'Masterless Men'; Riots, Patronage and the Politics of the Surplus Population in Kinshasa.

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Abstract

Based on fieldwork in Kinshasa, this essay makes a link between riots, recent anthropology of 'surplus populations' and distributive politics in low-income countries, especially Africa. Tracing the history of a political demonstration turned riot, it shows how distribution structures the interactions between rich and poor in the city. Situating the riot in a context where subjects are dependent on the market for goods but are not able to sell their labour, the essay shows the riot to be a rational intervention in a place where elites do not see popular support as especially important, and where occupying space and controlling circulation and distribution are the primary political-economic imperatives.

Night in Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is 2011, in the run up to elections. Sitting in a bar beneath trees, I hear a murmur, then a roar, then an angry crowd surges along the road beyond, then gunfire. The crowd, in response, runs back along the route it came, as a hand pulls me from behind, back into the building. The crowd has come from down the road in Ebende[1] – a township built by the Belgians to house industrial workers. Like many of Kinshasa's outlying areas, Ebende is now associated with poverty and violence. The crowd was trying to get to Malolé, which is even poorer. Ebende boasts the remnants of formal infrastructure, while Malolé has mud roads, and an electricity supply even worse than in the rest of this giant city, where many are without power for months on end. The crowd of *bana Ebende* (literally 'children of Ebende'; here refering to the inhabitants of an area) is trying to get to (and destroy) the house of Likala, one-time judo champion who, since 2010, has become a prominent member of the youth league of the

Partie du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (PPRD), the main ruling party behind (now ex) President Joseph Kabila.

Earlier that day Likala had played a prominent role in a small demonstration, where a number of young men had accompanied Desiré, a pro-regime candidate, to make gifts to a supportive church in Ebende. These demonstrators had been paid $25 dollars each to attend the rally. This was part of a general pattern where regime figures pay poor young men - known as *sportifs* because they practise martial arts such as judo and boxing - to support their demonstrations and to intimidate and attack rivals. Centred on an electoral district, here called Calvare, this paper is about a paid-for demonstration and a subsequent riot in election time and, in a wider sense, about distributive politics in very large, very poor cities.

'Distributive' here refers to the handing out of money or resources, where distribution is based on ideas of obligation or membership, and not conceptualised as compensation for labour (Ferguson 2015, Englund 2015). Distributive politics is strongly associated with rents on primary commodities and is important in the DRC. Since its revival in the early 2000s, an industrial mining sector, foreign-owned and managed by expatriates is, in financial terms, the largest part of the economy. Though the deals signed are notoriously bad for the country as a whole (see Lutundula 2006), this sector pays a series of rents, official and unofficial, accruing to whomever is recognised as sovereign. In the DRC this recognition has nearly always been accorded to whoever is in power in Kinshasa, however weak their control of the hinterland. Those controlling the capital have attracted a raft of other payments and protection monies, on diamonds, timber, etc., along with a series of further rents, related especially to property ownership and construction. Thus the primary political

imperatives in the DRC have been around controlling the capital and negotiating access to the distribution of rents within a relatively small social circle, reflected in the need to make 'connections' and in a Liliputian obsession with the rituals of daily life in the capital.

Dependence, distribution and the 'relative surplus population'.

Recent scholarship has argued that narratives of development are invariably based on a false premise: that those dispossessed by 'modernisation' will be drawn into the social fold through industrialisation and a resultant expansion of wage labour (Denning 2010, Li 2010, 2017; Ferguson 2015). Evidence suggests that this story is no longer true. In most parts of the developing world wage labour has been declining, either absolutely or as a percentage of the population, even during periods of GDP growth, and deindustrialisation now begins long before much of the population is pulled out of poverty (Anonymous 2010; Rodrik 2016), leaving in its wake an ever larger 'relative surplus population' (Marx 1967/1961:906). These are people who are surplus relative to capital's capacity to exploit them for profit; populations without access to wage labour, yet dependent on the market for basic provisioning.

Anthropologists have proposed that these changes necessitate a political shift, away from liberal personhood centred around self-ownership and labour, where struggle is based in the site of production; towards the politics of distribution based in the 'relational person' (Li 2010, Ferguson 2015). In Africa and elsewhere ideas of rights in distribution have often been expressed in terms of dependent kinship or relative age (something an earlier literature termed 'paternalism'), and recent scholarship has argued that the deployment of such vocabularies in contemporary Africa does not necessarily represent a regressive political

programme (Ferguson 2015, Englund 2015). In addition this paper shows that, notwithstanding the appeals to vocabularies of relatedness, the claims encoded in such professions of dependence can be very conflictual, and build on previous histories of struggle (Li 2017).

In understanding the events described in this paper, I also make a link to a second literature, which has placed to the fore the claims made by the social category of 'youth'. Youth here refers 'less to a specific age cohort… than to a set of precarious circumstances' (Watts 2018:479). The political expressions of the 'precarious youth' discussed here are often made in the vocabulary of relative age and dependent kinship mentioned above – supplicants present themselves as 'juniors' or 'children' - but this is in a context of conflict that everyone understands. It has been a much-debated issue in Africanist Anthropology whether 'youth' in this sense constitutes a 'class' (Rey and Dupré 1969, Richards 1996). While this paper does not intervene directly, it is assumed that the 'youth' identities discussed here do, at least partially, cohere around the grievances of the surplus population. While objectively the surplus population is composed of a broad range of social ages and types, ideologically it is young 'masterless men', denied possibilities for social reproduction and 'alienated from the worlds of legitimate authority, and from the market order' (Watts 2018:480 see also Comaroff 2004; Pratten and Gore 2003; Honwana 2012), who often come to represent the 'dangerous class' in the popular imagination.

In Kinshasa these 'masterless men' are connected to a large repertoire of popular practices that are also important class signifiers. Strong neighbourhood identities, drug-use (especially marijuana), types of music, football, forms of martial sport such as boxing and judo,

bodybuilding, fighting and violent male heroes from popular culture are all strongly associated with poor young men. Nowadays Kung-Fu films and video games are popular, while at independence such men were keen followers of westerns and often dressed as cowboys, becoming known as '*bills*' (as in Buffalo Bill). To this day *yanké* (from Yankee) means 'tough', while the sub-dialect of Lingala spoken by poor young men is still known as *hindou-bill*[2]. (De Boeck and Plissant 2004, Pype 2007, Gondola 2016).

Some, for example Cole (2011), has argued that 'youth' should not automatically seen as an oppositional category: African youth movements are 'not …standing outside existing structures of power: …[but] … trying to get inside them' (2011:72). This is a useful corrective to the tendency to approach all youth culture under the sign of 'resistance', but, as Cole acknowledges, we need to pay attention to class dynamics (see Pype 2007). The famous Congolese Sapeurs, foregrounded by Cole in her discussion of 'youth integration', came from a decayed bourgeoisie (Gandoulou 1974), and their attempts to 'crash' the social system, desperate as they appear, depended on resources that youths from the surplus population did not have. As this paper shows, for those nearer the bottom of the social scale, patronage-seeking behavior is generally poorly understood as 'trying to get inside' the social order.

