about understanding the ways in which we are interdependent. The extent to which this is normalised is a demonstration of a worldview that is contrary to an understanding of hospitality which we are proposing here.

'I was helping a friend doing a visa application and one of the questions, which I'm guessing was not a question 20 years ago, was "do you have an online profile?" Now these States are also trying to monitor us – they know that the digital platform is also where people are doing activist work, which makes it riskier. Employers who go onto your online spaces and check out what your opinions are, check out what your life is like, to see if you are "a threat", so it definitely increases the risk, it increases visibility.' (Khwezilomso Mbandazayo, South Africa)

In understanding the specific impacts and risks present on this virtual stage, we must broaden our definition of care to incorporate the digital body

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[53]   A transcription of excerpts from a WhatsApp exchange between Mamela Nyamza and Ukhona Ntsali Mlandu on 19 May 2023.

[54]   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

as one of the territories we care for and protect, because what happens online has implications in the real world.

'**Digital body** is a category developed in dialogue with activists from the Latin American and Caribbean regions. This category is understood as the combination of memories and information about ourselves or about the collectivities to which we belong, which we create digitally to have a presence in the virtual space, closely connected with our physical body, and deeply interrelated to the notion of territory-body-earth, present in numerous Latin American cultures. The digital body is interconnected with the various bodies and territories we inhabit, and which are at once vulnerable to risk, and spaces for protection, care and resistance.' [55]

This realisation and caution is further extended to the oversimplification that suggests that to solve its problems the visa application processes ought to be automated and digitised. While that might be convenient for some, it fails to:

- Recognise that the Internet is not easily accessible to all for a number of reasons.

- 'The training data [for AI] has been shown to have problematic characteristics resulting in models that encode stereotypical and derogatory associations along gender, race, ethnicity, and disability status [...] White supremacist and misogynistic, ageist, etc., views are overrepresented in the training data, not only exceeding their prevalence in the general population but also setting up models trained on these datasets to further amplify biases and harms.' [56]

This is to say that the digital body can be instrumentalised to further enact harm and exclusion in this instance too. It is yet another space to consider as a tool that can enact weathering and join other intersecting sites of struggle.

Another aspect is the inherent potential for criminalisation at every step of the process where punitive punishment like deportation is always looming as a threat. 'Engaging with structural drivers of injustice is difficult work that requires the development of shared political, feminist analysis of the roots of the violence of justice systems and a firm grounding in the histories of the establishment of these systems, which is critical for full appreciation of the theoretical underpinnings of the misogyny, patriarchy and ableism we experience in engagement with the law.' [57] (And to this you can add rules, eligibility criteria, etc.)

'Law was conceptualised as "the gift we gave them" promulgating regulations on every aspect of life, from marriage to drinking, to entertainment, land and labor. Law, along with other institutions of the colonial state, "transformed conceptions of time, space, property, work, marriage and the state."' [58]

Given the great role that law continues to play in structuring our societies, it is important to unpack the philosophy underpinning Western conceptions of law to illustrate the manner in which it continues to mete out violence. Western conceptions of criminal justice, exported through colonialism, centre the determination of blame and administering pain or punishment – the pain of being locked up and sometimes the pain of imminent death. One only needs to look at the so-called 'refugee crisis' of the Mediterranean Sea and the Sahara Desert to see how law and eligibility are used as a tool to mask inhumane attitudes and actions.

Overall and all the time 'We feel the iron of a vicious system whose appetite seems limitless [...]

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55   https://rootingcare.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FAU_RootingCare_en.pdf?utm_campaign=meetedgar&utm_medium=social&utm_source=meetedgar.com

56   https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/women-warnings-ai-danger-risk-before-chatgpt-1234804367/?fbclid=IwAR1mFbYRSca52DDSwQsUHCWArjIYyPemPk6Aynz-idz3OCXwMAn5YZr8H2U

57   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022

58   *Law and Colonialism,* S.E Merry.   https://www.jstor.org/stable/3053874

Even when we are not the prey, we feel hunted. This is a social and not just an individual level-trauma.'[59]

'We are living inside a deadly game, one that was set up to ensure there would be winners and losers. Within such a world, racism will always be necessary to justify why some people seem to be winning, some losing *their lives*. But in this context, we shouldn't simply strive for "more winners". We need to stop playing the game. We need to build entirely new worlds and ways of being with one another that don't involve resting on the necks of losers. Viral justice requires that we challenge the corrosive individualism that infects every area of our lives and work against the revolting distortion of "freedom" that prioritizes a sick individualism over mutual obligation.'[60]

African Hospitality: A distinct texture of hosting and welcoming guest(s) from a perspective that recognises their presence and choice to grace with their presence your home, space, country, territory, etc. as an honour not a burden. This honour is met with warmth, generosity, and good faith that the visitor has come in peace. It is the default position to assume everyone to be of integrity and good intention until proven otherwise. This generosity is extended from a belief system that says life and resources are regenerative, and this regenerative logic is beyond logic. It is spiritually generous and is rooted in a generosity of spirit. It is the polar opposite of a scarcity mindset which breeds self-preservationist behaviour based on paranoia. It is rooted in an ethic of collective care.

'The importance of creating time and resources for healing in a global structure that isolates the symptoms from political and economic factors, is at the heart of healing justice as a radical approach to organising.'[61] It becomes very important that we begin to imagine ways of approaching the process of visa applications in ways that recognise the harm

that it causes as well as thinking through ways to act that heal and mitigate more harm in order to create an enabling environment for cultural mobility justice.

