



universität
wien

MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

**Geographies of a Transnational Urban Black Consciousness
Through Artists and Activists**

Mapping Self-Directed Blackness in Vienna, Brussels, and Oakland

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2017 / Vienna, 2017

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme code as it appears
on
the student record sheet:

A 066 664

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt /
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium DDP Urban Studies

Betreut von / Supervisor:

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4Cities Erasmus Mundus Masters Course in Urban Studies
Cohort 8 | September 2015-2017

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1 September 2017

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¹ Cover page image: painting by Edward Ofosu (2013)

TOWARDS PROGRESS...

**“WHERE DO YOU BEGIN TELLING SOMEONE THEIR WORLD IS NOT THE
ONLY ONE?”**

-LEE MARACLE, *RAVENSONG* (1993)

Prologue: Encounters

“We will always be black, you and I, even if it means different things in different places.”

-Ta Naheisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*

While I was studying in Vienna, my Ghanaian and Nigerian friends, both residents in Vienna, were watching soccer at a bar in Schwedenplatz. An inebriated White Austrian man goes over to my Nigerian friend and spits on him. Spits right in his face and walks away. Shortly afterwards another White Austrian man comes over to him and says: “Sorry, he just doesn’t like immigrants.” It’s May 2016, and Mercer, the international consulting firm, had just named Vienna the most livable city for the seventh time. Livable for who? The Ghanaian successfully calmed down his Nigerian friend by explaining that even if he wins the fight, ultimately he will lose. I interviewed the Ghanaian for this thesis; his name is Amoako Bofo and he is a painter currently doing his doctorate at the University of Fine Arts—one of the top universities in Vienna. He is one of four Black people at the university. He told me in our interview in August 2016 “They always equate blackness to wrongness.” The word ‘they’ refers to White people.

One evening in January of 2016 in Brussels a friend of mine was driving me home. He is a Belgian doctor and drives a Lexus. He also happens to be biracial, White Flemish and Nigerian. As he parked in front of my house, a police car slows down beside us and two policemen peer into the car. He gives them an underwhelmed wave and they drive on. The police car had been following us for about 15 minutes. According to my friend, this same police car—and invariably—these same policemen often follow him and sometimes harass him when he’s driving in the city center. He believes this is because he’s a “Black man driving a nice car.” I said to him half-joking, but also seriously: “I hope when they get sick, you are their doctor.” A year later I was sitting at a bar with a professor from my Masters program. I mentioned something about racism in Brussels, he chuckled and said in a surprised tone: “You’ve experienced racism in Brussels?” As if to indicate that such an experience was unlikely. My first inclination was to respond by downplaying my experiences of racism in Brussels mainly because I was taken aback by what sounded like irony in his voice. I casually said: “Of course, but not as bad as in Vienna.”

In Oakland a friend tells me that more young White people have moved onto her street. Having lived in that area for some time, she knew most of her neighbors and often greeted people on the street whether she recognized them or not. She told me that because of gentrification this open, neighborly exchange has changed; she explains: “My presence now is being seen differently... I’ve seen the shift in my own neighborhood... a shift in the energy.” When walking, White people who pass by her stop their conversations, look down, and don’t respond when she greets them with a smile. She feels unacknowledged, rendered as invisible, at the same time she is very visibly Black.

There is not one day that goes by in many European and American cities where Black people are not aware of our Blackness. Hyper-awareness of our Blackness shapes the way we move through cities and determines how our Black identity guides our mobility patterns. As a Jamaican-American Black woman I am Black wherever I go. As Fanon says in 1967 in *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Wherever [s]he goes, the Negro remains a Negro” (173). In some particular cases, my American passport eclipses my race, however I am still Black and that has positive or negative connotations depending on the context. I have lived in eight cities on three continents, experiencing what it means to be Black in different places. Five have been European cities: Galway, Brussels, Vienna, Copenhagen, and Madrid—from where I am currently writing.

While living in various European cities, I've encountered communities of people who identify as Black and who create culture, including art, and music, and political actions around Blackness and being apart of the African Diaspora. Because I tend to gravitate towards these people and groups, I am deeply interested in the ideology of Blackness and postcolonial subjectivity. My experience indicates that being Black in any context necessitates a discussion of socio-cultural, historico-political and national discourses of identity, sense of belonging, memory, and 'home.' These subjects are ever present in the daily lives of Black people in Euro-North American contexts and the fabric of our societies. Furthermore, the aforementioned topics impact the way Black people experience the cities we live in and how the cities we live in relate to us. The Black consciousness of the artists and activists with whom I spent time and interviewed, are creating culture around Blackness, forging a hybrid Afropean identity, as well as acknowledging their experiences as a part of the African Diaspora.

I Introduction: “Black Faces, White Spaces”²

There are two myths that are widely believed in Europe by the dominant society. One of these is that racism is not as big of an issue in Europe as it is in the United States, for example. The other is that Black people (people of African descent), and people of color more generally, are new to the continent of Europe. There have been many scholars to dispute these claims [see: Bressey (2007), Hondius (2009), Essed (2009), Van Sertima (1985), Rosenhaft and Aitken (2013)—to name a few], and although I will not be going into depth about these two topics, this thesis is predicated upon the denial of these two myths as amounting to truth. Historically the United States has had and statistically still does have a higher Black population (13.6% according to the 2010 U.S. Census) than any European country. Great Britain has one of the highest Black populations of about 3% (2011 United Kingdom National Statistics). In Great Britain’s census people can identify as “Black British,” which includes those who have origins in Jamaica, Ghana, Nigeria, Barbados, Kenya, etc. Regardless, similar to Blacks in Europe, Black Americans are relegated to the position of “other.” In both cases, Europe and the United States, the “other” refers to those who are not visibly ethnically White European or White American.

In this thesis, Black refers to people who identify as Black and are of African descent. It is a political self-definition based on a collective identification and globality. Often there is a dissonance between being both Black and American or Black and European or African in Europe, thus some Black people find “it easier to identify with a general sense of Europeanness, African identity, or a wider black diasporic consciousness” (Hawthorne, 2017, p. 159). In this thesis it is a “Black diasporic consciousness,” which is being mapped through the local realities of the respondents. This thesis looks at the experiences and culture initiated by some Black artists and activists on an urban scale through their individual microgeographies within their cities of residence. Using a global Black consciousness as a basis to discuss issues of exclusion, belonging, and culture for Blacks in European and American cities, there can be a mediation of the presentation of different scales of identity within urban contexts.

Black subaltern communities operate in a way that is easily identifiable for someone, like myself, who has a certain global Black consciousness and seeks out others who are initiating culture and activism aligned with this. The racial encounters the artists and activists in this study experience in their daily lives on the street can be described as “episodes of everyday racism” (Kilomba, 2010). These episodes of racism and encounters in urban spaces, exclusion, and—sometimes—xenophobia are often framed in national discourses yet experienced in very local, particular contexts. The artists and activists responses to this exclusion and racism in their respective cities is subalternity, political, cultural, and geographical. In many ways they embrace a global Black consciousness, a transnational experience of the African diaspora, using it to produce inclusive culture in a local urban particularity.

Current Black geographies of activists and artists in European and American cities are creating new subjectivities and spatial possibilities. It is through “their desire to claim and reimagine the city, by extension, [that] this remaking of urban space” happens, which is “foundational both for civil and human rights” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 219). This thesis uses individual urban narratives as a sort of biography for collective narratives of exclusion and belonging in cities. The spatial possibilities outlined

² This is the title of a book by geographer Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (2014): The University of North Carolina Press. Although this book was not officially used as a reference, the title is an apt description of some theories espoused in this thesis.

in this thesis represent some manifestations of territorial claims to inclusion by Black people in Europe and America, Black Europeans, and Black Americans.

In this thesis, Black geographies are understood as—incorporating—but, largely, going beyond the *where* of Blackness in European and American cities to a geography of the tensions, conflicts, ideologies, and expressions of it in local socio-spatial contexts. In this thesis Black geography is situated in three distinct cities within two European countries and the United States of America. Although these cities are within nation-states this thesis is comparing people within the cities rather than the countries themselves. Using Black geography along with the experiences of Black artists and activists, I hope to rearrange the hegemonic (and usually linear) notions of time, space, and history in these three cities and urbanism more generally.

Demographics in both the United States and Europe are quickly changing and becoming more diverse, challenging the long-standing conception of these Western nations as White and Christian. Capital cities in Europe and larger cities in the U.S. are usually places where this increased visible diversity is more prevalent. As such, ongoing conversations about integration (especially in Europe), diversity, multiculturalism, nationalism, citizenship, and inclusion are being centralized and initiated on all levels of society: political, social, economic, civic, historical etc. Regardless, for the most part these discourses reproduce the status quo, are not truly progressive, and principally leave out the voices most affected and at the center of these very issues. Meanwhile, on the ground level, on the local level there is not only the negative reactions to this perceived demographic shift such as racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, etc; there is also continued resistance and reappropriation of space, cultural heritage, and discourse by marginalized communities—of which Black people are one.

In both the United States and Europe diasporic Black experiences are diverse and sometimes the only connection between various African, Caribbean, and African descended communities is their Blackness. In this thesis, the connectedness is amplified based on a common racialized experience. The Black diaspora is not seen as a bounded entity, rather as an idiom that finds itself articulated in local urban nuances. While giving importance to the Black subaltern experience, the Black activists and artists who make up this thesis use spaces in the city for affirming and contesting Blackness, in many ways, on their own terms. The umbrella question that drives this thesis is how does Blackness, embodied by young activists and artists, relate to the city and how do they feel the city relates to them as visibly non-White. Under this general question regarding relationality, are further questions about where, how, and what spaces within the city are transformed or reclaimed as well as how racism and exclusion are responded to.