The Riot as political form

The riot is salient to these questions of youth, surplus populations and distribution, and the following discussion draws on classic literature about riots from social history, and on Joshua Clover's recent (2016) reinterpretation of this literature. E.P. Thompson's account of the 18th century bread riot situates it as struggle by a population that was increasingly

dependent on the market for food but was not (yet) selling its labour. Because of this, conflict concentrated, not at points of production but at points of circulation and distribution (in this case grain depots, markets, ports, bakeries, etc.), with the riot as a popular veto on 'profiteering' by landowners, bakers and flour merchants in times of scarcity. Clover (2016) drawing on Tilly (2008), shows how a shift occurs in repertoires of protest over the 19th century, from the riot to the strike – corresponding with a shift in the site of conflict, from the point of distribution and circulation, to points of production like the factory floor. Changes in the structure of global production, often characterised as 'neoliberal', mean that both rent and non-employment are more important than they once were in high GDP countries (Frase 2011, Neveling 2018). Clover (2016) suggests this has led to a resurgence of riot-type disruptions in the high GDP world. In any case, in places like the DRC, where wage labour has always been a relatively obscure sub-category of work, where precarity has always been the norm (Millar 2014), and where ruling class income has always been based on rents, riot-type disturbances have always been to the fore.

Riots led by poor young men, have had marked political significance in Kinshasa. Independence itself came about because of riots in 1959. Football supporters, emerging from a game that their team had lost unexpectedly, collided with the police in the process of dispersing a political demonstration. The ensuing disorder lasted for days and destroyed the air of implacable command that the colonial state had cultivated over decades. The panic this generated within the colonial administration precipitated Belgium's botched decolonisation the following year. Likewise in the early 1990s, when opposition to Mobutu's western-backed dictatorship grew, bouts of prolonged citywide looting, known as *les pillages* marked a point of no return for the regime (Devisch 1998). More recently, as will be discussed at the end of this essay, a series of demonstrations-turned-riots pushed now ex-

president Joseph Kabila into a partial retreat, confounding his preferred schemes for retaining power.

Riots are not the only form of political action in Kinshasa, From the 1980s a series of opposition politicians, above all Etienne Tshisekedi, until his death in 2018 leader of the UDPS (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*), have commanded mass support. This opposition has generally diverted popular energies into other forms of action. Unlike the smaller demonstrations discussed in much of this paper, these are unpaid events. Notable in this register have been mass demonstrations that stress Christian forbearance, and mass stay-aways, known as *villes mortes*. Courageous and impressive as these events are, I argue that the formal opposition has been limited in its effectiveness and that these limitations relate to the social and intellectual biases of the opposition leadership, which comes from Kinshasa's narrow class of professional bourgeois, with lawyers, clergymen and former Mobutiste deputies to the fore. Viewing their popular support as a source of legitimacy, but never as a way to seize power, they have repeatedly channelled popular discontent into pseudo-legalistic frameworks, in a state where the rule of law counts for nothing.

Demonstrations in this register are about *voice* – expressing the popular will – where for the masses they are about *presence*, controlling space and using bodies to occupy (and if possible seize) nodes of power and circulation. This was evident after the first of the aforementioned 1990s *pillages*, when Mobutu played a series of political games appointing and dismissing members of the opposition. At one point a huge crowd from some of Kinshasa's poorest districts arrived at Tshisekedi's house in Limete, imploring him to march

with them to the *primature* and take power from Mobutu's appointed prime minister (see Trapido 2016:65). Tshisekedi simply told them to go home.

In this context the mass marches and *villes mortes*, hardly effective at the best of times, have gradually lost force. Like the Grand Old Duke of York, the opposition has repeatedly marched its supporters to the top of the hill, only to march them down again. This is not to romanticise riots: undirected by popular leadership, they struggle to articulate a coherent programme, frequently express xenophobic sentiments, and often have deleterious consequences for the masses themselves. But in their stress on a politics of presence - controlling circulation and space - they have understood something crucial about the political economy.

In theorising riots, a useful heuristic can be gained from juxtaposing a set of contrasts: between the surplus population and the proletariat, between the riot and the strike (see also Clover 2016), between distribution and the wage form (though, as we will see below, the surplus population does not in fact benefit from distribution), and between relational conceptions of the person and liberal 'autonomy'. One further contrast is between time and space. E.P Thompson (1967) argued that an industrial time consciousness emerged in the 19th century, linked to the need for homogenous units of value produced at a regular rate, and that this time-consciousness replaced the highly differentiated social perception of time in the pre-factory era. This need to set productivity within the delineated grid of industrial time became the terrain of conflict for labour. Disrupting this even time, slowing or stopping its flow, became the target of collective protest. Filip De Boeck (2015) argues that for the poor in contemporary Kinshasa, time is radically different from the uniform rhythm of industrial work time. Time here is highly syncopated, with each individual struggling body inserting and detaching itself from networks of survival according to a series of

complex polyrhythms. It is clear that this syncopated, wage-labour free environment, renders the time/production axis an unpromising focus for collective struggles. Thus just as classic ethnographies of the industrial work place (e.g. Lee 1998:109-136) show that conflict is a series of micro-struggles over control of the worker's **time,** so this paper proposes - and documents - a political ethnography of the relative surplus population as a series of micro-struggles over the circulation of plebeian bodies in **space.**

Where the body is an important form of infrastructure (Simone 2004, De Boeck and Plissant 2004:235-6), configurations of the plebeian body in space (noticeable not just in riots but also in other public events such as funerals) have the capacity to disrupt and re-evision the flows of the city in multiple ways. These struggles, often concentrated in placing bodies at key passing points in social geography, become critically concerned with presence. Vasudevan (2015) has called this a 'radical politics of infrastructure', which sometimes 'materialises the social order it seeks to enact' (2015:318), while at other times it asserts 'the persistence of the body' materialising against the powerful (Butler in Vaseduvan 2015:323). In the context of Kinshasa, Geenen (2009) has shown how 'Shegue' (street children) have sought to 'colonise' spaces within the city, asserting their presence, and perhaps a 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1996/1967), in the face of extreme official violence.