An example is making sure that as a host who is inviting an African cultural worker you set up systems to better support this process, providing resources that recognise that there are expenses attached to travelling to embassies for visa appointments, that the visa itself carries fees, and that there are childcare implications for those who are mothering or primary care-giving in the most gender-inclusive and expansive sense of the word, etc. Also, hosts must understand the emotional dimension of this process and support that too. Asking questions and eventually having a checklist that is dynamic and flexible, so as to be responsive to the needs of the moment and make accommodations that demonstrate solidarity, is necessary for repair and imagining collective liberatory futures.

As a collective, we have to disrupt the cycle of violence at every opportunity being mindful that 'The "collective" is no longer a single unit with the same experience, beliefs and needs but a complex, varied whole. Such a lens is critical when thinking of collective justice and healing needs and methodologies, because it necessitates the thinking through of our differences, similarities, priorities and histories, and the creation of a toolbox of strategies resulting from conversation, rather than a one-size-fits all approach.'[62]

'It is by engaging in difficult conversations around accountability, power-sharing and imagining new ways of thinking about distributing responsibilities that feminist alternatives to difficult questions can be created [...] There are no comfortable answers to creating and implementing transformative visions of justice. Let us rather "Plan. Run. Dream. Experiment" toward transformative feminist futures.'[63]

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59   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.
60   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.
61   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.
62   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.
63   **https://www.uaf-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/An-African-Feminist-Exploration-of-Healing-Justice.pdf**

Gender, marginalised identities, and activism navigating cultural mobility

In earlier sections I made a note of how the manifesto for the African Capitals of Culture is silent on gender. Now that could be a telling oversight, or a deliberate omission, for any number of reasons, including not wanting to tackle gender because of a lack of commitment or interest in interrogating the full, inclusive spectrum of what it would mean when tested against the rest of the pledge. It could also be to shy away from the nuanced, inclusive and expansive understandings of gender that are expected at certain levels of engagement and that are obviously being suppressed in more countries than not on the African continent.

Regardless of not knowing the real reason, the omission is glaring.

'Women across the Middle East and North Africa region face varying restrictions preventing them from moving freely in their own country and from traveling abroad without the permission of their male guardians—typically their fathers or brothers, and when married, their husbands.'[64] This includes states that have prohibitive laws against women obtaining passports without permission from a male authority. This includes the ability to travel abroad with children, which immediately gives rise to childcare issues that may be addressed by the ability to travel with children if and when the resources are available. Such rules that are often counter to constitutional rights and international human rights can and have been instrumentalised to perpetuate

harm, discrimination, control, sabotage in ways that make women vulnerable to abuse and that strip them of their agency and self-actualisation.

This has happened in parallel with the rise to prominence and influence, since the early 2000s, of the Anti-Gender Movement: a transnational coalition of conservative activists and organisations on the African continent. The movement works to counter political gains made by feminist and LGBTIQ+ rights activists and groups. They also work to eliminate critical knowledge on gender and sexual diversity.

This movement is largely funded by the political Global North to fuel division that is costing people their safety and lives. 'Anti-gender/pro-family actors are generating professionalised discourses justifying their stances against gender equality, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) by expanding their arguments beyond largely religious and moral foundations [...] the ways in which women's rights and gender equality aspirations are discussed in global and/or development declarations and instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lend themselves to being adapted to suit heteronormative pro-family discourses. We identify similar tendencies in how gender inequality is articulated in social protections

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64 https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/07/18/trapped/how-male-guardianship-policies-restrict-womens-travel-and-mobility-middle?fbclid=IwAR2H_7q7E6dgV8Sog5BxXYMwau1FL7ZosNMmOMeIsSu6jwX67jE9px-IVmE

programmes and policies [...] For instance, many of the organizations that are leading anti-gender coalition and movement building are based in the Global North but are active in Global South contexts and within international governance arenas.'[65]

What does this have to do with cultural mobility you may ask? Again feminist, intersectional analysis requires us to delve into the implications of gender on cultural mobility and to demonstrate some commitment to continued understanding of the nuance of the context. Any solution or imagination that does not centre the most vulnerable is still essentially performative in its posture towards justice.

Of concerning interest is that 'Although culture and entertainment are major employers of women (48.1%), gender equality is a distant prospect.'[66] This is as reported in the UNESCO 2022 publication *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good*. While it notes the gender gap regarding women, this report is silent on gender expansive communities such as the LGBTIQ+. This is unacceptable for a report in the year 2022.

'The problem of mobility injustice begins with our bodies, and the ways in which some bodies can more easily move through space than others, due to restrictions on mobility relating to gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and physical abilities. Consider the spatial restrictions on the mobility of wheelchair-users, or the limited mobility of racialized minorities under police regimes of white supremacy, or the constrained mobility of women under patriarchal systems of violent domination, or of sexual minorities under heteronormative regimes.'[67]

Furthermore, gender marginalised identities who work in this space are often working within a context that necessitates their work to by default lean into activism. It is impossible in the culture space to

separate the ways in which cultural attitudes and beliefs have a role to play in cultural mobility, as demonstrated above.

Caroline Kouassiaman – executive director of ISDAO, a feminist fund dedicated to movement building within the gender space in West Africa – speaks of instances where extreme groups that belong to the Anti-Gender Coalition have successfully lobbied against and sabotaged travel based on gender or activism/artivism within the gender space. Body autonomy is a strong pillar of freedom and freedom of movement. This obviously has an impact on how cultural mobility plays out. The aspiration and the audacity to make art and 'provocative art' and insisting on travelling to the wider world is an act of defiance in a context where anti-gender work and political repression is rife.