As the introduction comes to a close, the next section outlines the aims and objectives of this thesis, some of which I've already mentioned. I then move to the theoretical framework, followed by the methodological aspects of the research of which methods, demographics, and processes are detailed. After which, I outline the three case study cities. After the framing of the case study cities is the analysis. The analysis is in two parts. The first part of the analysis contextualizes the three cities, and the second part is divided into four overarching themes, of which the first two sections are on behavioural Black geographies and historical geographies. Subsequently, the conclusion is followed by an epilogue as the thesis began with a prologue.

Through cognitive mapping, the artists and activists interviewed for this thesis attempt to articulate their place in the city in which they live. The mapping of an urban Black consciousness is the relation to and fragmentation of urban processes by people who identify as Black. In this thesis I intend to argue that the

artists' and activists' identification with Blackness and a global Black/African diaspora frames the way they move through and spend time in their city of residences, as well as informs the places they go to in their leisure time, the spaces they produce for (Black) leisure, and their performance of postcolonial identity in the city. Furthermore, it is from the historical and current fluid understanding of Black identity that the artists and activist challenge and resist exclusion and racism experienced in these three cities.

II Aims and Objectives: Mapping An Urban Black Consciousness

In chapter four of Henning Bech's *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (1997), entitled "Wrongness," the author's description of the ways in which homosexual Danish men feeling wrong and wronged in who they are is an apt description of what it feels like for many Blacks to be Black, especially in Western nations. This feeling of being wrong because of one's appearance has a decisive impact on the comfortability with which one moves through a city. However, the main difference between Bech's sentiments and this thesis is that while a homosexual White Danish man may be able to change his style of dress and adopt certain behaviors and mannerisms that are considered heteronormative while out in public, in most cases a Black person cannot hide or cover up their Blackness.

The list Bech provides as an admission of his response to the othering homosexual men face include some tactics that are commonly employed by Blacks, and—I imagine—others who are visibly different, in order to live in the city with some semblance of being normal or apart of the majority. Number four on this list is for a homosexual man to assure himself, and the masses, he is supposed to and allowed to be there—that he belongs. This is one strategy employed by many Black activists and artists in European and American cities, especially in academic or 'high culture' spaces that tend to be exceptionally White, male, and middle to upper class. Additionally, number eleven on Bech's list is to contact like-minded people.

In the second section of the book discussing the aims, Bech asserts that it is about "the conditions and possibilities of life in contemporary modern societies" (p. 2). He concludes this section asserting that the exploration of the experience of homosexual Danish men should be of some concern and relevance to men, women, homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. In a similar vein, this thesis contends that a study of Blackness in the city: how Black people relate to the city and how they feel it relates to them, is relevant as a general urban issue having to do with inclusion, exclusion, multiculturalism and integration. Black people as a part of the urban fabric of Western cities is not new and still has immense local and global implications.

Integration is a term that has been used by far-right politicians and other White supremacist theorists to mean an erasure of one's culture in order to adopt and assimilate into the dominant culture. This happens by these parties and their proponents advocating for nationalist policies, which are almost always exclusionary and discriminatory to marginalized communities, under the framework of nationalism and citizenship. More and more Blacks are being born and/or raised in Europe, hence ideas of national belonging and citizenship are continuing to shift. As Soysal (1994) says in the introduction to *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*:

The model of national citizenship, anchored in territorialized notions of cultural belonging, was dominant during the period of massive migration at the turn of the century, when immigrants were expected to be molded into national citizens. The recent...experience reflects a time when national citizenship is losing ground to a more universal model of membership, anchored in deterritorialized notions of persons' rights.

This new model, which I call *postnational*, reflects a different logic and praxis... Postnational citizenship confers upon every person the right and duty of participation in the...public life of a polity, regardless of their historical or cultural ties to that community. (p. 3)

As such, understanding Blacks in European and American cities, as residents with a right to the city whether they are citizens of the country or not is crucial in how cities can begin to understand non-hegemonic integration.

In this thesis I use integration to mean a “stage of our development when differences and diversity are not seen as sources of division and distrust, but of strength and inspiration,” as famously said by Fijian politician Josefa Iloilo³. I understand integration as a means of recognizing difference, while also finding common ground to understand the ways in which different cultures contribute to the health and dynamism of a city. I believe integration involves a realization that there is more than one way to be a part of a nation and that having multiple identities is an integral aspect of modern society.

Aims

This thesis aims to explore four interrelated topics. Firstly, how Black activists and artists move through their city of residence in their leisure time. Black activists and artists tend to have a heightened awareness of their environment and strong values regarding their work, thus this thesis wants to understand how and if the work they do in their daily lives affects the places they go and things they do in their leisure time. This exploration entails how their identification as being Black and apart of the African diaspora affects the way they live and move through the city in which they live.

Secondly, how they are able to create and transform spaces. As a subaltern community, it is common to try to find or create spaces that are safe and somehow represent parts of your identity. Some spaces change significance depending on what’s happening there. As a result, the second thing this thesis explores is how these activists and artists appropriate spaces in a way to make them more inclusive and the way certain spaces that are not always seen as inclusive can be transformed depending on what is happening there. Even if they are not working in their leisure time, having urban spaces that reflect their identity is still an important issue.

Thirdly, how Black activists and artists respond to exclusion, racism and deal with urban memory. For some Black people racism is a daily occurrence. The work of many Black artists and activists problematizes the exclusion and racism experienced by Black people. As Black people, experiences anti-Black racism, subtle exclusion, and the invisibilization of our presence happens in a myriad of ways, which can inform the places Blacks we go and activities engaged in during leisure time. An element of this invisibilization and exclusion is how and if the interconnected history between Europe, the United States, and nation states where Blacks descend from is recognized and addressed in urban memory in public spaces. As such, choices about leisure time can shed light on how the aforementioned issues are dealt with.

Lastly, this thesis aims to explore how postcolonial subjectivity is a basis for the negotiation of European culture and Diaspora culture in the city. Part of the experience of living in a European city for some Black people, and people of African descent more broadly, is one of postcoloniality; the knowledge that “we are

³ Could not find original source of quote, none of the sources that use this quote cite the original source of the quote other than by Josefa Iloilo. Found in an article “Too much noise and no action,” by Temple Chima Ubochi on [Nigeriaworld](#).

here because they were there.”⁴ Part of deciding where to be in one’s leisure time has to do with many aspects of one’s identity. Postcolonial subjectivity centralizes the experience of a postcolonial subject with the assumption that postcoloniality links us to people beyond just our nationality. This subjectivity can affect how Black artists and activists choose to spend their leisure time.

I am attempting to map a part of the consciousness of Blackness in urban spaces, the cultural production of the Black Diaspora, and bring awareness to the myriad of subtle and overt ways Blacks are excluded within the city. As well as mapping a Black consciousness as it is perpetuated in different urban contexts transnationally. I intend to explore, document, and further understand the urban subaltern experience for Black artists and activists in two European cities and one American city. To understand how visible difference, postcolonial identity, affects microgeographies and socio-cultural experiences of Black artists and activists (and by extension Black people) in Euro-North American urban contexts.

Finally, this thesis hopes to centralize Black subjectivity in urban settings with an ultimate goal of suggesting more genuine practices of integration. An effective and comprehensive discussion or a striving for true integration (as redefined above) in the city necessitate understanding the lived experiences and realities of minorities, vulnerable populations whose daily urban lives entail an experience of otherness rather than normalcy, even in cities they call home.

Research Objectives & Processes

In the subsequent sections I will introduce my theoretical framework and research methodologies of which objective 1, 2, and 3 refer to. After contextualizing the three case studies, I will move to the discussion of my empirical findings, which objective 4 references. The following objectives briefly state the processes used to achieve the aims of this thesis. Research objectives are as follows:

1. To use interviews and fieldwork in each case study city for assessing micro-geographies of Blackness. This process will be expanded upon in the section on methodology.
2. To use socio-critical theories in tandem with qualitative sociological and geographical research methods to describe and support the analysis of the fieldwork. Theoretical framework treated in the following section.
3. To use a theoretical framework in which most of the scholarship is by people from the African Diaspora (and postcolonial communities, more broadly) with an emphasis on women of color critical theorists.
4. To centralize subjectivity using direct quotes and stories from respondents for describing the urban from a critical Black perspective. Using the experiences, recommendations, and realities of the respondents along with scholarship to articulate more nuanced and thoughtful practices of integration.

⁴ This was a popular slogan used by the Black Movement in Britain, as well as quote that has been adopted/used by many postcolonial theorists to describe diaspora, patterns of migration, among other things.

III State of the Art: Black Urbanism

Blackness, Black Europe/Afropean identity, and African Diaspora Studies, are foundational theories in this thesis. Scholars such as Stephen Small, Philomena Essed, and Michael McEachrane are editors of two anthologies that delve deeply into different manifestations and understandings of Blackness contemporarily and over time in Western and Northern Europe. Along with Black identity, theories on Black geographies and racial geographies—more generally—developed by Katherine McKittrick and Caroline Bressey are integral. Specifically Bressey and Claire Dwyer’s discussions of microgeographies. These theories and scholars use Europe (primarily Western, but also Northern) and North America (both Canada and the United States) as points of reference. Thus, like this thesis, they are focused on Blackness in the African Diaspora in Western cities on a transnational scale. Most of this scholarship is particularly based in critical race theory of which there is no space to explain in this thesis, ergo certain statements that may seem dogmatic are inevitably entrenched and undergirded in this framework.