This notion of presence situates political contest in a space that is recognisably 'public'. And Kinois representations of space make characteristically liberal/modern divisions between public and private: the 'house' and the 'outside' (*ndako*/*libanda*), where - unlike in the ancient world - it is the outside/public that is conceptualised as the site of both economic production and sociality (Arendt 1958).[3] But, while we should recognise the distinctively

modern outlines of political space in Kinshasa, Western understandings of politics do contain assumptions that we need to set aside. Examples include the assumption that political equality can (and should) exist in the absence of economic equality (see Staeheli and Mitchell 2008), or that politics is essentially about speech and communication, rather than, say, occupation of space or distribution (see also Vasudevan 2015, Meiksins-Wood 1995). As we will see these assumptions are fundamentally at odds with the political conceptions of Kinshasa's poor majority.

 Another of these assumptions, derived from modern European political theory but common in Anthropology (Radcliffe-Brown 1940:xiv, Sahlins 1972/2017:134-167), is that politics is based in some form of underlying 'contract' between 'rulers' and 'the people' (see Gledhill 2000:10-11, Holbraad 2017 for critiques). Despite great differences, contemporary Africanist political theory shares with classic social contract theory the idea that there is a long-term bargain between leaders and followers. Distribution is central to this bargain, with African politics supposedly characterised by 'vertical' (from high to low rather than class-based) forms of resource distribution and political allegiance. One strand within this thinking links distribution to legitimacy: the leader as 'good-giver' creates both material incentives and a system of ideas (Van de Walle 1994, Bayart 1993). In all versions of this story the bargain is pathological, because 'vertical' distribution dissipates accumulation, glorifies 'corruption', and prevents the formation of a Weberian bureaucracy (Chabal and Daloz 1992, de Sardan 1999, Bayart 1993). Recent Africanist Anthropology has both endorsed and nuanced this picture, pointing to the ambiguities of patrimonialism: showing how the demos can both critique and legitimate practices of 'patronage' or 'corruption', relying on brokers while decrying or satirising the moral malaise (de Sardan 1999, Smith 2006).

Yet valuable as they are in the details, such stories paint a misleading portrait of African political economy. Massive capital flight relative to GDP – higher in Africa than in other continents (Collier, Anke, and Catherine, 2001) - is incompatible with the notion that elite pillage is linked to exceptional pressures to redistribute vertically. Money stashed in the Virgin Islands has, by definition, resisted the pull of local retinues (Trapido 2015). This essay complements this macro perspective, demonstrating ethnographically that the focus on 'the bargain' secured via 'vertical' distribution is misplaced.

This is not to deny the importance of either resources or ideas in politics. As elsewhere in the world, resources and distribution are inseparable from ideological affiliation. But looking closely at different kinds of political payment actually undertaken, we see clear categorical differences. That is to say we see differences between 'horizontal' payments to class equals, and 'vertical' payments to social inferiors. As I will show, continuing to 'rule' in Kinshasa depends **not** on striking a bargain with the demos, but on pleasing other powerful people, and the overwhelming majority of distributions are directed either 'horizontally' or 'upwards' to other power-brokers. The tiny sums paid to poor people to stage demonstrations buy no wider support, indeed they probably alienate a hostile populace further, and even those who take part are rarely won over. An important question for this essay therefore is, 'What is everyone doing?' Why do the ruling classes pay the poor to participate when they are not prepared to invest enough to win real popular support? Why do the poor turn up for politicians they mostly despise? How do the riot and the paid for demonstration overlap? I suggest that it is in the 'politics of presence', and in struggles over space and circulation that we should start to look for the answer.

In what follows I will attempt to answer these questions, laying out the complex social context in which this politics operates. First we will examine the ways in which distribution relates to class power, and how plebeian demands for patronage actually represent a critique of existing elites. From there we will look at how this class-based political landscape interacts with paid-for demonstrations. Having established this background we return to the story of Likala, Desiré, and the riot in Ebende, with which we opened this essay. Exploring this particular incident in depth - looking closely at the intersection of rumours, money, personal advancement, class struggle and space - allows us to reach a better understanding of what is really at stake in this kind of politics. Finally we apply this new understanding to the most recent (2018) elections in Kinshasa, looking at the ways in the notion of presence allows us to make sense of the apparently confusing events we find there.

Distribution and class power

The minister is blind drunk, having finished the best part of a bottle of Chivas Regal. The social event underway has brought together many politicians in the government and businessmen, and the entertainments are lavish. Still clasping the bottle, the minister's arm is around the neck of an expatriate businessman, heavily involved in logging and diamonds. 'Just remember it's me who protects you! Nobody can do anything to you!' The reference, immediately understood by all present, is to protection monies, paid by the businessman to the minister in exchange for the smooth running of the business. These kinds of arrangements are common, and reflect the nature of ruling class incomes. Based in informal rents on commodities, they demonstrate the uncertainty of economic activity in the DRC. While expatriate businesses are especially vulnerable, nobody is immune. There is much

'cutting in' of other powerful people in order that they will provide a network of protection against frequent political reversals. The hyper-diverse business portfolios of those at the top result from these constant offers of shared enterprise (Congo Research Group 2017). One example concerns Justin Mibeko, a minister who will recur in our story. Reported in the international press to have stolen money from the sale of international debts owed a Congolese parastatal (to a fund in a tax-haven), Mibeko's case received unusual scrutiny and he resigned. But there was no prosecution or return of money. It is alleged Mibeko gave a generous share to others in the inner sanctum, ensuring his fall from grace was short-lived. These significant flows of resources within the ruling class happen largely in secret: the expression *mbote ya likasu* 'the kola nut hello', referencing the common gesture of sharing kola in a closed handshake, evokes such transactions.

As this shows, the ruling class in Kinshasa is a community of distribution, and the limits of the class are the limits of the community over which meaningful largesse is disbursed. It also shows how the ruling class is unstable, with competition between individuals and factions conditioning patterns of distribution. While it is sometimes thought that factional politics is opposed to class identification (for example Scott 1972), this is not the case here. The dangers of intra-elite factional intrigue mean that aspirant patricians are constantly obliged to win powerful allies to protect themselves from the threat of political reversal. This is done by making prestations and otherwise distributing gains *within the ruling class;* an imperative which also mitigates strongly against significant 'vertical' distribution, for reasons that the following example explains.

Aimé: the true boss goes to jail.