Recent developments in Ghana and Uganda with regards to repressive laws that have been passed create volatile conditions for cultural workers who belong to gender minorities to exist, never mind to work in these spaces. The risks are real and rising. They join a chorus of other repressive conditions within the continent, regulated through law or not. The need to seek asylum or to go elsewhere to create or present work is a reality for the preservation of human life.

There is of course the rhetoric and belief that embracing gender expansiveness and womxn's rights is a colonial influence. This selective application of logic and selective memory serves men who benefit from patriarchy who are appropriating human rights rhetoric around being pro-family, pro-life and 'African'. On top of navigating and fighting Western imperialism, womxn and gender expansive peoples have to contend with self-preservationist attitudes of beneficiaries of patriarchy that essentially mimic other systems of domination. They carry the same characteristics and logic of othering. They carry the same essentialising of identity to one homogenous

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65 https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/cfi-subm/2308/subm-colonialism-sexual-orientation-un-ios-unrisd-input-2.pdf

66 From page 143 for the article by Anupama Sekhar: https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en

67 *Theorising Mobility Justice*, Mimi Sheller, 2018.

whole while receiving money, ideological discourse, infrastructure from the Global North. They claim other rights that are against gender expansiveness and reproductive rights. Like there is only one way to be Africa? Many lives have been lost and continue to be lost at the hands of these logics. This point of decision and tension serves the West in creating another mutation of a fragmented Africa pulling in different directions.

Furthermore, as Carl Collison writes: 'When it comes to covering anything related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, (LGBTI+) matters, the media — particularly African-based publications — are known for being unsupportive to the point of cruelty.'[68] So what makes it onto the media is usually a point of crisis or condemnation and not the amazing work of resistance and contribution by women and gender expansive humans.

Another consideration on gender is that more often than not womxn's lives involve an element of caring for others whether it be children, elders, spouses, etc. This unpaid and invisibilised labour is not always considered when taking into account all the factors that influence one's ability to play the game of navigating systems that enable culture workers to pursue cultural mobility. There are

cultural attitudes that prevail in most contexts that make the situation complex and therefore require us to treat each case on its own merits. It would be interesting to do a study of the various genders of culture workers who are mobile versus those who have to keep their movements small because of their caretaking obligations. The cultural sector certainly has a way of penalising and punishing mothers and primary caregivers.

It took me until my children were much older to begin to practice more as an artist than an arts administrator and to begin to travel than it did my ex-husband whose career as an artist continued despite having young children. Although this is changing there is still less conversation and fewer resources around the implications of mothering on mobility.

A question worth asking for every hyper-visible heterosexual male from the continent who is navigating the cultural mobility space with relative ease (all things considered): who is the woman and/or gender minority who is doing similar work who gets left behind on account of their intersecting points of marginalisation? To seek them out. To support them. To offer them platforms and opportunities and invite their voices into the proverbial rooms.

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[68]   https://www.iranti.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Iranti_SDF-Study_22November2019.pdf

Climate justice and climate action for sustainable liberatory futures

'[...] mobility justice issues are crucial to understanding the uneven impacts of climate change in relation to spatial injustices and uneven mobilities. Environmental injustices and mobility injustices are two faces of the same problem, each contributing to the other, and they are intertwined with the uneven distribution of access to transport, energy, and the fundamental life requirements of clean air, water, food and shelter. The circulation of waste, pollution, and toxic materials overflows any boundaries, with plastics filling the ocean, electronic waste traveling to dumps around the world, and greenhouse gases changing the composition of the Earth's atmosphere.'[69]

Therefore Mimi Sheller's proposals made for a just foundation from which to build and draw from as a multi-pronged approach to addressing the tendency or blind spot (whether deliberate or not) of separating climate action and environmental sustainability from climate justice and mobility justice:

- 'Those industries and countries that have contributed the most to greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution shall have a responsibility of reparative justice to limit the impacts of their actions on others and to restore the atmosphere and environments as far as possible.

- Those displaced by climate change shall have a right to resettlement in other countries, and

especially in those countries that contributed most to climate change.

- Protection of the planetary commons (oceans, seafloor, air, Antarctica, and extra planetary bodies) shall outweigh any rights to global free trade or private rights to resource extraction.

- All states shall be party to world forums at which carbon budgets are agreed upon and reductions in greenhouse gases regularly measured and met.

- A global trust fund shall be established into which polluters pay in order to meet the costs of urgent global climate change mitigation.'[70]

I do want to state that just as quickly as I am excited to read this sober contemplation of practical ways of holding states accountable and providing steps for repair and restoration, I am confronted with other ways in which the world's superpowers are stubborn in their entitlement to extractive economic practices.

An Africa Climate Summit held in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2023 was reported to have been dominated by 'Western officials'. The acknowledgement of the world's greatest polluters was not addressed adequately. The reality is that Africa accounts for less than 4% of global carbon emissions. Africa is also suffering the impacts of Western industrialisation

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[69] *Theorising mobility justice,* Mimi Sheller, 2018.