Secondly, Grada Kilomba’s exposition on “everyday racism” and subtle exclusions is a useful framework. Kilomba says in an interview: “When we speak about racism, it usually has a macro-political perspective but Black people’s realities, thoughts, feelings and experiences have been often ignored.”⁵ This theory of experiential racism (in cities) is subjective and from the perspective of those who experience it on a daily basis. The microaggressions stemming from racism, which can affect the mobility patterns of Black artists and activists, can also be seen as types of geographical exclusion. Thus, in tandem with the idea of everyday racism and micro-exclusion, I will use David Sibley’s *Geographies of Exclusion*. Sibley understands the geographies of exclusion as a sort of laundering and deeply pervasive behavior, which also includes a critical rejection of marginalized scholarship. (Yet another reason why the use of women scholars from marginalized communities is a decisive way to combat exclusion.)

Thirdly, a postcolonial and subaltern framework will be used to discuss how geographies of Blackness interact with certain issues, including: belonging, placemaking, identity and memory in the city. Paul Gilroy, and especially his concept of: the Black Atlantic, is a key figure in this discussion. He is known for using historical colonial and postcolonial references to analyze multiculturalism in Europe today. I will also use the concept of subalternity developed by South Asian scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha. In my opinion, subalternity can be incorporated under the umbrella of Postcolonial and Cultural Studies even though it is often used to critique Postcolonial Studies. Subalternity and postcoloniality attempt to give an autonomous voice and centrality to historically oppressed groups who are often silenced by dominant epistemologies.

I will use the aforementioned theories as a frame to produce, what I’m calling, a concept of Black Urbanism. My definition of Black Urbanism is the amalgamation of the issues and concepts outlined above positioned in an urban context, explained in part by urban theories and also by social, cultural, and historical theories. It centralizes Blackness as a lens through which to understand different aspects of urbanity and the urban experience for Blacks on a transnational, comparative scale.

⁵ This interview is entitled “White Is Not A Color,” first published on the African Times in 2014 and since has been taken down, now only remaining on the AfricAvenir website.

Blackness, the African Diaspora & Geographies of Belonging

Any discussion of Blackness is incomplete without integrating the idea of the diaspora, of which a Black identity is dependent. Although it is widely agreed that race has no scientific basis, the reality of Blackness is based in the geography of dispersion of people of African descent (primarily from sub-Saharan, central, and southeastern African countries)—especially in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Brazil where race is a very contentious notion. However, with the shifting demographics of Europe I believe the new frontier for the discussion of Blackness is in European cities, and not only those which are in countries that were formerly colonial powers. Using the African Diaspora as a framework for understanding Blackness in Euro-North American contexts centralizes the:

Black Diaspora as forms of experiential subjectivity when they intersect with the registers of everyday life through their quotidian engagements. (Wilson and Coly, 2007, p. 415)

Highlighting, validating, and making visible the urban experience of Black identity in multiple places in the West. This identity, “Blackness as an intricate confluence of multiple histories and cultures” (Wilson and Coly, 2007, p. 415), is articulated hyper-locally based on a global identity of being a part of a Black Diaspora. It’s also crucial to note that both Black identity and the African Diaspora are concepts which some people of African descent choose to adopt and others choose not to. This thesis focuses on artists and activists who identify with Blackness and the African Diaspora.⁶

In discussing Blackness and the African Diaspora, it becomes clear the experience of Black subjectivity must be transnational and is inherently political. As Wilson and Coly (2007) argue:

...the grafting of diaspora onto the multiple experiences of Black subjects around the globe signaled a forceful and necessary turn towards conceptualizing transnational Black communities as political correlatives... Black Diaspora as a position of political existence and as a location of cultural belonging. (p. 417)

Black art and activism can be both a political expression as well as a form of appropriating space to create a sense of belonging. Even though Black art and activism happen on a local city-level they are produced out of transnational links to a global Black Diaspora. As Murdoch (2008) argues these “transnational linkages speak strongly to the ways in which communities undergird prior and contemporary conceptions of Blackness” (p. 337). While Wilson and Coly contend that Blackness and the Black Diaspora should necessarily be conceptualized as transnational, Murdoch assumes transnationality and further connects this to the historicity of shifting notions of Blackness.

Currently in Europe there remains a very present Black Diaspora that has, as Stephen Small (2009) puts it, “shifting terrains of Blackness” (Hine, Keaton, & Small, introduction xxiii) and thusly continues to explore questions of collective belonging. There is racialized experience of Blackness for various Black communities in Europe and the United States. This means that at times other forms of identification, like nationality, become less primary in the public domain. The city culture that creates some sense of belonging outside of the private domain (home and the specificity of identity: ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexuality etc.) usually happens under the umbrella of Black identity. Thus, belonging—specifically how it is manifested in public urban culture—becomes about how many different Black

⁶ Although in these this paragraph Black Diaspora and African Diaspora are used interchangeably, the former refers more to people who are born outside of the African Diaspora but are of African descent, and the latter normally refers to all people of African descent in the world including those born on the continent of Africa.

communities and ways of being Black can be included in a space or place at any given time. Scales of Black identity, like the ever-blurred distinction between the public and private domains, are mediated in the different layers of urban life, such as: home, community, work, nightlife, politics, etc. Black geography attempts to discuss what these shifting notions of identity look like in these different terrains of being.

While this discourse around Blackness may seem new in Europe, according to Philomena Essed (Hine, Keaton, & Small, 2009, forward xii), “the search for and defense of a black European identity is not a new phenomenon.” The fluidity of Blackness in North America and Europe is articulated by the scholars mentioned. Thus, local manifestations of Black geographies will be demonstrably multi-layered. Part of the reality of Blackness in Western cities is constantly recreating and reclaiming a sense of belonging and a sense of place. This has happened politically in the widely known Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the Black Power Movement in the United Kingdom. However, it has happened and continues to happen in many ways culturally and politically in the United States and Europe. This reclamation of belonging is anything from larger political movements of solidarity like Black Lives Matter (which has caucuses in Denmark and the UK, and had solidarity protests in Paris and Brussels) to Diaspora conferences curated by Black Austrian women at Sargfabrik in Vienna.

Studies of Blackness in Euro-North American contexts centralize the geographies of Black subjects since often “essentialism situates Black subjects and their geopolitical concerns as being elsewhere, on the margin, the underside, outside the normal” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 4) concern of cultural and urban geographies. Blackness and the African Diaspora are inherently geographic subjects that inhabit both theoretical and physical space. As Essed, Small, et al. aim to redefine Europe as it is experienced by Black people, understand the racialization of the African Diaspora, and speak about the “connective tissue of collective belonging” (Hine, Keaton, & Small, 2009, introduction xxiii), McKittrick and Woods (2007) position Black geographies as integral to and inside larger human social geography discourses. McKittrick and Woods are concerned with the ways in which Black geographies are shaped by and shape human geography, as well as the importance of making visible the geographies of those that are often invisibilized at the same time hyper-visible. Geographies of Blackness can be used to highlight the everyday reality that “the invisible/forgettable is producing space - always and in all sorts of ways” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 4).

Diversity tends to be more common in larger, mainly capital, cities in Europe, thus it is vital to discuss the manifestations of Black cultural geographies within the context of cities. North American cities are known as hubs for art and activism, as a result the Black experience is magnified on an urban scale. The production of space in the city is a topic of great concern in the field of Urban Studies. Creating a sense of belonging is one way that Black subjects (and other subaltern populations) produce and appropriate space. Although many of the concepts and theories around Blackness happen on a nation-state or continental level, the city is a stage for which national, transnational, and global discussions of Blackness and the African Diaspora are effectuated.

Everyday Racism & Subtle/Geographies of Exclusion

As a result of visible difference and subconscious racism, Black people in Europe and North America experience what Grada Kilomba refers to as “everyday racism” (2010) and David Sibley describes as geographies of exclusion, which affect—primarily—subaltern communities. Sibley (1995) explains the importance of human geography acknowledging and “identify[ing] forms of socio-spatial exclusion as

they are articulated and experienced by the subject groups” (introduction x). The subtle racism and socio-spatial exclusion experienced by people who are visibly different, meaning non-White, in this case Blacks in European and American cities, affects their mobility in the cities in which they live in a variety of ways. In addition to creating the need for safe spaces of inclusion and altering one’s behavior in public spaces, new geographies are produced whereby inhabiting places and spaces by/for Blacks, Africans, and non-Whites becomes a necessary way to move through and *be* in the city.

While Sibley focuses on the social and spatial structures associated with geographies of exclusion, Kilomba identifies the subjective experience from a psychological perspective. Both are relevant in this thesis as they go hand in hand with mapping a Black consciousness that is predicated on the spatial, experiential, and psychological realities of visible difference in urban spaces. Kilomba aptly describes this subjective experience of everyday racism and the othering of Blacks in mundane ways. She speaks in the first person:

Discourses place me as ‘Other’ when I am told that I cannot be from here because I am Black... Gestures place me as ‘Other’ when at the bakery the *white* woman next to me tries to be attended to before me. Actions place me as ‘Other’ when I am monitored by the police as soon as I arrive at a central station. Gazes place me as ‘Other’ when people stare at me. Every time I am thus placed as ‘Other,’ I am experiencing racism, for I am not ‘Other.’ I am myself. (Kilomba, 2010, pp. 44-45)

These forms of subtle racism that place non-Whites as others are built into structures of society and the way urban public spaces are regulated and inhabited. For example, Kilomba mentions being monitored at the central train station, while Sibley has referred to the ways in which those perceived as “non-desirables” in seemingly-public spaces are often targets for security guards to control.