Aimé's father worked for an international company in the 1970s. Aimé travelled abroad in the 1990s, and gained status via a series of cultural interventions. Trading on this, he insinuated himself into patrician circles via gift-exchange. Playing Falstaff to the inner circle, he gave them designer clothes and introduced them to nightlife. Becoming a member of the PPRD, he was elected to parliament. A particularity of Aimé's situation was that his father had built a house in a then sparsely populated area, which, with time became colonised by the poor, and Aimé grew up with poor neighbours, with whom he seems to have felt a genuine moral community. After his election Aimé became the man who built bridges for his flood-prone constituents, and helped with medical and funeral expenses, acquiring a cult following among the poor. None of this came cheap, however, and Aimé had not worked his elite connections sufficiently well to keep paying for everything. He then used his position in other ways. When a nearby factory appeared to be leaking noxious chemicals, Aimé arrived demanding 'compensation' from its Lebanese owner. Unfortunately for Aimé, the factory owner had a good connection to a regime figure, whom he called and who dispatched soldiers. Locked in the factory and realising his mistake Aimé tried to soften the blow, telephoning contacts of his own, but this was only partly successful and Aimé was suspended from the party for a year, triggering events that would eventually lead to dissident status, exile and imprisonment. On the surface this story fits the 'conventional view': the patron misappropriating funds to become popular with an extended plebeian social network: distribution as the opposite of 'good governance'.

Digging deeper, it illustrates why such behaviour is necessarily unusual. By raiding the factory, Aimé, a relatively marginal figure, came into conflict with others in the ruling class. Successful patricians often extort or pillage when opportunities present themselves. But this misses the point: Aimé's crime was not extortion but a lack of class solidarity: had Aimé

spent less of his money on paupers' funerals and more on distribution within his class, he might have been a less marginal figure; his small-time acts of extortion would have been set against denser networks of ruling class friendships to protect him. For the poor, figures like Aimé do not bind them to a corrupt political system, but embody their critique of it, vertical resource dispersal and the 'good leaders' who enact it are subaltern ideals not mainstream political practice. Furthermore Aimé's popularity with the poor was not the product of naked instrumentalism. Generosity is rather a proof of a leader who eschews a transactional approach to retinues. Here the phrase 'he gives without looking' (*apesa atala te*) i.e. without calculating, is a term of political acclaim[4].

But if all this is the case then why do ruling classes spend *any* money on the masses? Why not ignore them? The answer is complex, and questions liberal assumptions about politics as 'legitimacy' of rulers with the masses (Hobraad 2014). First though, we must examine typical forms of political expenditure, drawing on ethnographic materials from the 2006 and 2011 elections.

Paying the populous

While it is rejected by two parties (the UDPS, and the *Parti Lumumbiste Unifié*, PALU), distributing money is a necessary part of most rallies in Kinshasa and organisers attempt to make lists in advance of those coming. This is to keep some handle on the anarchy that often ensues, and also to stop staff pocketing too much of the campaign's funds. The major reason for a list, however, is that running out of money can be physically dangerous. 'If you don't pay you risk being lynched,' one not especially unpopular congressman told me. At times, especially during the first election in 2006, this ludic insincerity of the masses reached

epic proportions. One informant recounted how a candidate wanted a 'base' in his part of the city. The informant was instructed to bring people to a meeting.

> I came with around 30 people… 'Honourable' didn't have any discourse to convince people, 'Honourable' comes, takes the microphone – '*Nye nye!*' and the audience responds 'Nyeeee!' [a mocking rendition of the sub-Mobutu call-and-response style of political rallies in the DRC]… '*Bana…* You know me!', people say 'Yes Honourable! *Aa vieux*!' And he says 'I don't have a lot to tell you, I've got a lot of money you can see . . . Here is money, if you vote for me I will give you money!' People clapped 'Hwaaaaaaa!' and then he adds, 'The speech is over. People with money don't talk too much!' [And to his aides] 'Go give them the money'. After that the fight started and no joke, Joe, I can tell you, we all came back for money more than once.
>
> Interview 2014

Similar practices structure the kinds of crowd that led to the riot. 2011, two days before the riot. Music blares, marijuana wafts, and crowds besiege the entrance to the headquarters of candidate for re-election Joseph Kalombo. Why the scrum? Campaign t-shirts (*polo*) are being distributed and there are not enough. Does this indicate the crowd's ardour for Kalombo? Unlikely. I ask a young man if he is going to vote for him. 'Me? No! I'm just waiting for the money then I'm going home.' Home for this man, and most of the crowd, is a poor neighbourhood, typical of the areas that supply people at demonstrations. As the sun sets the demo degenerates into a series of fights. This is the commonest (but least serious)

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form of political disorder in Kinshasa. Fights are not between rival political formations, but within a series of 'cells' of which the crowd is composed. Crowds are not an amorphous mass, nor simply a group of individuals, but a series of loose units, sometimes referred to as *écuries*: 'stables'. While the *écuries* assembled for rallies are often transient, they do relate to a series of gerontocratic, quasi-familial idioms that abound in the city, specifically the relationship of the *'petit'* and *'vieux'* (junior and elder). To recognise oneself as someone's junior (*petit na*, literally 'small of', it also implies some kind of fraternal connection) is to declare a mildly gerontocratic relationship where a *petit* will perform tasks for, and receive spiritual and material blessing from, his *vieux*[5].

Fixers organising rallies link to these 'stables' via a single intermediary, often conceptualised as the *vieux*. In this case the stables are dojos and boxing clubs: this crowd having been recruited from the *sportifs*. It is understood that at the end of the demo there will be an envelope for each dojo head, which will then be shared with the other members. Such envelopes should not contain much less than five dollars for each participant (money known as *tshweke*), but they have a tendency to get lighter with each set of hands they pass through. Cock-up combines with conspiracy and often organisers have miscalculated the number of attendees, leaving too little money to circulate in a crowd of young men who have spent all day in the sun. Confronted with a derisory sum for his day's work, the *sportif* suspects his *vieux*, and the various members of the dojo turn on one another. Such a ready recourse to violence is already heavily conditioned by popular discourses about the 'falseness' of elders.

'Honourable', mentioned at the start of this section, was not elected. In the riots that followed the 2006 election his properties were looted, sometimes by the same people who

had come to his rallies. Likewise, Kalombo was not re-elected in 2011. His status as a *faux opposant*, a term which refers to the large group of politicians who were elected in 2006 as members of the opposition, but who actually voted with the regime on crucial issues, almost certainly for financial inducements, alienated his initial constituency. But *faux opposant* status also meant that he was not positioned sufficiently close to the ruling majority to benefit from their widespread electoral manipulation in the 2011 elections. His electoral gifts, gladly accepted, won him few votes. He received no votes at all in polling stations where his own officials were known to have voted, and he slapped one of his aides when he discovered this. A member of his organising committee told me directly they voted for another candidate. As this indicates, such exchanges buy presence, not support, and, broadly, this is understood by everyone. Participants are paid at the end of the rally because everyone knows they will leave once this happens.

This is rational behaviour by the crowd. Monies distributed for political participation are, with some significant exceptions to be discussed, merely an intermittent supplement to livelihoods gained elsewhere. The staff of life for the poor comes from their own small-scale productive and commercial activities. Most often rulers represent a drain on this income, standing as they do at the top of a system that continually demands informal tithes from petty producers and sellers (Segatti 2015). Distributions from the great are simply too small and, being clustered around important events in the political cycle, far too intermittent to buy real support.