[70] *Theorising mobility justice*, Mimi Sheller, 2018.

and the plundering of African resources. Instead, the discourse and Western imposed accountability frameworks are leaning towards the concept of carbon credits. Essentially, the carbon credit system allows the accumulation of credits awarded for good behaviour towards the environment, using a framework that is predetermined by the West. The very accumulators of these credits can use these credits as a means to justify other extractive practices elsewhere. Said companies can also trade carbon credits amongst themselves. Where does that leave the environment? How is that changed behaviour? Who will get to play in this arena in terms of how it will be regulated and quantified, or have access to resources to embark on the various tracking methods? An entire industry that will be used for exclusion has just been invented. It does not really solve the problem, does it? When does repair and restoration actually happen when the world's superpowers keep inventing loopholes?

'[...] a more robust and comprehensive theory of mobility justice can help us address the combined "crises" of climate change, sustainable urban transitions, resource depletion and global migrations. These "crises" are part of a common phenomenon, which shares its origins with other uneven mobilities that impact everyday life. However, one aim is to shift away from the language of crisis towards a more productive way of framing these dilemmas and proposing how to deal with them. Mobility justice is an overarching concept for thinking about how power and inequality inform the governance and control of movement, shaping the patterns of unequal mobility and immobility in the circulation of people, resources, and information. We can think about mobility justice occurring at different scales, from micro-level embodied interpersonal relations to meso-level issues of urban transportation justice and the "right to the city", to macro-level transnational relations of travel and borders, and ultimately global resources flows and energy circulation. Ultimately, I argue that we urgently need to connect these scales of the body, street, city, nation, and planet into one overarching theory of mobility justice.'[71]

For your notes and comments:

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[71] Theorising Mobility Justice, Mimi Sheller Tempo Social, revista de sociologia da USP, v. 30, n. 2.

Policy vs practice

'Today, we must secure culture's rightful place in our recovery plans in order to overcome the crisis. But we also need long-term policies in order to respond to the structural challenges highlighted by the crisis. Artists and cultural professionals from all over the world have spoken out on this subject in the debates organized by UNESCO. They have drawn attention to the need to create regulations which provide artists with some degree of security, the need to provide support with regard to digitalization by ensuring cultural diversity, equitable value chains, and fair remuneration of creators by the main digital platforms.' (Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, UNESCO)[72]

I would like to suggest a shift from the world value-chain to that of an ecosystem that recognises the interdependent nature of things, in a non-linear fashion, in order to enhance the above statement. And to also note that 'Disparities between developed and developing countries are significant, with developed countries leading the trade of cultural goods and services – accounting for 95% of total exports of cultural services.'[73]

This is contrary to the goal of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity Expressions to 'Achieve a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and increase the mobility of artists and cultural professionals.'[74]

While it is understood that the Convention has no power to hold any government accountable to implement this goal, it is quoted here as the most comprehensive and most referenced articulation of possibilities for futures in the sector. Such actions informed by this and other UNESCO Declarations and Conventions indicate how these form a network of motivations for the pursuit of cultural mobility and an articulation of mobility justice.

'The plurality of institutions and regulations dedicated to mobility indisputably show proof that political leaders strive to promote the mobility of goods and people worldwide. International laws like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity state the right for people to go and come as freely as they please. At the regional level, organizations for integration set up a certain number of rules so as to facilitate the movement of nationals from member countries, like the Schengen space within the EU (European Union) and that within the Ecowas (Economic Community of West African States). Many mobility tools were put in place both at multilateral and bilateral levels. Examples include grants for training, residencies or creation programmes (Ateliers du Monde and Visas Pour la Création by Institut français, the UE-ACP programme Crossing Borders, Connecting Cultures (traverser les frontières, connecter les cultures), data bases (Internet websites, On the Move […], agreements and organizations (Relais Culture Europe, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Office National de Diffusion Artistique (ONDA), Informal European Theatre Meeting (IETM), Roberto Cimetta Fund, Arts Moves Africa (AMA), Arterial Network, Young Arab Theatre Fund (YATF), etc.).'[75]

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[72]   Foreword of the UNESCO report, Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good, 2022.
        https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380474.

[73]   From page 143 for the article by Anupama Sekhar: **https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en**

[74]   From page 143 for the article by Anupama Sekhar: **https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en**

[75]   The Mobility of African Artists: a politically-oriented issue, by François Bouda, 2013.
        https://artmobility.interartive.org/the-mobility-of-african-artists-a-politically-oriented-issue-francois-bouda/

Curiously and regrettably, and even if the article dates back only to 2013, some of these funds or networks no longer function, or else still exist but face a lot of difficulties (due to various reasons, of which the drying up of funding is the most prevalent). Typically, these initiatives would get seed funding from a source based in the political Global North. Attempts to source diverse funding income streams would be made. The impact of the organisation would be felt to the extent the available resources were able to support. At some point the funding would dry up, and the organisation would close, leaving a void. This tells us a number of things, including the following needs:

▪ To educate funders across the globe, including philanthropic organisations, on cultural mobility and cultural mobility justice and its idiosyncrasies and to lobby to make a case for its place in budgets.

▪ To work towards budget allocations and the direction of funds towards the preferential treatment and redress that is often only alluded to.

▪ To shift perspectives to include mobility justice on social justice agendas, as demonstrated in this reflection, and to enter the spaces where these conversations are happening.

▪ To join in advocacy and calls to action around gender and racial justice in philanthropy and giving patterns, to ensure philanthropy leadership includes mobility justice.

▪ To challenge the biased trust deficit that exists along racial, gender, and geographical lines and to direct resource allocations in funding spaces towards mobility justice.

▪ To dream new iterations of mobility patterns, grants, programmes that are mindful of the context detailed here, because this shift is necessary.

▪ To continue to support existing platforms that are effective.