Sibley states how certain implicit and explicit rules of inclusion appeal to some, normally the dominant demographic, and are oppressive to others. Thus, highly policed areas make many White Europeans and Americans feel safe, but are often areas where Blacks and non-Whites try to avoid whether or not they have been harassed or abused by the police. As Shwanen et al. (2012) notes in his study of the “spatiotemporal inequalities” of the night-time economy in the Dutch cities of Groningen, Utrecht, and Rotterdam, “whereas more police on the streets may empower women in the nighttime economy, the converse might hold for visitors from Arabic, Afro-American, Asian, or Latino descent” (p. 2082). These areas, for the most part, make Whites feel safer and Blacks feel less safe—especially Black men who are disproportionately controlled by the police. This difference in perception of police alone is a factor in how Black microgeographies play out on a city-level, on a neighborhood level and further, in how/where one decides to spend their leisure time. In places of leisure particularly “there is a connection between the function and design of a space as determined by [some]... and the construction of one group of the population as ‘deviant’, out of place, and threatening” (Sibley, 1995, introduction xii).

Exclusion from spaces of leisure is not always explicit. However, there are clear indicators of non-belonging. This can be anything from receiving poor service to being asked if you are in the right place. These are “instances of exclusion where boundaries are drawn discreetly between dominant and subordinate groups” (Sibley, 1995, introduction xiv). In this case between Whites and those perceived as non-White, even if they have one White parent. These are the experiences Black people draw upon to determine, sometimes intentionally and other times unintentionally, their microgeographical patterns within the city. This informs their search for spaces of inclusion, spaces where they are not a minority—where they are not seen as other.

In this thesis Sibley and Kilomba are used in tandem to nuance a Black urban experience. Whereas Sibley speaks about subaltern groups and other populations who are sometimes subordinate and other times dominate (such as White women) Kilomba uses only the experiences of Black women in Germany to speak more generally about Blacks as subjects in and subject to White society. Kilomba uses the biographies of Black German women to centralize the subject group as Sibley argues is necessary to progress human geography in its understanding of geographies of exclusion. As McKittrick articulates, exclusion of Black people in public urban contexts is that “the placement of subaltern bodies deceptively hardens spatial binaries, in turn suggesting that some bodies belong, some bodies do not belong, and some bodies are out of place” (2006, introduction xv).

The instances of everyday racism and geographies of exclusion developed by Kilomba and Sibley can be further understood by the concept of racial geographies. Bressey and Dwyer (2013) focus on how the social construction of race manifests in local contexts, primarily in neighborhoods and cities in the United Kingdom. Their framework is also useful in the discussion of subtle racism and exclusion. Furthermore, this thesis:

Reflect[s] on the different geographies of race and racism highlighting the significance of the microgeographies of everyday life in understanding how ethnicity is lived and how ideas of race are made, mobilised and encountered. (Bressey and Dwyer, 2013, p. 3)

Kilomba (2010), Sibley (1995), McKittrick (2006), Bressey and Dwyer (2013) help to situate the ways in which the urban geographies of Blackness are related to the social, spatial, physical, historical and psychological realities of Black identity. They also necessarily focus more on quotidian experiences and hyper-local manifestations rather than the previous concepts that tackle these notions on a societal level. Hence, their approaches are vital to the arguments made about microgeographies of Blackness.

Postcolonialism and the Subaltern

Postcolonialism, particularly in an urban frame of reference, reflects “a tension between cosmos and polis, global and local, worldly and parochial angles of vision” (Gilroy, 2005, p. 10), in which postcolonial subjects are constantly defining themselves against both hostland and homeland. This tension between not belonging in the place where you are born and not belonging in the place where your parents, grand parents, or (in the case of many Black Americans) distant ancestors are from is one—of many—postcolonial realities. With the case of Blacks in Europe or North America, postcoloniality is an inevitable truth. Urban space is then a scale through which to understand how postcoloniality operates in microgeographies.

The United States was a British settler colony and even countries in Europe that were not direct colonial powers, like Austria, benefitted from the colonization of the continents of Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean, and Asia. Settler colonialism in the United States is different from European colonial endeavours on the continent of Africa and in the Americas, however there are elements they share. Both settler colonization in the United States and the colonization of countries in the global south by European nation-states have elements of *internal colonialism*. Tuck and Yang (2012) clearly describe this process:

...attended to by postcolonial theories and theories of coloniality is *internal colonialism*, the biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna within the “domestic” borders of the imperial nation. This involves the use of particularized modes of

control - prisons, ghettos, minoritizing, schooling, policing - to ensure the ascendancy of a nation and its white elite. These modes of control...and their dislocatability - are at work to authorize the metropole and conscribe her periphery. Strategies of internal colonialism, such as segregation, divestment, surveillance, and criminalization, are both structural and interpersonal. (pp. 4-5)

Although this excerpt refers to these modes of control in past tense, as former mechanisms of colonialism, in different ways their legacies have been continued on a contemporary urban scale. Through discussions of postcolonialism in both the United States and Europe, one can begin to unravel how Black microgeographies are an example of the legacy of colonialism and navigating the hybridity that results from it.

Postcolonialism and subalternity are produced from colonial geographies. As Sharp aptly says in the introduction to her comprehensive book on colonialism and the effects thereafter, *Geographies of Postcolonialism* (2009), the experiences of postcolonial subjects are:

of a world after the colonial period... created by the powers, connections and imaginations that were written into the world and the making and remaking of these geographies ever since... Each is a postcolonial subject constituted through real and imagined geographical processes and identities. (p. 2)

The manifestations of postcolonial subjectivity produced from historical colonialism and its legacy in Euro-North American contexts allows certain communities to identify racially with Blackness. This Black identity did not exist before the dispersion of the Africans in the Diaspora which was a result of colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade, and postcolonial migration to Europe. In the words of Gilroy, “the colonial project not only manifested in a new kind of geopolitical space, but [also] filled it with a new cast of readily racialized characters” (2005, p. 69), who may identify more with race and the diaspora rather than nationality.

Postcolonialism as understood in the microgeographies of Blackness on an urban scale can amplify the solidarity of racialized communities. The postcolonial reality of Black geographies are “provoked by being racialized as different” (Gilroy, 2005, p. 76). Sharp (2009) argues that the barriers of difference produced during the colonial period continue to shape our geographical understandings and the process of hybridity. This postcoloniality has the potential to unite people who identify as Black and with a diasporic consciousness in Western cities regardless of nationality. It posits “alternative ways of knowing and understanding - often talked of in terms of ‘other voices’ - in order to present alternatives to dominant” (Sharp, 2009, p. 5) constructs and structures. Certain Black people produce work and spend time in places that are considered alternative and encourage alternate ways of *being* in urban spaces. This subjectivity is further developed in the concept of subaltern communities.

Subaltern, a term coined by Antonio Gramsci through his work on cultural hegemony (Spivak, 2005, p. 475), refers to populations that are historically and culturally excluded from society’s institutions and further—according to Homi Bhabha—are racial minorities whose social presence was crucial to the counterdistinction upon which a majority formed their self-identity. Subalternity, as defined by the Subaltern Studies Group made up of south-asian scholars, refers to “those agencies of the marginal, minority, subaltern, or diasporic that incite us to think through—and beyond—theory” (Bhabha, p. 13). In other words, similar to postcolonial theory, subalternity gives voice to marginal groups who are often considered ‘other’ to the dominant group. The Black communities are postcolonial and subaltern because

their identities are ‘othered,’ hybrid identities that are malleable and multidimensional. As subaltern groups inhabit and produce spaces in cities, they aim to make space based on their multifaceted identities.

Donald S. Moore (1998) uses the subaltern framework to speak about how locality is not fixed, rather that subaltern communities remap localities based on identity struggles and the ductility of identity. This remapping of space is one way that subaltern, postcolonial communities use their agency to redefine their geographies. This redefinition is a response to colonial legacies and their subordinated reality, but also an empowering aspect of hybrid identity. In this thesis, subalternity is understood both as a type of community and a form of empowerment. The experience of subalternity and their “agency *produces* locality and identity through a complex cultural politics of place” (Moore, 1998, p. 370).

The exclusion and racism experienced by groups of people who come from historically subordinated and colonized populations is what creates the basis for considering them a subaltern community. Subalternity aims to do what Prakash (1994) describes as an “effort to retrieve the autonomy of the subaltern subject resembl[ing] the ‘history from below’ approach,” (p. 1480). Subjectivity is a lens through which to produce and validate knowledge from communities who are normally not seen as producers of knowledge or space. Postcolonialism and subalternity position the subject as a producer of knowledge and space.

Black Urbanism

While Urban Studies is generally a very comprehensive field, as with much of traditional academia, it still lacks a nuanced and thoughtful discussion on race and ethnicity, unless a particular ethnic group is seen as disrupting societal norms. Current discussions of ethnicity in the field of Urban Studies are largely focused on Muslims as a result of the rise of popular Islamic extremism. In the meantime discourse on other marginalized groups is pushed to the wayside or non-existent. While there is scholarship on marginalized populations like women and Queer/Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender, these theories are often perpetrators of White-centrism and leave out the issues and voices of Black/non-White women and Queer LGBT populations, as well. Additionally, they also suffer from being Euro-American centric. Furthermore, Europe’s general denial of race and racism attempts to make research using critical racial theory inessential when in many cases it is crucial to understand the urban life world of minorities. Black urbanism is the study of spaces, places, and areas Black people inhabit in an urban setting and how this relates to issues of identity, belonging, and the cultural collective production of space in a city.

Black Urbanism is a phrase I am using to describe three things: 1) How Black identity shapes and is shaped by the urban context it operates within, 2) How Blackness is used as a way to appropriate spaces in the city, create a sense of belonging and inclusivity for people who identify as Black, and 3) A way of understanding the cultural, social, and political geographies of Blackness in cities. It is useful for articulating how the above discussions about Black identity, diaspora, exclusion, subalternity and microgeographies provide the framework for urbanism based on a Black consciousness. Using Black Urbanism as a concept, I hope to provide more ways of talking about race in urban spaces in the field of Urban Studies. In this thesis, I aim to integrate urbanist theories with Black realities using the aforementioned concepts to map a Black urban consciousness. It is about existence and resistance: acknowledging the existence of race and racism, as well as understanding how one’s relation to their race can be a form of resistance against geographies of exclusion within the city.