As a popular song put it:

> Lelo nde oyé? Yo te! Tokolia ango na loso kasi yo te!

> Today only you come? Not you! We will eat this with rice but not you!

(Dakumuda 2006).

The 'conventional view' of distributions to the poor as 'buying legitimacy' is entrenched partly because these performances are hard for outsiders to decipher. In reality such petty cash buys performances that are mimetic of distributive relations that *do* structure political allegiance in the DRC, though most often these 'real' gift relations are *within* class boundaries. Nevertheless one does not have to be listening too hard to hear a clearly articulated set of discourses by the poor, relating to the 'falseness' of 'elders', and the moral rectitude of taking the money and doing nothing in return. But this only poses the question again, if it is primarily 'us' who are fooled, not 'them', why do elites bother? Before addressing this, we must investigate the crowd further.

Basic crowds are recruited on the promise of five dollars, food, beer, t-shirts or plastic basins. Those offering protection or a show of force get more, though this 'force' is often largely aesthetic. As one fighting-man-come-fixer put it,

> He [the patron] comes to me and says 'I need some guys for an event' and I ask him 'How much?' He says '$1000' and I say 'Put $1500'. That way I will come with thirty *petits*. I take $500 for myself and give xxxx $250 – [my] best pal. I give $25 to all my *petits*. That way they can get something to eat and whatever they need to give them courage. If it's beer, beer, if whisky, whisky, if it's dope then dope.

Introducing the riot's protagonists: Desiré and Likala

While this provides much necessary background it has, so far, shed no light on why politicians will commission such figures. In tracing the story of Desiré, who would become a key protagonist in the riot, we start to establish certain key aspects of what is happening. Desiré worked in the National Assembly, was a member of the PPRD and was widely seen as the *petit* of Justin Mibeko, a minister mentioned at the start of this paper. Desiré wanted to be the leader of the Calvare PPRD and to head their electoral list in the Calvare electoral district (heading the party list makes election more likely). Mibeko represented powerful support, but there was an obstacle in Desiré's way: Modeste Ekonda, sitting head of the PPRD in the Calvare electoral district. Modeste was a deputy in the National Assembly. He owns a television station and a newspaper; he has connections to the mineral economy, and investments in South Africa. He was known and reasonably popular in Calvare, even though the PPRD is generally not liked in Kinshasa. Desiré by contrast was unknown, the protégé of an unpopular politician, in an unpopular party. Before Desiré showed up in 2010, Modeste was clear leader of the party in Calvare. Towards the end of the 2006 election Modeste employed two famous 'bodyguards', *maître* Yoka and *maître* Jos, who were specialists in Congolese all-in fighting, known as *mukumbusu*: 'gorilla'. There may have been some value in these huge men as bodyguards, but they were also part of the image that Modeste was cultivating, of the *grand*, surrounded by people and especially by bodyguards. Yoka and Jos were famous in the district, and fighting men of this sort were popular with poor young men.

Desiré realised the draw of such fighting men. And his thoughts turned to Likala. Likala is from Malolé, the aforementioned poor neighbourhood. He was not well-off growing up and is uncomfortable in French, easy fluency being associated with higher social class. He is a black belt, and has competed for the DRC in international competitions, but converting

his success into financial reward was not so easy. One of his friends told me that, on returning victorious from a competition abroad, he was invited for an 'audience' with a minister. Such meetings are understood to encompass a payment. The story, relatively common, is that senior administrators at the judo federation received details about the timings and took the meeting without Likala. All Likala got was a few hundred dollars. Judo was not the only field where Likala made a mark. In 2009 he released a song. A patchwork of several rather lewd shouts/dance steps, it was a big hit. One of its interesting chants makes reference to a belief that briefly took hold in 2008 about mystical stealers of penises (alleged to be West Africans trading in the marketplace) who could make the sex organ disappear by touching the victim (See also Bonhomme 2009).

Est-que elimwa? Te ezali! Simba bord!

Has it disappeared? No it's there! Touch your thing [to make sure]!

Though the song blared from a thousand bars and parties it garnered no money for Likala. The main dance and chant was turned into a second hit by an established pop star, a friend to politicians and businessmen, who had the set-up to profit from such success in Kinshasa's royalty-free creative environment.

These stories make a wider point: Likala was hard done by. He was one of the DRC's most successful sportsmen, creative and talented besides, but he made little money. As his competition years drew to a close he had few prospects, until he met Desiré. Desiré realised that Likala was poor and hard done by, and that they could be useful to each other. So the next time Likala came back from competing abroad, Desiré rented a small crowd and went to meet him at the airport. Being met by a noisy throng when returning from abroad is regarded as a mark of success in Kinshasa, and street children rent themselves out to

provide such acclaim (Geenen 2009:353). Sources told me that Desiré also presented Likala with a generous envelope. These overtures made an impression and around then he joined the PPRD youth league. On joining, Likala was given a motorcycle emblazoned with the party logo. Many also say that he was given a pistol, but this is contradicted by better-informed sources and, as we will see, seems unlikely. Then he was put to work. In 2010, before the elections, Desiré organised an event that showcased the might of the local PPRD, including a mass run of several miles: jogging (of the kind that boxers do for stamina) is associated with the *sportif*. The event also included a large 'carneval', which is what a truck with a sound system on it is called in the DRC.

Likala was respected among the *sportif* and mobilised hundreds of them. With him on side and money distributed, the event attracted a large number of people. Kabila himself is said to have attended. A gloss put to me was that this was at Mibeko's behest, and that he presented Desiré to the president with the words 'Ye-o mususu te!' (Him, not another!)', pressing Desiré's case in the factional struggle in the light of the impressive manifestation they had just witnessed. This version has a mythological ring to it, not least because Joseph Kabila cannot speak Lingala, the language of the capital. But as ideology this idea, that Desiré became anointed after the inner circle had seen him draw a crowd, reveals something important about the ways that crowds and power are associated in the Kinois mind. It is a subject to which we will return.

Likala gets to work.

Likala became involved in the rivalry with Modeste in the following months, leading to the 2011 elections. A meeting of the local PPRD was held. Desiré's people were already inside; when Modeste arrived with his delegation, Likala was at the door acting as 'security'.

Absurdly, Likala claimed not to recognise Modeste or his delegation, blocking their path. Yoka, Jos and entourage tried to push their way in. A fight started between the two sets of bodyguards and in the melee shots were fired. Police intervened on the side of Desiré's faction: Yoka was arrested and Jos went into hiding. Modeste managed to get Yoka out after a few days by getting another member of the inner court to intercede on his behalf. But Modeste got the message. He left the PPRD, and founded his own party. This was not significant politically: the new party was one of numerous satellite parties that recognised Kabila as 'authorité morale', and fitted with the PPRD's wider strategy of encouraging some candidates to stand as pseudo-independents[6]. But it left the field clear for Desiré to head the local federation, and top the PPRD list in the district.