▪ To understand this to be an iterative process and to not be attached to one way of doing things but to learn continuously and be responsive to the needs of the moment and to be accepting of the lifespan of some initiatives coming to an end.

▪ To make the process of acquiring said resources, such as funding and other resource support, seamless and not performatively bureaucratic. This is possible because all systems are human-made and can therefore be simplified by human imaginations to be enabling rather than prohibitive.

▪ To factor in all cost centres in mobility schemes and make provision for them.

▪ To engage governments, states and embassies to demand radical shifts in visa processing inhibitions.

▪ To have a multipronged strategy from African and European cultural workers that involves elements of protest, boycotts, and other means of subversion to demand change and make felt the urgency of the matter.

▪ To be deliberate in joining discussions and using them as windows of opportunity to drive a narrative construction that makes this discourse of mobility justice part of the everyday lexicon in popular consciousness and imagination – a form of movement making.

▪ To ensure guidance and adapted process ('Meeting changemakers in the innovative ways their work shows up across the world. It [must] be democratic and decentralized.'),[76] with decisions guided by rapid consultative processes that give agency to the most marginalised.

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76   **https://blackfeministfund.org/**

- To call for a greater number of donors around the table: 'A call to win: A window for breakthrough progress is here, but time is running out. Amid a chorus of calls for racial and gender justice across philanthropy, support for Black feminist organizing remains low and slow. Change will only happen when donors of every kind come to the table and push ourselves and our colleagues to give more, and more quickly. In this inflection point in history, we can look back and say we delivered, together, with the urgency and boldness this moment demands. Will we meet it?'[77]

For your notes and comments:

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77   **https://blackfeministfund.org/**

Alternative sproutings and emerging experiments

'**Tools of international cultural cooperation are manifold** and might include local, regional, national, and international levels as well as physical, hybrid and digital activities. They might concern the preparation, implementation and/or evaluation phase as well as a combination of all three mentioned project phases are for example:

■ Global culture-related initiatives like UNESCO, international NGOs, and networks in culture (e.g. like PEN), etc. including related involvement of stakeholders.

■ Internationalisation strategies in culture and creative industries.

■ (Culture-)policy learning and peer exchanges.

■ City twinning initiatives and hosting of international (including culture) delegations.

■ International conferences on culture including showcasing, branding, exchanging, etc.

■ International research on topics related to cultural exchange, culture policy, sectoral cooperation, decolonialisation, etc.

■ Professional and amateur cultural and artistic exchange, co-production, residencies, and mobility.

■ International trade and circulation of artworks, restitutions of artefacts and combatting trafficking.

■ Culture and creative industries related business internationalisation and export initiatives and born global creative companies operating worldwide.

■ International cultural tourism and related cultural festivals promotions and activities.

■ International cultural activities and intercultural exchanges of a wide range of diasporas (like different African diasporas in Europe, and different European diasporas on the African continent).

■ International solidarity in art and culture including initiatives to welcome refugees.'[78]

There are myriad of points of imagination, activation and intervention at various points of the dynamic ecosystem. This is where an attitude and posture reflecting an iterative process makes sense in order to be responsive to the evolving needs of the moment in ways that are regenerative and equitable, and in order to demonstrate interdependence and collective care, to foster a sense of social justice as it plays out in mobility justice, and to build the levels of solidarity to achieve this. It requires the acknowledgement of the past and how it influences the present, as well as the need for redress and reparations that are linked to climate justice and that consider mobility as imperative to the sustainability of all vulnerable lives and entities. It requires a departure from a scarcity mentality and paranoia to something more expansive and malleable.

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[78] 'How Cities and Local Governments Can Contribute to Better Relations Between Africa and EU/rope?', A study report by Sylvia Amman – Inforelais (February 2023): **https://www.salzkammergut-2024.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Deconfining_WP2_inforelais_ AMANN-Sylvia_CoC_International_Report_Final.pdf** (page 10).

Below are a few examples that demonstrate ways in which cultural mobility can be understood in all its complexity and incorporate all the considerations for the kind of radical imagination referred to above. It is important to note that we do not have access to means of evaluating whether the intended outcomes were achieved and what the experience of the collaborators was like. And we are also unable to determine in what ways power dynamics showed up.

KIBERA FASHION WEEK

'Kibera Fashion Week is not your typical fashion week but comprises a year-long programme to fundamentally change the power dynamics and narratives in the fashion industry, labelling itself a fashion week with the ambition to reinvent the format. Showcasing the talent of creatives from Kibera and sharing their insights with audiences in Kenya and the EU, the project wants to build a new ethical and sustainable fashion industry. Rooting this project in Kibera confronts the neo-colonial realities of the fashion industry by learning from a community that is faced with the abundance of textile waste exported by European countries and creating a new dialogue around the consequences of unsustainable consumption. Through this dialogue a movement can start of change, impacting both consumers and designers in Kenya and abroad by respecting the skills and insights of local communities. While Kibera is often portrayed as a place of hopelessness in need of help and so called "development aid", it is in fact a diverse metropolis, booming with creativity and constantly evolving and innovating. The project firmly believe that the world can learn a lot from the people of Kibera and they possess the skills to become pioneers in a sustainable and ethical creative industry. Kibera Fashion Week will become a platform for the community to redefine fashion, share new methods for sustainability and bring together stakeholders from around the world to challenge unethical and exploitative consumption.'[79]

MUSIC IN AFRICA

The Music In Africa Foundation (MIAF) is a leading pan-African arts organisation with a mandate to support the African music sector, particularly music creators. They create and share opportunities for music professionals to learn, exchange, develop and promote their careers, and by actively implementing developmental projects, including, but not limited to, artist mobility, capacity building, educational programmes, performance, lobbying, conferences, and other related initiatives. Their founding partners are Siemens Stiftung and Goethe-Institut.