IV Methodology

An Approach to Methods

This thesis is descriptive and exploratory, as such mainly qualitative methods were used. The lived experiences of the respondents is central to this thesis, thus semi-structured interviews were conducted as a main basis for data collection. Interviews provided first-hand information on how Black artists and activists feel in their city of residence and the importance of their identity being apart of urban life. Interviews were as a primary source. The interviews were conducted using a list of questions that attempted to understand where these activists and artists go in their leisure time, why they go to these places, and how their Blackness affects their movement through the city. Interviewees were between the ages of 25-40 and, with the exception of one case, are fluent in the language of the country in which they reside. All interviewees have lived in the city for at least two years, and at least two respondents from each city (usually more) have grown up in the country that the city is in. All interviews were conducted in English and in person.

In addition to conducting the interviews in person, I spent time (no less than three hours) with each interviewee either in a place they feel comfortable going in their leisure, their home, running errands, or at their studio (in the case of visual artists). In many cases after the official interview, the respondent would take me to one or more of the places they listed as being an inclusive space, or we'd have a meal in a neighborhood they stated was a space of belonging. In two instances I was taken to one of the places listed as being exclusionary after the interview. This qualitative fieldwork provided further context for the interviews and allowed for more informal and experiential data collection. It also resulted in more conversation, which shed light on the experiences of these Black artists and activists—how their upbringing and past experiences affect their current interactions and movement patterns within the city.

During the interviews, interviewees were asked to list places or areas they enjoy going in their leisure time as well as those places where they have had negative experiences in. Places of enjoyment and belonging were mapped along with places that interviewees consider historically related to Blacks or Africans. Mapping these places and areas allowed me to analyze if there are patterns of social spatialization. It also shows where the places and areas are in the larger context of the city and if this is correlated with other social, economic, or racial structures within the urban system. In addition to mapping, I went to these places as a participant observer to see if some of the views of the interviewees can be felt from visiting these places and areas once or twice. Although I am the researcher, I am also a part of the demographic being interviewed, this may be an advantage since many claims made about these places are on the basis of racial recognition or belonging to a certain racial and age demographic. I believe participant observation allowed me to experience these places in similar way, but not the same, to that of the interviewees themselves. It also allowed me to ascertain the general demographic makeup of the place while I was there.

One of the interview questions asks the interviewee if they know of or feel there are places in the city historically linked with Black and/or African people. This question was intentionally very broad as not to determine what type of places or spaces count as being historically linked to a Black identity. Based on the answers provided, research was done to understand the historical geographies of Blackness that interviewees mentioned. Historical racial geographies often impact contemporary feelings of identity and belonging. While the historical geographies of Blackness may be more salient in the case study city of Oakland, California—they are not entirely absent from the European case study cities. Encouraging

interviewees to search their minds for historical geographies of Blackness in their cities also brought up issues of urban memory and how that connects to one's identity being reflected, or not, in the city in which one lives. In terms of the European case study cities, this question of historical geographies of Blackness is less documented resulting in, primarily, the use of notes from independent researchers and responses from interviewees.

This thesis has an emphasis on qualitative methods, though quantitative data was used when possible. After further analysis certain quantitative data sources such as statistical and demographic information to understand the makeup of certain areas within the city was useful. When possible data sources are on the city level or urban region scale; however in some cases only data on a national level was available. Nonetheless, quantitative data was used only for supplementary or contextual purposes.

Demographics & Selection

I have chosen to focus on Black artists and activists because it is a community I am apart of, familiar with, and has been striving to find itself reflected in Western discourses for several decades. Artists and activists, because of the nature of their work, tend to have a more critical and sensitive approach to their surroundings. This is in part due to the fact that they use their environment as a basis for their work, and also because their work has to do with debunking the status quo, making clear that what seems normal for most people may be oppressive or marginalizing to other populations. As a result, their perception and use of urban spaces is nuanced and involves a specific consciousness that all minorities may not choose to adopt.

Black artists and activists believe that exposing and expressing their realities is a way to help others who may feel similar speak up. Activists and artists often encourage people who may feel disempowered to use whatever resources they have to feel empowered. Additionally, they have the ability to create safe spaces and inclusive spaces where others can come to. Finally, activists and artists, especially those interviewed for this thesis, are not famous but do have a following of people (Black, White, and otherwise) who believe and support the work they are doing. This means that although they speak from their own experience, their personal experiences resonate with many others and thus can be used as a more general interpretation.

I chose activists and artists between the ages of 25-40 because this age group is a majority in the activist/artists communities I am apart of and connected to. It's also important to note that with places of leisure, this age group tends to be out more often than people between the ages of 40-55. As such, they not only have the ability shape the urban landscape of leisure, they are also more intune with it. Among the activists and artists interviewed for this thesis, more than half either consistently organize events or at least once a year are involved in organizing events having to do with Blackness, diasporic realities, or postcolonialism.

Artists and activists are part and parcel to creating and claiming urban spaces that feel inclusive for Black people and other marginalized populations in the city. These artists and activists have their own microgeographies, but are also integral in producing certain types of microgeographies for other Blacks in the city. Essentially the respondents for this thesis are both leaders and followers so they are subject to urban geographies, and also creators of them. This means their perspective is multi-varied and valuable because they understand how they are subject to certain geographies of exclusion and racism, while at the same time their work provides solutions and resistance to this exclusion. As a result of their position they

can more articulately and thoughtfully suggest initiatives and solutions to creating inclusive spaces in the city.

The activists and artists interviewed for this thesis were either people who I already know and have worked with or from the networks of Black artists and activists that I am apart of. In each of the three cities, I chose some people specifically based on the type of things they produce in the city as well as put out a call to my network asking for people who are willing to discuss their experiences with me. For the people I did not know, choosing who to interview was about a combination of factors. One aspect that was important was getting a diverse range of Black communities, meaning not all respondents within each city come from (or have parents who come from) the same countries. Making sure the respondents speak the language of the country in which they live or at least have an understanding of it was also important. I wanted to have various types of activism and art represented, as well as respondents who have some sort of following and are not doing this work in isolation. Additionally, I had to work with general logistical limitations such as time restraints and work schedules, who was available to be interviewed while I was in their city, and who was able to secure a place where they feel comfortable for us to meet to talk, etc.

All of the interviews were recorded (although the recording for one of the interviews was lost) with the verbal consent of the interviewees. Extensive, detailed notes were taken during all of the interviews. Field notes were taken after the interviews when I was taken by respondents to places they liked, frequented, or felt like were exclusionary. After each initial interview certain quotes and themes that stood out from our conversation were highlighted in the notes. After completing all the interviews and listening to each multiple times, general themes that came up across the three cities were determined. Once these themes were solidified, interviews were partially transcribed and further quotes were pulled out from each interview. The selection of the final four themes that make up the second part of the analysis was based on how much emphasis was put on the topic in each city by the respondents, how it ties into the theoretical framework, how many times it was addressed in different parts of respondents' interviews, and how it is translated across all three cities. Each respondent was sent by email the quotes and demographic information used to be approved or declined. Each respondent approved the use of the quotes and all information included in this thesis.

Leisure

Using this idea of "leisure" as a method to map Black geographies of artists and activists was both difficult and interesting. It was difficult because many of the respondents expressed not having so much "leisure time." Meaning they feel there was always work that needed to be done or they could be doing. Some of them also mentioned that in their leisure time they attend events or go to places that they have either organized, helped to organize, or are somehow apart of. Most of them said the only real space of leisure, comfort, and belonging for them was their homes or the homes of their friends, so I often had to specify when asking questions: "outside of your home, or the homes of your friends." However, the idea of leisure showed how for many of the respondents their work as activists and artists is not necessarily separate from what they do for fun or when they are relaxing. Using leisure as the basis also showed how many of them had to create spaces of leisure that feel safe and inclusive because they didn't necessarily exist.

Practically, I chose mapping spaces of leisure because it was necessary to narrow down what type of social and cultural geographies I would be studying. Leisure was one of many types of geographies I could have chosen from. However, I also chose it because it is rather general and open-ended so can

encompass many types of places, including restaurants, nightclubs, cafes, and cultural centers. Ultimately, each interviewee interpreted what leisure meant to them, thus providing multiple types of spaces in the city with different functions and with varying modes of inclusivity. Analysing spaces of leisure meant that the qualitative aspects of the research could often happen in those spaces, the spaces were generally accessible, and all were public.

Interviewee Backgrounds

Brussels is the only case study city where only one of the respondents was born on the continent of Africa. All other respondents in Brussels are first generation Belgian, meaning both parents were born on the continent of Africa but they were born in Belgium. All respondents have Belgian nationality. All respondents identify as “Black” or “Black African.” All respondents identify with some sort of Black/African Diaspora. All but one respondent, the one whose parents are from Ethiopia, identify as being postcolonial; while all acknowledged Belgium as a colonial power. One of the respondents has parents from the Congo, and another respondent has parents from Rwanda, which was a Belgian protectorate colony for some time.

In Vienna, two of the respondents were born on the continent of Africa, and the other three were born in European countries. Out of all the respondents, two have Austrian nationality, one has British nationality, and two have nationalities from West African countries (Ghana and Nigeria). All respondents identify as “Black” or “Black African.” All respondents are from postcolonial countries or have at least one parent that is identified as postcolonial, and they all identify with some sort of Black/African Diaspora. Of these respondents, the British Jamaican was the only one with both parents being born in a European country. She is second generation British and third generation Jamaican.