Likala's usefulness continued. In the run-up to elections certain *sportifs* smashed one of the sites used by the *parlementaires débout*s. *Parlementaires débout*s ('standing-up parliamentarians') are a kind of open air pro-opposition debating club found throughout the city. One the main sites for this in Calvare is near a petrol station en route from Desiré's headquarters. There was much strong heckling from the 'parliamentarians' whenever the PPRD entourage went past, and everyone I spoke to attributed the sabotage to Likala, acting at Desiré's behest. As the election season came into view things got more intense. When UDPS opposition leader Tshisekedi went to present his candidature for the presidency he was accompanied by a huge crowd, and returning, they passed the inter-federal headquarters of the PPRD, guarded by police. Massively outnumbered, the police panicked and fired in the air. Members of the crowd then threw petrol bombs at the police. The next night the headquarters of the UDPS was burned down. Again, Kinshasa's rumour mill discerned the hand of Likala. Eye-witnesses told me they saw Likala's *petits* filling containers with petrol at the station just before the arson, and one informant claimed to have been offered a part in

the job. I was told that Likala was given $50,000 for this act. Most aspects of the story are plausible, though as we will see later, a version of it also spread on the Kinois rumour mill which contained unlikely claims.

Which brings us to the riot. Two days before the election Desiré went with a *carneval* and entourage, including Likala's *écurie,* to offer gifts to the church in Ebende. On the way they passed near an ironware market, and insults were traded between locals and the procession. Youths followd Desiré's group holding pieces of iron and arriving at the church, there was already some fighting. The *bana Ebende* began to throw stones at the PPRD procession. Some say Likala's *sportifs* threw things back, and that Likala took out and brandished a pistol, or even fired in the air. This 'pistol brandishing' charge was made by nearly everyone who spoke about the riot, including some who claimed to be eye-witnesses, but it was strongly denied by individuals close to Likala, who had not sugared their portrait in other ways. The accounts fit into a pattern where Likala became a symbol, standing for everything the Kinois objected to. As the *bana* Ebende threw more missiles, Desiré's procession took refuge in the church, whereupon the *bana* Ebende began to push against the walls. Units of heavily armed Rapid Intervention Police arrived and the procession was escorted out of Ebende with police gunshots ringing out. It was then that the *bana* Ebende made their advance upon Malolé to destroy Likala's house, but they were driven back by gunfire about a mile down the road: the surging crowd and the gunshots that I witnessed while sitting in the bar beneath the trees.

Crowds and politics. Rejecting what? Buying what?

Given that such ceremonies often pass off 'successfully', why did the *bana Ebende* exercise a veto on this occasion? Ebende is hostile to the ruling coalition, and the period leading up to

the election was particularly tense, with several violent confrontations. But many other such rallies occurred in this period and numerous *bana Ebende* took $5 and a beer to join them. Informant narratives repeatedly talked about Likala himself as the real provocation and related to this were local rivalries. Informants spoke of *bana Ebende* 'angering' at seeing Likala (from Malolé) and the PPRD in 'their' commune. In this context the flashing of a pistol by Likala was cited by several of the *bana Ebende* as the final act of provocation that pushed them into riot. But several well-placed informants denied that he had a gun, and this seems likely. The proliferation of Apocrypha surrounding Likala points to his position as figure of particular cultural difficulty. People 'saw' him undertake various acts of sabotage. Yet the best-placed sources insisted that, while Likala was paid for sabotage, he was never himself present. Given how well known he was, and how easily he could commission others, this seems likely. Likewise his setbacks, real or imagined, were revelled in: Likala was abandoned by his fiancée, so it was said, because he could not put up a fight in the bedroom, and so on.

Transactional politics are common in Kinshasa, and most aspirant politicians will stage demonstrations. Sabotage of the kind outlined in this paper is also common. All this relies on fixers like Likala, and Likala exemplifies a common mediating figure, 'brokers' as anthropologists sometimes call them (James 2011, de Sardan 1999). But patronage from the ruling class to the poor is usually modest, and scope for the enrichment of brokers is equivalently small. Likala did *much* better than this: he bought a house in Malolé and two businesses, one making coffins, the other running a bar. This Pied Piper of the lumpen-proletariat acquired the essentials of bourgeois status. The problematic nature of this enrichment becomes clear when we compare it to broker figures who were in many other respects similar: Jos and Yoka, fighting men with followings among the urban poor. They

have acted as strongmen and recruiters for wealthy members of the PPRD. They made some money (they have new clothes and are fed) but unlike Likala, this was not enough to acquire assets. They lived in small rented quarters and would tap people in the neighbourhood when they needed money for medicine, a beer, or the rent. But they could go about as they pleased and, despite their performances for the ruling class, they retained their status as celebrities without being under constant threat. This situation is common: hundreds of others sold themselves as fixers and mobilisers, few earned Likala's notoriety, or his money. As a feeble pun might have it, as long as the broker is broke, nobody minds.

Nor is shilling for the regime in itself enough to earn such enmity. Figures like Aimé, who use their position to redistribute money according to the strictures of the 'good leader' can become hugely popular, acquiring legitimacy in the conventional sense, though, as we explored, there are severe limits on this strategy. More often however, those who make it into the ruling class, generally from bourgeois backgrounds, acquire sufficient resources to protect themselves from the wrath of the street. Likala was different, his progression was from poor to petty bourgeois. His progress might have been more acceptable had it been linked to any of his considerable talents. But recognition of these was usurped by others. Nor could his betrayal be accommodated within the normal subsistence-based involvement in politics. Real progression required selling himself body and soul to the dominant class, and undertaking a series of eye-catching mobilisations and acts of sabotage for them. Contrary to what Africanist literature has sometimes claimed (Mbembe 1992, Chabal and Daloz 1999), such a progression was not at all gloried in by the masses.

So, to return to the question posed earlier; why do ruling classes bother with all of these crowds and fighting men? Assessed against any of the purposes that western political theory would assign them, roughly speaking, 'force and right', the use of fighting boys was worse

than useless. As 'enforcers' the fighting boys did little enforcing and much to provoke conflict. Conflict that was then put down by violence, yes, but this was done by the conventional forces of the state - military police and soldiers. In terms of recruiting supporters, or establishing 'legitimacy' with 'the people' in some other way, the logic is even more obscure. One could find some regime stalwarts who saw the confrontations during the elections as evidence of violent intentions by the opposition, but these were people who had, putting it mildly, already been convinced. Most often the use of fighting boys reinforced the settled view of a pro-opposition town that they were ruled over by thugs.