Through their Music in Africa Access Conference, they provide an annual platform that sees the continent's musical ecosystem converge for the purpose of doing business, networking, and peer learning. It is a landmark event for musicians in the continent as well as those who seek to have their finger on the pulse of what is happening on the continent for the purpose of doing business.

'The broad objectives of the Music In Africa Foundation include (but are not limited to):

- providing reliable and useful information that promotes the African music sector and its operators.

- connecting and promoting exchange between music operators from, or related to, Africa and its diasporas.

- promoting and encouraging the creation of content by Africans, about Africa or related to Africa and its diasporas.

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79   https://www.eunicglobal.eu/news/new-european-spaces-of-culture-projects-selected-for-2023

- improving the distribution, accessibility, and viability of such content.

- promoting the spirit of entrepreneurship among the African music sector.

- enhancing music education.

- facilitating and promoting, through research, development and education, the use by professionals and audiences of current and future technologies; and

- providing one single and viable access point for all of the above that links existing initiatives, services and resources.'[80]

THE ALGERIAN MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND ARTS

'Facilitating the Schengen visa application process for Algerian cultural professionals. In 2018, the Algerian Ministry of Culture and Arts signed an Agreement with the Algeria-based embassies of countries that issue Schengen visas. The Agreement aims to facilitate and speed up the application process for Algerian cultural professionals. Algerian cultural professionals scheduled to participate in cultural events abroad or civil society organizations sponsoring them are eligible to apply for a recommendation towards obtaining a Schengen visa from the Directorate of Cooperation and Exchanges at the Ministry of Culture and Arts. This recommendation has resulted in faster processing times and the successful issue of 70 Schengen visas in the period 2018-2019, with musicians, actors, directors, writers, poets and visual artists

benefitting from the measure. In some cases, applicants have obtained a Schengen visa within 48 hours. The Ministry of Culture and Arts has worked in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with cultural organisations to implement this measure. Similar agreements are in the pipeline with embassies of other developed and developing countries in Algiers.' (Source: Algeria QPR)[81]

While the number of issued visas is not large in the greater scheme of things, and while it is not clear whether this initiative is still in existence, it demonstrates some of the tangible, practical, and action-oriented possibilities for making meaning from cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations beyond their usual vagueness.

PRO HELVETIA FUNDING OF SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION AS WELL AS SWISS-AFRICA RESIDENCIES

'The co-creation grant provides support to collaborations between two participants (individual artists or a collective) from the liaison offices regions and Switzerland who wish to embark on a joint creation process. The grant supports tandems who want to develop project ideas further, building on exchanges from previous residencies, research trips or other experience of collaboration. The

funding measure is a way to support artists in deepening mutual artistic practice.'[82]

'Cultural practitioners from Switzerland may apply for residencies in Southern, East, West or Central Africa, while cultural practitioners from Southern, East, West and Central Africa can apply for

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80   https://www.musicinafrica.net/about/music-africa-foundation

81   From page 143 for the article by Anupama Sekhar: https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en

82   https://johannesburg.prohelvetia.org/en/2023/09/12/new-funding-measure-co-creation-grants/

residencies in Switzerland. Below you will find more information about the countries in question.

The residencies programme is open to artists and cultural practitioners working in the fields of visual arts, design and interactive media, music, literature and performing arts, as well as arts practitioners with a transdisciplinary focus.'[83]

'Pro Helvetia Johannesburg has, for the past two decades, been investing in transnational collaborations, exchanges and joint projects between organisations and creative practitioners spread across the SADC region. This "intra-regional" programming was financed through a series of cooperation agreements with the regional office of the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)** located

in Harare, Zimbabwe. Since 2012, the regional arts programme has involved investment of approximately USD 3 million through nearly 400 grants to individuals and organisations across the SADC region.

Between 2015 and 2017 the impact of the programme increased substantially, both in geographical reach and impact, with our office supporting approximately 1 200 arts professionals involved in 135 projects and residencies. These activities traversed all fifteen countries in the SADC region, with an especially significant footprint in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Madagascar. This was realised through awarding micro-grants from an annual **ANT Mobility Fund** open call.'[84]

THE MANY MIRIAM MAKEBAS OF THE CONTINENT[85]

Intentional about where she went and why, on the surface she was a musician that went wherever music went, but Miriam Makeba used her mobility as a cultural worker to bring attention to other complex, urgent matters like the apartheid atrocities in South Africa. The nature of her work and the brutality of the regime was such that she was exiled from her birth country to the point of not being able to bury her mother. She relied on a nuanced understanding of her circumstances from people who were processing and facilitating her ability to move between countries on the continent and abroad. There is a myriad of other artists that can be quoted and acknowledged here for work under similar circumstances, both in modern times and

in history. This reality needs to be accommodated in ways that take into consideration Mimi Sheller's assertions towards mobility justice, especially considering the role of Europe and the political Global North in creating the conditions from which artists cannot fully realise a living, cannot fully embody freedom of expression, and/or cannot continue to exist for fear of persecution, etc.

These artists and cultural workers are sleeping on each other's couches, using their limited resources to travel and realise projects under difficult conditions, fuelled by a conviction that understands the power and intersection of art, politics, and social justice.