Out of the respondents in Oakland, two were born on the continent of Africa, however one of the two has been naturalized as an American citizen within the past three years. Three of the respondents have two parents born and raised on the continent of Africa. Two of the respondents have both parents born in the United States. All respondents identify as “Black.” All respondents identify with the Black/African Diaspora, however none identify themselves as being traditionally postcolonial. This could be because the three respondents with African parents are from the horn of Africa (Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia), countries which have not been colonized at all or in the same way as other African countries. As for the other two respondents, most Black Americans don’t identify as postcolonial and rather identify more with the African Diaspora as a result of the enslavement of Africans forcibly brought to the United States.

Reference Sheet *All but last four columns are orally self-reported by respondents, written down by researcher. All the respondents consented to having the following information included in this thesis.

	Name	Age	Race (identified with)	Ethnicity	Nationality	Duration of time as resident	Artist	Activism	Transcript	Notes	Date Interviewed	Time spent outside of interview (field notes)
Brussels												
	Soiresse Njall Kalvin	34	Black African	Cameroonian-Togolese	Belgian (naturalized, born: Togo)	12 years	writer, former journalist	Memoire Coloniale, coordinator	✓	✓	September 2016	✓
	Laura Nsengiyumva	29	Black	Rwandese-Belgian	Belgian	entire life	Film/visual art and architecture		✓	✓	December 2016	n/a
	Anne Wetsi Mpoma	40	Black	Congolese-Belgian	Belgian	entire life		Afro Brussels City and Africana, founder and radio host	✓	✓	December 2016	✓
	Melat Nigussie	25	Black	Ethiopian-Belgian	Belgian	4 years	writer	Belgian Renaissance, co-founder	✓	✓	February 2017	n/a
Vienna												
	Jennie Iroh	30	Black	Nigerian-Austrian	Austrian	11 years	photography and drawing	Black Her*stories Project, co-founder	✓	✓	December 2016	n/a
	Njideka Stephanie Iroh	35	Black	Nigerian-Austrian	Austrian	14 years	poet/artist	Bodies of Knowledge, co-founder/co-curator	✓	✓	August 2016	✓
	Tonica Hunter	27	Black	British-Jamaican	British	2 years	DJ/music maker	Sounds of Blackness, co-founder	✓	✓	August 2016	✓
	Amoako Boafo	32	Black	Ga Ghanaian	Ghanaian	3 years	painter/visual artist		✓	✓	August 2016	✓
	Cliff Erinnwionghae	35	Black African	Edo Nigerian	Nigerian	12 years	photography	Nigerian community organizer	n/a	✓	August 2016	✓
Oakland												
	Guled Muse	27	Black	Somali-American	American (naturalized, born: Somalia)	2 years	music production	Speak With Beats, co-founder	✓	✓	July 2016	✓
	Halston Chapman	27	Black	Afro-Latino American	American	5 years		Ourobos Noir International, founder	✓	✓	July 2016	✓
	Tsedal Tesfahun	26	Black	Ethiopian	Ethiopian	3 years	singer/songwriter		✓	✓	July 2016	✓
	Ziada Tewelde	33	Black	Eritrean-American	American	10 years	photography	Home Away From Home Project, co-organizer	✓	✓	July 2016	n/a
	Jesus El	29	Black	African American	American	22 years	performer, dancer, entertainer	Restorative Justice Facilitator/Mentor	✓	✓	July 2016	✓

V Case Studies: Transnational Blackness

For this thesis research I chose two cities in Europe, Vienna and Brussels, and one city in the United States as a point of comparison, Oakland, California. There are three primary reasons why I chose two cities in Europe to compare along with one North American city: 1) I'm attempting to map how a global Black consciousness is perpetuated hyper-locally in Western cities, thus it made sense to use more than two cases and more than one continent; 2) Both Brussels and Vienna are European cities that have very different histories: one being a former colonial power and the other being a former European imperial power, yet still there is a similar type of Black consciousness manifested in both places through the art and activism of residents who identify as Black; 3) The United States is normally the quintessential case for studying Blackness, especially in urban settings, as such it is a good point of comparison with the other cases. Additionally, in some ways Oakland and Brussels have more in common than Brussels and Vienna even though the latter are both capital cities of European countries.

As I am a part of activists and artists communities in each of the three case study cities, I was already connected with potential respondents and familiar with the different manifestations of Black identity, current activist issues, and artistic practices within each of the three cities. Additionally, since Brussels and Vienna were among the first two cities the 4Cities cohort lives in, it gave me ample time to get to know and research these communities while I lived there as well as during the second year of the program. Similarly, having spent a good part of my life living in Oakland I was familiar with the communities there. Moreover, in all three cities I either worked with organizations and/or attended events having to do with Black identity, the diaspora, postcolonial art and in some cases these events were organized by some of the respondents. With all this in mind, along with increasing political conservatism in the United States and Europe and more self-directed visibility of Black arts and culture within Euro-North American contexts, I felt artists and activists from these three cities would provide insightful local/global perspectives.

In Europe, cities—but especially capital cities—tend to be the most diverse parts of the country. Comparing a European city to their more diverse counterparts in North American cities is more feasible using capital cities which tend to have the highest concentration of diversity. However, between these three case study cities Brussels is the most diverse, being one of the most diverse cities in the world after Dubai. According to the World Migration Report 2015 published by the International Organisation for Migration, 62% of the people living in Brussels are foreign born or of foreign descent. Dubai tops the list with 83% of the population. While Oakland is one of the most diverse cities in California, with no race being more than 35% of the population according to the 2010 census, as a result of gentrification it has become less and less racially and ethnically diverse.

Identifying as Black, especially for Europeans, is a political and global choice as such this can be manifested locally in mobility choices and cultural expression. To clearly document how this Black identity affects the urban experience in a variety of contexts, I felt it was important to choose more than two cases. The subaltern experience is global even though it is practiced locally. Choosing two European cases that are not both former colonial powers also begs the question if postcoloniality is a lived experience in all of Europe. Choosing Oakland, California as the American city to compare is for a few reasons: 1) Oakland is known as being a hub for art and activism, and 2) A lot of historical (i.e. Black Panthers) and contemporary (i.e. Black Lives Matter) Black activism has developed there; 3) A few of the artists and activists interviewed for this thesis are inspired by activism and art in Oakland and have, in some cases, used it as a direct reference for their own work.

Black artists and activists in these cities are able to integrate global ideologies, connections to homeland and hostland through historical global ties and legacies of colonialism, all through their quotidian urban activities. In all three case-study cities there are forms of postcolonialism, especially showing up as racialization and double culture. While Brussels, Vienna, and Oakland are all very different cities, this thesis explores the similarities and patterns of the experiences of Blackness in all these cities as they are manifested on microgeographical levels. This transnational and international comparison considers the existing expressions of a global Black consciousness in urban space.

VI Analysis

The analysis is in two parts. The first part gives specific context to each city and outlines respondents' general feelings of comfort and exclusion in certain places and areas. In each city many respondents felt like the only place they were fully able to *be* safely as a Black person was at home. As Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006) relate in their discussion of home, quoting Janet Zandy, "home is an idea: an inner geography... where there is no sense of 'otherness'... a community" (p. 50). The artists and activists in all three cities are using their "inner geographies" to understand their outer geographies. But first this is considered in the particular setting of each of the three cities.

The second part of the analysis discusses the four overarching themes and how they are manifested across the three cities. While the experiences of the artists and activists are not the same, there are similarities that point to racism and exclusion experienced by people who are visibly different (meaning non-White). Additionally, the second part documents a Black consciousness throughout the three cities that creates a sense of connection and belonging with others who identify as Black—even if they are a different ethnicity or nationality. Beginning with behaviour and historical geographies of Blackness, the second part ends with examining Black and Black adjacent spaces as well as the city as a potential haven.

The two-part analysis was necessary because while the first part contextualizes each city in its own right, the second part draws on similarities and convergences between the experiences of the artists and activists in each city. Each section within the second part of the analysis addresses at least one or more of the aims. Since all four of the research aims and objectives are interrelated it seemed abstractive to structure the analysis according to the four aims.

Part I: To Each City Its Own

The respondents in these cities problematize the notion of whether place defines identity, and instead relate the struggle of how identity and culture (re)defines place. Each city has its own unique historical and contemporary experiences of Blackness that informs the way respondents approached their interview with me. These distinct urban formations and moments do not only have to do with Blackness or African identity as few things in the city happen in isolation. Each of the three cities has its own relationship to and with Black activists and artists. In all three cases certain histories, places, and actions are more salient for these communities than others.

Brussels: Colonial Memory and African Activism

Of the three case study cities, Brussels is the only city in a country that was a former colonial power. Belgian colonialism was among the most violent. Under King Leopold II about ten million Africans were killed in the Congo. Some refer to this massacre as the "rubber terror" (Ankomah, 1999⁷). Although Belgium's primary colony was the Congo, they also had Rwanda as a protectorate for a short period of time, aforementioned. As Brussels is primarily known as a French speaking city and with Belgium's colonial history, many Africans coming to Brussels are from former French colonies in Africa. There are also some East Africans and English-speaking West Africans. Statistically sub-Saharan Africans are a small percentage of the foreign population in Brussels, however there is still a relatively large community of Black Africans in comparison to Vienna, for example. As a result of this very visible African

⁷ This online document does not have page numbers.

population and the discrimination they have faced and continue to experience, activism among Africans (both Maghrebians and Black Africans) in Brussels has developed rather robustly, especially beginning in the 1990s.