Yet for individuals such actions made sense. The use of fighting boys by Desiré allowed him to sabotage rivals and find favour with powerful superiors. To understand this favour, I return to the story of how Desiré and Likala organised a mass run-past of *sportifs*. According to the story, during this show of crowds and force, Mibeko was able to press Desiré's case with the president, so that Desiré received the nomination as the PPRD candidate in Calvare over his rival. The narrative may be untrue, but it offers a glimpse into how the Kinois think about power: the production of a run past of fighting boys was theatre and the poor were the actors, while the ruling class was the audience. The poor majority thus play a role in ratifying power, and popular followings can be useful to aspiring patricians. But we err if we conflate this with ideas of 'legitimacy', '*the* social contract' or 'popular sovereignty'. Power is mainly justified *upwards* in gifts and blessings that pass within the ruling class: the acclaim of plebeian bodies is a form of necessary prop. The successful aspirant (Desiré) is recognised by his superior (Kabila) because, having assembled a set of contacts in the ruling class, he is able to deploy the bodies of the poor in the correct space with the correct distribution of clamour and acclaim.

Liberal political theory and its alternatives.

Kinois politics operates in a political economy of the body quite different from that envisaged in classic liberal political theory. The point is not to contrast an ethnographic description of Kinois politics with an idealised theory of European practice. It is rather that liberal political theory is so central to scholarly reasoning about all politics that we need to make some of its assumptions explicit. Following Hobbes, the wellspring of liberal political theory (Ryan 2013), the bodies of political subjects are like atoms: homogeneous, equal, bounded, abstract and interchangeable. Yet at the same time they add up to a single political body – the leviathan, society, the people. These assumptions, of politics as a covenant between the sovereign and a formally equal 'people', condition almost all educated discussions of politics (MacPherson 1962, Strauss 1963, Holbraad 2014). Weberian theories of politics, which underlie most Africanist discussion, though different in many particulars, share this idea of an underlying bargain between rulers and individual subjects.

More recent, more sophisticated treatments recognise the way actual publics have been shaped by regimes of power, property and social division (see especially Staeheli and Mitchell 2008). These accounts have limited influence in debates about African politics, where they could do much to problematize a discussion dominated by ideas of 'the people', and 'the social contract', based in patrimonial legitimacy. But even these more nuanced accounts, which recognition an actual differentiation of publics, ground their analysis in a normative commitment to formal equality of political subjects (for example Staeheli and Mitchell 2008:141-54, Simone 2010:120). By contrast the normative idea of the political body in Kinshasa is multiple, interconnected, and heterogeneous, with few assumptions about formal political equality in the absence of actual economic equality. In place of 'a' social contract, varied forms of assent are sought and given, and are cemented in different

forms of exchange. Some distributions – generally those made from rulers to the surplus population - mark the most transient and transactional forms of assent: ungenerous, grudging, insincere: these purchase nothing but presence and end upon payment. Others, generally those within the ruling class, mark deep and open-ended pacts: grand, heartfelt, long-term, free of narrow reciprocity or calculation.

Political demonstrations where none of the participants will vote for you and where a wider electorate is not convinced are not useless expenditure, though individual events can be ill conceived or unsuccessful. Such demonstrations are rituals of ruling class reproduction: rituals that require the bodies of the poor to be present, but whose target is elsewhere. Thus we should not view their presence at demonstrations, acclaiming, dancing, envelope-taking, as heartfelt assent. But nor can this be understood as 'laying it on thick', while drawing on a 'hidden transcript of resistance' too dangerous to lay before the patrician class (Scott 1990). Little is hidden, and the type of assent given at Kinshasa's political demonstrations *is* understood by both sides.

Procuring the bodies of the poor for demonstrations is about presence: proving a temporary capacity to occupy the space of the city, a space assumed in general terms to be hostile. In a situation where control of Kinshasa is central to the capture of rents, and where ruling class reproduction is far from certain, the ability to successfully deploy a crowd and to temporarily occupy a space becomes important. Where property rights are insecure and where not all accrued social power can be stored as money in the bank, earlier notions of people as wealth – as noise, as the potential for sabotage, as a culturally validated notion of glory, as the gloriously adorned person of the powerful himself - retain currency. Such

considerations apply as much to the poor as to the rich and to the riot as much as to the demonstration. Where people are dependent on long distance markets for goods and provisions, but cannot sell their labour, struggle concerns the ability to sabotage circulation, via bodies in space. This acquires significance well beyond controlling narrowly 'economic' forms of circulation. There is a strong tendency in this circumstance for infrastructure to take on ritual significance. This can be seen in the rituals that cluster around the key infrastructures of the city, such as the airport and its connecting road, briefly discussed in Likala's case earlier. Aeroplanes and airports are key locations in Kinshasa's ritual nexus, and successful 'players' on the city stage - politicians, sportsman and musicians - return from success abroad to be greeted by a plebeian throng, rented for this purpose (Geenen 2009). In the more important instances it is not only the airport but the length of the Boulevard Lumumba, connecting the airport with the city, which is surrounded by crowds. Thus in February 2016, the DRC's football team returned victorious from a championship final. On the day of their return various political dignitaries went to meet them at the airport with rented crowds in tow. But this welcome was swamped by a far larger group of football fans, lining the boulevard chanting *Kabila yeba mandat esili!* 'Kabila know it, your mandate is over!' The police drove them back, but it destroyed the regime's attempt to make propaganda from the victory, relegated from their performance as masters of ceremony in the city's triumphs.

This prompts some further remarks about protest in years since 2011, especially as they relate to the much-delayed presidential elections, eventually held in 2018. In the preceding years the government was repeatedly forced into partial defeats or tactical retreats. The most important of these partial defeats was in the election itself. Despite repeated manoeuvres Kabila did not risk standing for an unconstitutional third term, something he appeared to be

considering. And, despite widespread vote rigging, the regime was unable to impose its preferred candidate for president. Bargaining with a weaker hand than it had anticipated, the regime cut a deal with opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi, who was announced 'winner'. This was hardly ideal: the most credible reports indicate that Felix came a distant second to the real winner, Martin Fayulu. Nevertheless this represented a real, if partial, defeat for regime, which has historically acted with impunity.