83   https://johannesburg.prohelvetia.org/en/residency/residencies/
84   https://johannesburg.prohelvetia.org/en/dossier/regional-arts-programme/
85   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wONkMpbl7N8

The question of resources and obligations as a collective responsibility for collective alternative world building

'[...] healing as self-confrontation. In other words for healing to take place we must confront all issues that we believe contribute to our un-wellness [...] We need spaces that look at how systems have made us who we are and what it means to fight against oppressions we carry within us.' [86]

'According to the report, "Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) are movements of money and assets across borders which are illegal in source, transfer or use". There are four main categories: firstly, "Tax and commercial IFFs", which mostly consists of fraudulent issuing of invoices for products to be imported or exported, amounting to approximately 40 billion US$ per year; second, "illegal markets", which are principally human trafficking and toxic waste; third, "Theft-type activities and financing of crime and terrorism"; and finally, IFFs linked to "corruption".' [87]

'In its latest report on Illicit Financial Flows (IFF) in Africa, UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) discloses that 88.6 billion

US$ from the continent go up in smoke every year. Not only must we ask questions about the size of these amounts, we must also wonder how this is at all possible.' [88]

'The evidence reveals a complex network of actors and enablers involved in orchestrating and facilitating capital flight and the accumulation of private wealth in offshore secrecy jurisdictions.' [89]

'Contrary to the dominant discourse, it is actually the case that the 54 African states finance developed countries and not the other way round.' [90]

'Regarding offshore bank accounts, the Tax Justice Network has shown that 10 of the most financially secretive countries fighting to defend bank secrecy practices are all major powers.' [91]

This serves to address the myth of Development Aid as well as the myth of corruption being synonymous with Africa. Recent events across the African continent have emerged to reveal existing tensions.

86   https://www.uaf-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/An-African-Feminist-Exploration-of-Healing-Justice.pdf

87   https://www.cadtm.org/Illicit-Financial-Flows-Africa-is-the-world-s-main-creditor

88   https://www.cadtm.org/Illicit-Financial-Flows-Africa-is-the-world-s-main-creditor

89   https://unctad.org/meeting/debate-trail-capital-flight-africa

90   https://www.cadtm.org/Illicit-Financial-Flows-Africa-is-the-world-s-main-creditor

91   https://www.cadtm.org/Illicit-Financial-Flows-Africa-is-the-world-s-main-creditor

We are at a point of rapture where the time for false narratives and deliberately lazy political analysis of the status quo to favour continued imperialistic narratives has reached its boiling point. Its acceptability has expired. This includes the resistance that is emerging against African states men who collaborate with the West to continue unethical power dynamics as long as they and their cronies remain core beneficiaries.

The wave of accountability is here. It cannot be circumvented. We must then make space for accepting the notion of 'healing as self-confrontation'. In this breath we must start with the following contextual framings: 'In light of this UNCTAD report, the United Nations (UN) should reconsider its systematic promotion of private finances for the realization of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and rather, challenge FFIs' "tax and commercial practices". This should enable African countries to recover half of the money needed for the realization of SDGs, which are to be achieved by 2030. This breath of fresh air would be significant for African countries' public finances. Even more so in a time of debt crisis coupled with increasing pressures on public finances as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic's healthcare and economic consequences […] Certainly we share the claim that "IFFs are a shared responsibility between developed and developing countries," but we regret that there is no nuance in terms of degrees of responsibility. If people in the Global North are victims of austerity as a result of IFFs in the same sense as people in the Global South, we cannot make an equivalent comparison at the level of States. The interests of capital are very largely situated in Global North countries. They are the ones who directly influence international architecture and international, multilateral, and national regulatory frameworks to be adopted.'[92]

'Despite how inequality is made to seem natural, scarcity is manufactured...Viral justice offers a vision that requires each of us to individually confront how we participate in unjust systems, even when "in theory" we stand for justice.'[93]

'In analyzing the structural violence of economic systems, there is much to learn from the environmental justice (EJ) movement, which has broadened the understanding of "environment" beyond the scope of conservation and presentation of natural resources, defining the environment as "where we live, work, play, learn and pray" EJ is based on structural analysis of "environmental racism", which refers to the disproportionate impact of environmental harm on certain groups, including people of color.'[94]

'Unpacking structural issues that put certain communities at risk is at the heart of this analysis, believing that environmental justice is realized when people can realize their highest potential, without interruption by environmental racism and inequity.'[95]

'We do not simply resist; we transform. Our movements remind everyone that freedom stretches deeper into the past and further into the future than anything this world has eyes to see, or hands to steal.'[96]

'A recent evaluation by the Parties of the long-standing bilateral cooperation agreement between Burkina Faso and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in Belgium (which has been in operation since 1998) reveals that partnering civil society organizations do not have enough cashflow to comfortably advance the funds needed to run the projects, including mobility dimensions, as reimbursements are made later in the project cycle.'[97]

92   https://www.cadtm.org/Illicit-Financial-Flows-Africa-is-the-world-s-main-creditor
93   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022
94   https://www.uaf-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/An-African-Feminist-Exploration-of-Healing-Justice.pdf
95   https://greenaction.org/what-is-environmental-justice/
96   https://blackfeministfund.org/a-love-letter-to-black-feminist-movements/
97   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

This last is but one example of some of the blind spots, whether deliberate or innocent, that operate when a fully intersectional and contextual view of cooperation and project design is not taken into consideration. When justice, equity and collective care are being centred, different questions emerge at every stage of project design, planning, and implementation. Once a loophole or barrier is identified in an iterative process, measures are taken to address it.