There are several African organizations led by and for Black Africans in Brussels. Calvin, who was interviewed for this thesis, is the president of *Memoire Coloniale*, which is a network of associations throughout Belgium with Black African leaders where they meet to discuss “the struggle for our memory and our history” (Calvin, 2016) in Brussels. *Memoire Coloniale* struggles for Belgium’s colonial history to be acknowledged and to address issues of urban memory, stereotypes, discrimination and so forth experienced by Black Africans in Brussels, and all of Belgium more widely. One of their current initiatives is to have a plaza in Ixelles named *Place Patrice Lumumba* to acknowledge Belgium’s role in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, colonialism, as well as to honor the Black Africans’ struggle for independence and their presence in Brussels.

There are hundreds of streets, avenues, and monuments which commemorate colonialism in Belgium and none of them refer to the Congo or Patrice Lumumba (Goddeeris, 2015, p. 397). Calvin asserts *Place Patrice Lumumba* is necessary because in Brussels “it is the problem of memory...their [Black African people’s] place in the society here.” In addition to this focus, Calvin leads anti-colonial tours in Brussels a few times a month so that White Belgians and whomever else is interested can understand how colonialism is integrated into current daily life and urban spaces. Thus, as a place for Black African activism, Brussels is central for much of the work being done throughout Belgium.

Brussels is a very diverse city with the Black African population quite visible and present. Taking a walk through Matongé, known as the African neighborhood, one can see the presence and culture of many Black Africans. Matongé was named by all respondents as a place that is historically for Black Africans, and also remains this way despite it undergoing gentrification. Anne, one of the respondents, told me the city is trying to rename Matongé to “Quartier du Monde,” a rebranding to make it more attractive to a wider demographic since it is close to the expanding European Quartier.

Matongé, named after an area in Kinshasa, Congo, has been a center of African life in Brussels since the 1960’s (Diekmann and Maulet, 2009) when Africans, students and otherwise, began living and working there. Since then it’s not only become an interest for urban tourists seeking “authentic” city experiences, it has always been the site for gentrification in part due to its proximity to the European Quarter and history of having reasonable rent prices. According to Buettner (2016), less than 10 percent of Matongé residents are African, but its importance as an African area is far greater than the actual number of Africans living there (p. 392). Despite Matongé’s transformation towards gentrification since the 1990s it still remains a site for Africans and Black Belgians today. Although, this gentrification may be threatening that:

Bohemians, EU professionals, and others found in Matongé pleasurable opportunities to consume ethnic exoticism in the form of shopping, food, drink, African music featured at many bars and restaurants, and people-watching. By 2005, Brussels’ tourism authority began to officially promote the neighborhood as a place worthy of a visit — a move closely connected with a wider regeneration programme. (Buettner, 2016, p. 392)

While gentrification threatens the integrity of Matongé, it is still a site of belonging for the Brussels respondents, as well as Blacks and Africans in Brussels more widely. It is a place where they go to get

food, to shop, to hang out and to be a majority whereas in most spaces in their daily lives they are a minority.

As Anne, founder of Afro Brussels City, mentioned to me in her interview the area around Gare du Midi (Rue Heyvaert and the market) and Matongé are historically linked to Black Africans in Brussels because they were the first sites of immigration for these communities. In the 19th century Heyvaert was a very active, industrial part of the city linking it to Wallonia's coal production industry after the canal was created in 1830 (Rosenfeld, 2015). Like many countries in Western Europe in the 20th century, Belgium went through mass deindustrialization and Heyvaert was an area very affected by this. Several industrial cities suffered during and after deindustrialization in Belgium, mostly French cities, the Wallonia region that had strong industrial activities and economies. Half of the industrial jobs were lost in the Heyvaert neighborhood, much of the working class population moved out, thus making way for cheap housing (Rosenfeld, 2015).

As this part of the city became less valuable, the abundance of cheap housing in the Rue Heyvaert area made way for migrants to enter. This began with guest workers from countries like Morocco and continued with migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries. The current population of the Heyvaert neighborhood is mostly made up of Africans—both from Sub-Saharan Africa and Northern Africa, however the Sub-Saharan African population is now more dominant. Many recent West and Central African immigrants looking for a familiar community and a cheap place to stay as they get settled in Brussels come to the Heyvaert neighborhood. Still, most respondents associated Matongé with being the most historically African area.

Another neighborhood three of the four Brussels respondents mentioned as being a place where they frequent in their leisure time is Flagey. While one of the respondents lives in Flagey, the others who mentioned it said they go there more than a few times a week. Flagey was described by the respondents as a diverse neighborhood where there are many young people and lots of things to do. Additionally, Ixelles, the district which Flagey is in, was also mentioned by three of the respondents as an area where they feel comfortable going in their free time as it is also very diverse and caters to a young adult population. Matongé and Flagey (within Ixelles commune) are all close to, but outside of, the city centre in the southeastern part of the city. The district of Ixelles including these two neighborhoods are situated between the city centre and the outer wealthier districts (i.e. Woluwe-Saint-Pierre and Uccle)—both of which were places of contestation.

All of the Brussels respondents mentioned Woluwe-Saint-Pierre and Uccle, and the southern communes (districts) more generally, as areas they do not like going to or feel comfortable in. As these communes are exceptionally wealthy and White, respondents felt that unless they are rich and White people do not want them there. Melat added that these communes are mostly residential and there is not much to do there anyway. Anne lives in Uccle because she has a son and says the schools are better there, and even she often feels uncomfortable in the district in which she lives.

While all respondents mentioned going to certain places in the city centre in their leisure time when there are certain events, they also stated that it is not always a welcoming space. Laura, an architect and artist, said she tries to stay away from “mainstream places,” many of which are in the city centre. Kalvin mentioned that there are certain bars in De Brouckere and La Bourse that are known for turning away Black people. The places that they do go to in the city centre when certain events are happening include Bozar, Le Space, Muntpunt and Bazaar. These places are not always comfortable and safe spaces, and

sometimes even host problematic events. Melat observes: “Places of culture are always weird, because they exploit Black arts and Black culture so much, but the audience they reach are young rich White people.”

Legend

- Frequented Places
- Contested frequented places
- Historic Places



*Map made by Nadia Nadesan

Vienna: Culture to Create Spaces

Austria was not a colonial power, although it was an imperial power and fascist during World War II. Respondents acknowledged this fascism as a part of Austria’s history as one way to explain current instances of racism and conservatism in the country. In 2016, Austria had two rounds of presidential elections where the right-wing party: Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), a party referred to by some as being neo-nazis perpetuating neo-fascism⁸, got a large portion of the votes. There is a belief that certain European countries exist outside of colonial contestations, of which Austria would be one. However, all of continental Europe benefited from colonialism—especially countries that were fascist in earlier historical periods and are now promoting policies that are hauntingly reminiscent of their fascist past.

Vienna was the center and political capital of the Austro-Hungarian empire. The Habsburg empire encompassed about 50 million subjects, meaning diversity was inherent. However this diversity did not mean peaceful integration or the rejection of nationalism, “Austria-Hungary reflected a patchwork

⁸ While some Austrians spoke colloquially about FPÖ being neo-nazis and neo-fascists, only a few news sources used this terminology explicitly of which Tablet was one with an article by Liam Hoare “Austria’s Incredibly Narrow Escape from Neo-Fascism” published May 23, 2016.

conglomeration of nationalities, each with its own culture and traditions” (Engle, 2011, p. 3). Vienna still reflects some of the diversity of the remnants of the Austro-Hungarian empire with a substantial community of people from former Yugoslavia. Vienna’s diversity has largely remained limited to Central and Eastern Europeans. However, now when walking the streets of Vienna one can see more Black and Brown faces from countries such as Nigeria, Brazil, Egypt and China⁹. Additionally, as a German-speaking country, Austria (and especially Vienna), receives postcolonial communities and other people of color from Germany.

Cliff and Njideka, long time Black activists in Vienna, made it clear that in Austria more generally and Vienna specifically, migration politics is a strong marker of activism. With current political discussions about immigration and integration, it becomes vital “to integrate the[se] into histories of migration at a variety of scales—in the home, on the street... within the imperial network—and illuminate the pathways that led to settlement and the geographies of interaction people experience in those places” (Bressey, 2013, p. 553) today. Among those visibly Black Africans in Vienna are the Nigerians and Somalis, which make up two of the largest African populations in Vienna along with Egyptians and Tunisians.

Nigerians have been emigrating to Vienna since the 1950s. The organization *Naija Akatarians* was founded in the 1960s; their full name is Nigerian migrants in Vienna since the 1960s. Last year in June 2016 Naija Akatarians did an exhibition entitled “Nigerian Migrants in Vienna since the 1960s” based on a lot of research and many interviews with Nigerians who have been in Vienna since the 1960s and 1970s. The exhibition opened in Kings Barbing Salon in the 7th district, a place where many Nigerian men go to get their haircut, meet, and hang out. There is another organization called *Opopao*, which is for all African migrants, but a lot of Nigerians are part of it.

Nigerians in Vienna have experienced and continue to experience many types of racial violence and racial profiling, especially by police. Since the 1960s Nigerians have had to organize to fight against racism. This struggle has been ongoing and even escalated to the streets of Vienna in the 1990s. On the other hand, many Somalis have come to Vienna as refugees. Somalis are a known refugee group and are often asylum seekers because of the ongoing instability in their homeland. In 2012, Somali refugees protested in front of Vienna Parliament for their rights as refugees because they felt they were not receiving what they deserve.¹⁰ While the Black African activism in Vienna is less consistent than in Brussels it is still very present. Additionally, expressions of Black African art and culture are also growing in Vienna.