In analysing this set of events, reports have dwelt on the formal opposition, in particular opposition politicians and a rejuvenated student movement. Particularly eye-catching was a group of young activists in Kinshasa called *Filimbi* ('whistle'). But there is reason to think that this formal opposition was less effective than it might have been, and was only saved by the response of 'the street', who were operating according to a different logic. The opposition repeatedly called for mass demonstrations, but on each occasion the government, in control of the means of violence, was able to prevent large bodies of people from forming, or from approaching central areas. What transformed these protests from morale-sapping defeats into partial victories was the popular response. Prevented from massing or marching on the downtown, smaller crowds asserted control of neighbourhoods, setting up barricades with burning tires, and engaged in targeted looting. Targets included Chinese shops, which was xenophobic and possibly ineffective,[7] but also regime insiders. Known as 'operation toyebi ndako' (*operation we know your house*) gangs of young men looted and burned assets belonging to regime figures. These mosaics of city-wide rioting were not at all what bourgeois activists who had called the protests had had in mind. An illustration of the class-based contrast in political theory can be seen in the different uses of football metaphors by different groups. *Filimbi* is a reference to the referees whistle, blown when rules are infringed. But the phrase 'toyebi ndako' (*we know your*

house) invoked by the looters was also a football reference. It is what crowds chant at football matches when their team is losing, and is a threat to the referee who has given decisions against them.

What I think this shows is that the ruling class and the poor recognise imperatives around space and infrastructure, distribution and circulation that are crucial to the kind of class struggles generated in Kinshasa. Oppositional elites, overwhelmingly drawn from a narrow class of salaried property owners, are less likely to recognise these imperatives, tending to express themselves in familiar liberal terms, around rights to speech and to enforcing the written 'rules'. Such a stance tends to attract attention from international observers, who often come from similar class fractions themselves. But, as this essay shows, whatever their drawbacks, the riot-based strategies of the poor are based in a more acute analysis of the political economy.

The riot in Ebendé testified to this antagonistic shared understanding between the ruling class and the plebeian masses. It was a negation of the ruling class's claim to control space, refusing its deployment of bodies, and overruling the minimal forms of plebeian acceptance that had been purchased. This clear example of the riot as popular negation might be inserted into a wider taxonomy of riots in the region, where other forms of popular disorder, such as looting, might be seen as a more positive statement about the just division of resources, and the (im)morality of various economic actors (see Bazenguissa-Ganga 1999).

Conclusion, Space, Riot, Patronage

This paper has looked in ethnographic detail at the events leading up to a riot, and the ways in which distribution interacts with the politics of the surplus population. In conclusion we will look at the implications for wider scholarship.

First, where the surplus population is the primary agent of struggle, conflict concentrates on the distribution and circulation rather than on returns to labour. This is a challenge to the central agent of liberalism, the self-owning possessive individual whose political and economic rights emerge from labour. In Central Africa this struggle is expressed in terms of the relational person, as the claim on a share of distribution tends to use vocabularies of relative age, which also references dependent kinship. But these vocabularies of dependence imply no reduction in material conflict – the figure of the generous elder is invariably invoked as an ideological *critique* of actual elders (that is to say elites) who are not generous. The demands of the surplus population, while unfamiliar, show a clear understanding of categorical differences between the rulers and the ruled, and articulate clearly a set of antagonistic material interests. However apparently abject the professions of junior status may be, the claims these professions encode are potentially revolutionary in the sense that, were they to be carried out, they would be destructive of entrenched material interests and of the existing social order.

This brings us to a second area where we have shown that standard notions of politics, present in Anthropology since the earliest times, cloud our understanding of the struggles of the surplus population: the notion of politics as the quest for legitimacy and order as a contract between rulers and a formally equal people, and of vertical distribution of patronage as the attempt to create the social contract in low-income countries. In this paper

we demonstrate, in the DRC at least, that such claims are incorrect. Distribution within ruling class boundaries is generous and establishes long-term allegiance. Outside these boundaries distribution is paltry and merely serves to deploy the poor in short-term transactions. These events allow ruling classes brief occupation of certain spaces, but they also vibrate with the possibility of plebeian violence. There are examples where politically motivated distributions to the masses are genuinely enabling, and buy real loyalty, also of where poor individuals are able to use such patronage to 'move up'. But these rare cases, and the forms of social dissonance they generate, underline their status as exceptions that prove the rule. As we have explored, the real 'target' of most political demonstrations is winning support *within* the ruling class, and it is this upward 'justification' that explains some of the apparently irrational aspects of staging paid-for demonstrations which deploy transparently cynical youths, who provoke disorder and alienate the wider public. But an even more important part of the explanation lies in the imperatives to use presence to demonstrate mastery over urban space.

The classic ethnographies of work-place struggle showed these to be a series of conflicts over control of the worker's time. This study suggests that a research programme for the struggles of the surplus population needs to pay similar attention to the intricacies of the plebeian body in space. At some level this relates to the structure of the productive economy – the most significant surpluses accruing to the ruling class are produced by rents from enclaves captured and distributed among a narrow group. Control over these rents relates, therefore, to control of the political and infrastructural spaces through which surpluses must pass, and related to this, a politics of presence that manifests at these nodes. This kind of material underpinning can be seen in a range of political actions associated with blocking the road, cutting the pipeline, etc. But the politics of space and presence

cannot be reduced to such material calculations. Just as the politics of workers and *time* encompasses a series of ornate, and ritual aspects, for example the drunken politics of 'Saint Monday' where early proletarians in England used drunkenness to enforce a holiday and resist the encroaching industrial time discipline of the working week (Thompson 1967:73-80), so the politics of surplus populations and space often takes the form of ritual demonstrations of patrician mastery or of popular veto. Asserting the capacity to hold and occupy urban space temporarily, via paid-for demonstrations, is a key aspect of ruling class control: negating these claims to control via disorder is an important form of veto by the surplus population.

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1 The names of places have been changed and landmarks have been disguised. All of the central protagonist's names have been changed.

² The 'hindou' probably relates playfully to the idea that 'indians' were the enemies of bills/cowboys

3 Going further still, Simone (discusses Kinshasa's public and that of other low GDP cities) in classically liberal fashion. Contrasting the 'public' with the corrupt 'private' uses of resources by municipal authorities, 'the public' is found in a form of speech that 'goes beyond the specificities of community in a way to make unspecified others feel that they are being addressed in ways they might feel part of' (p120).

4 As I have argued elsewhere (Trapido 2015), this is in fact a cogent critique: the more elites are forced to redistribute the less they have to put in tax havens.

5 While these vocabularies relate to ideas of the lineage, and draw on the absorptive principles of earlier lineage-based economies, it is rare that such groupings, prayer groups, gangs, musical ensembles, dojos, are in fact based in kinship or use kinship in any significant way for mobilisation (see De Boeck 2004).

6 This was partly to evade hostility to the PPRD 'brand' and partly to game the DRC's version of the 'largest remainder' formula used to calculate seat allocation, which favours smaller parties. The many other reasons for party proliferation in the DRC are too elaborate to broach here.

7 There is clearly a xenophobic assimilation of shopkeepers with the Chinese ruling class, who have been firm allies of the Kabila regime. A complication is that Chinese shopkeepers probably do pay monies to local politicians just as other expatriates do.