Mimi Sheller writes the following proposals for the attainment of mobility justice to offer a counter narrative that seeks to close gaps by addressing practical and tangible areas of consideration:

'At this scale of the nation and transnational movements, we can add these dimensions of mobility justice:

- All people shall enjoy a right to exit and re-enter the territory from which they originate.

- There is a right to refuge for those fleeing violence, persecution, and loss of domicile by war.

- People displaced by climate change shall have a right to resettlement in other countries, especially in those countries that contributed most to climate change.

- There is a right to freedom of movement across borders for any temporary purposes defined by law (tourism, education, temporary work etc.)

- No one should be detained or deported without due process.

- Immigration law shall not be used to exclude entire categories of persons on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, or health status.'[98]

This then should form the basis for consideration of how to address the issue of resources, including financial, infrastructure, mobility routes, etc.

'Solidarity [...] is not charity. It is born out of the recognition that our fates are linked.'

For your notes and comments:

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[98]   *Theorising Mobility Justice*, Mimi Sheller, 2018

Conclusion

'Speaking to the hostile assertiveness of those seeking to maintain their status quo "possessive investment in whiteness" provides a more apt description of the dynamics than, say, "white fragility" (i.e. white defensiveness). Sure, white bodies and psyches may be fragile, but white politics are aggressive and deadly [...] Going back to the colonial era white men have deputized themselves as keepers of the racial order, protecting the law-abiding public from *those in* the *streets* [...] The racial paranoia of impending invasion makes sense for people living on stolen land [and resources]. But the threat was never the man in the street or across the border. It was always the man in the mirror.'[99]

'As the world inches closer to nuclear confrontation, we have the opportunity to redirect the impending reset by harnessing Magneto Electro energy, our own Magneto Motherland. The epistemologies of this Magneto Motherland are vastly different from Western political thought. It represents a politics of consistent mobility while questioning. It is the conception of movement which implies something distinctly different from the fiction projected as reality.'[100] This is a caption on a post on 23 August from the Chale Wote Festival, which happens in Ghana. Chale Wote is Africa's annual street art festival. MAGNETO MOTHERLAND is the collective utterance calling forth new identities and sensitivities, obscured by dominant habits of representation. It is the 2023 theme for Chale Wote Festival, hinting on a spiritual level what we must begin to imagine in order to survive this rapture.

This rapture that we see now playing out, casting a rebellious spotlight on the normalised injustices and unequal relations of Western domination, on the selective application of ethics and morality and on selective memory, is inevitable. It is of a material

and metaphysical and spiritual nature. Its time has come.

'Racial capitalism serves up a potent cocktail of corrosive individualism, persistent anti-Blackness and relentless grind that means many white people, too stagger early to their graves [...] the dogma of rugged individualism is mixed with contempt for interdependence in the form of a stronger social safety net, which is ultimately something that we'd all benefit from.'

'Black feminisms require that we fail productively; that even when we forget to leave destructive logics at the door, we simply ask forgiveness and work to right the wrongs done thereby. And because we are always building on the work done before, standing on the shoulders of the workers gone before us, we are never at a loss. There is always someone who can show us the way; through books, music, stories, friendship; through bloodlines, in forgotten pictures, on street corners. We never have to be the first or the only, because we are never alone.'[101]

'This work needs [radical] imagination. Feminist' economists have written extensively about the need for regenerative economies that center systematic alternatives, including addressing power structures, the commodification of natural resources and reliance on extractivism. At the heart of this feminist approach is the fact that it does not follow the nation-state approach of creating systems based on knowledge and comfort that it can coerce people into its vision with the threat of violence. Feminist approaches do not seek this kind of power, but depend on collectivity, experimentation and continued learning in imagining and creating alternative models and structures. Rather than a destination, freedom is understood as a process.'[102]

99   https://fsi.taxjustice.net/

100   https://www.instagram.com/p/CwaGUARIyP9/?img_index=1

101   https://blackfeministfund.org/a-love-letter-to-black-feminist-movements/

102   https://www.uaf-africa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/An-African-Feminist-Exploration-of-Healing-Justice.pdf

After all, 'Falling from a burning building, I might hit the ground first, but you won't be far behind. My well-being is intimately bound with yours. I don't need an all; I need you to smell the smoke. So come [...] Visionary writer adrienne marie browne invites this kind of attention to the microscopic when he observes "The crisis is everywhere, massive, massive, massive. And we are small. But emergence notices the way small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies [...] How we are at the small scale is how we are at the large scale [...] what we practice at the small scale sets a pattern for the whole ecosystem.'[103]

'What if we can architect a radically different existence? Why wait for these brutal, death-making structures to completely collapse before we start truly living? [...] As just one person let's band together with all other just people who are equally hungry for change.'[104]

WE can work towards:

Cultural mobility that can be defined and experienced as seeking to create and nurture an enabling environment for the imagination and re-imagination, facilitation, and support of mobility in ways that enhance the potential for self-actualisation of artists and culture workers (in the most expansive, inclusive and dynamic use of these words). **This process is to be rooted in a commitment and in taking tangible action to redress inequities, eliminate harm, centre collective care and solidarity, and use the most marginalised identities as a benchmark for integrity in achieving mobility justice.** This is to be done through intentional redistribution of resources and granting agency and dignity in the process of mutual exchange and alternative world-building.

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[103]   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

[104]   *Viral Justice: How We Grow The World We Want;* Ruha Benjamin, 2022.

ON
THE
MOVE