Vienna has a history of investing in culture, education and the arts. “Red Vienna” was a period in Viennese history which created specific programs and policies making education and culture accessible, especially to the working class. The municipal authorities created agencies to “provide students and low earners with cut-price tickets for cultural events such as opera, spoken drama, and concerts” (Beniston, 2006, p. 10). As a result of this legacy, there are currently programs and organizations funded by the city such as Kueltuer Gemma, which “has been supporting the artistic and cultural work of migrants, as well as furthering the critical discourse on the relationship between art and culture and migration” (Kueltuer Gemma website, 2017). In addition to these institutional programs, organizations such as Bodies of Knowledge and Sounds of Blackness provide platforms in the city for the expression of Black arts, music,

⁹ From “the Other(s) Vienna” report made in Vienna for 4Cities Urban Analysis III using statistics from Open Government Data Wien, Statistics Austria, and The Vienna City Administration.

¹⁰ibid, information from majority of this paragraph.

and culture. These organizations are not only created as a response to exclusion within the city, but also as a way to “create space in the city,” as Tonica Hunter (one of the founders of Sounds of Blackness) said to me in her interview, for Black people and people of color more generally.

The Sounds of Blackness events usually happen at Heuer am Karlsplatz, which is a bar lounge located next to Karlsplatz in the city center. All respondents mentioned going to Heuer when there is a Sounds of Blackness event. It is not a place they would normally go to because it is not very diverse or inexpensive. There were, however, some areas which all respondents mentioned as being diverse and feeling comfortable in, among them was the 15th district and Museumsquartier. The 20th district was also mentioned as an area of diversity as a result of it being an immigrant district where most respondents feel more comfortable than they do in the first district. The 15th district was also mentioned by more than half of the respondents as a place which has been historically linked to immigrant communities and by extension the Black African communities that live in the area. Additionally, Pavilion was mentioned as a place that respondents go to for certain parties; specifically the Birds & Bees parties that always have at least one Black DJ playing. These events make it possible for a certain collective conscious. As Njideka, a poet and co-founder of Bodies of Knowledge, expresses: “When black people get together and are not being isolated... [it’s about] just knowing that you are not on your own.”



*Map made by Nadia Nadesan



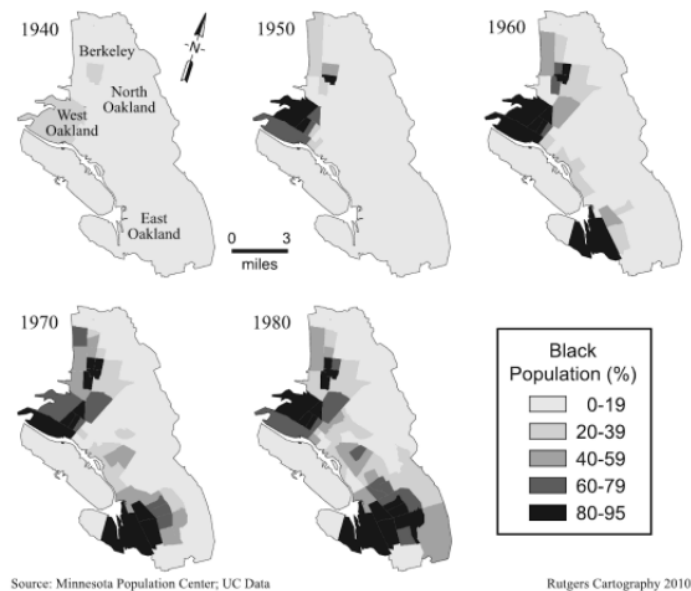
Oakland, California: Historical Hub for Black Arts & Culture

Oakland, as we know it today, does not have a history that goes as far back as Vienna or Brussels. This is because of the relative newness of the United States compared to Europe, as well as the fact that Oakland is on the West Coast of the United States making it newer even than the original thirteen colonies. Oakland was founded as a town in 1852 and over the next 100 plus years would become characterized as a diverse town with spatial segregation and Black political action.

World War II was instrumental in allowing more Black people to migrate to Oakland from the deep South to work at the Port of Oakland, which was thriving during this time. According to Rhomberg (2007):

During and after the war... the Black population grew rapidly. By 1960, more than 22 percent of Oakland residents were African-American. With increasing size came greater spatial concentration... intensified racial segregation in housing. In 1940, 60 percent of the Black population lived in... West Oakland. In 1950, despite more than a fivefold increase in size, 80 percent lived in the same area. (p. 121)

[Image taken from: *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (2010, pg. 2) original source listed within the image]



West Oakland, less than 20 years later, became the hub for the Black Panther Party. Additionally, during the War Years Maya Angelou lived in West Oakland. Ruth Beckford, a dancer and choreographer was born and raised in Oakland, where she was the pioneer of the African Diaspora dance scene in Oakland beginning in the late 1940's (Drummond, 2013). Thus, after World War II—especially beginning in the 1960's—West Oakland, but Oakland more generally, became a breeding ground for Black activism, art and cultural production.

In October of 1966 the Black Panther Party was founded by young college students Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. The Black Panther Party grew out of the Black Power Movement but transformed this through socialist ideology and a goal of addressing the needs of masses of Black people and not just the middle classes (Jones, 1988, p. 417). Two events, one involving a shoot-out with the police in Oakland and another having to do with California legislative law, propelled the Black Panther Party to operate on a

national scale. Regardless, their work still operated on a community-based local level. One such initiative was the Free Breakfast Program, which existed in several cities around the United States. The Free Breakfast for Children Program was started by the Black Panther Party initially taking place in St. Augustine Church in West Oakland, a church still existing and operating today (Macias, 2017). This program was one of the many ways in which the Black Panthers were both a model and catalyst for Black activism in Oakland.

The Black Panther Party is central to the urban political geography of Black activism in Oakland. Similar to the Black activists in Brussels striving for political acknowledgment through *Memoire Coloniale* and other organizations, the Black Panther Party “hoped to become a major player in Oakland municipal politics” (Murch, 2010, p. 203) because they believed certain changes that will benefit the Black community can only happen with the cooperation of the city government. The historicity of the way Black activists involved themselves in urban politics is integral to how Black activists and artists today understand their organizing and work. Identifying oneself as Black is already a political statement, especially for Europeans, and the Black Power movement in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States as well as in the United Kingdom had a profound effect on how Black Europeans and Black Africans in Europe understand their historical activist geographies. As Njideka speaks of the Viennese experience stating: “the force used against us (Black people) is a global one,” she continues, thus: “Wherever there is oppression there is resistance.”

Despite intense gentrification over the past two decades in part due to the northern expansion of Silicon Valley, Oakland is still a hub for Black music, arts, culture, liberal politics, activism, and diversity; although some of these aspects are being challenged by rapid gentrification and technologization. Places like the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, and Betti Ono Gallery still provide spaces of culture and arts initiated for and by the Black community, welcoming others as well. An important element of Oakland as a place for Black arts and culture is that it produces more diverse, inclusive spaces that are not only limited to Black people. Black people are acutely aware of what exclusion feels like and looks like so many times there is an effort to create spaces that reject exclusion. As one of the respondents Guled, founder of Speak With Beats, acknowledged in his interview: “Black folks’ nature is inclusivity.”

Over the years the Black community in Oakland has grown to include Africans and Caribbean people, with resources like the Priority Africa Network, Caribbean restaurants, and cultural/leisure spaces like AU Lounge. Though Africans and Caribbean people do not always initially identify as Black, within the context of racial polarization in the U.S. and the support of the Black communities in Oakland; this identification with Blackness becomes political, cultural, and part of the inclusive nature of Blackness. As Tsedal, an Ethiopian singer who's been living in the Bay Area for almost a decade now, quips: “I remember when I realized I was black... It wasn’t long ago, it was 10 years ago.” Tsedal thinks of this as more of an internal realization of Blackness rather than an acceptance of something being imposed from the outside. Although, identifying as Black is influenced by both internal and external factors. This identification with Blackness in Oakland by Americans, Africans, and Caribbean people alike can be seen in a myriad of places respondents mentioned that they enjoy going to in their leisure time.

All Oakland respondents mentioned AU Lounge and Era Art Bar & Lounge, both Black African-owned, as places that they enjoy going to in the leisure time and feel comfortable in. These places play music from the African Diaspora and generally have crowds that are mostly Black and Brown people, but overall include people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. All respondents mentioned Lake Merritt, a

man-made Lake and park area in the center of Oakland, as an area they enjoy in their leisure time. While some mentioned experiencing instances of racism at Lake Merritt as a result of the overall demographic shift in Oakland, they all still feel it is a place they can go in their leisure time and feel comfortable. New Parish, a music venue and nightclub, was mentioned as a place where respondents go when certain events are happening there. The New Parish is also a place being affected heavily by gentrification, where it is no longer seen as being completely comfortable and hospitable to the Black community at all times.

West Oakland (and specifically the Black Panther Party) was mentioned by all respondents as being a place in Oakland historically linked to the Black community. Based on the aforementioned history of racial spatialized segregation in Oakland after World War II and the activism and culture created as a result, West Oakland is still historically linked to Blackness despite it undergoing intense gentrification. Gentrification was mentioned by all respondents as an urgent issues and one reason why they try to support Black owned business, initiatives, and spaces. As one respondent, Ziada, lucidly commented in regards to having places where Black people can go to have fun: “Supporting anyone who is trying to create the space for those moments... because I do believe that Black joy is revolutionary right now.”

Legend

- Frequented Places
- Contested frequented places
- Historic Places

*Map made
by Nadia
Nadesan



Part II: Relating to the City Through Blackness

There were many overlaps and similarities with the interviews and fieldwork in each of the three cities. For example, in both Brussels and Oakland, gentrification was mentioned as an issue. In all three cities, police harassment and brutality, especially towards Black men, was mentioned as a problem. In both Vienna and Oakland, overt instances of racism were shared. In all three cities, subtle forms of racism were brought up, such as discrimination in the job market and experiencing prejudice. In all three cities respondents spoke about having a commitment to creating inclusive spaces and supporting Black/African enterprises and initiatives. Additionally, the city was seen as being a place where they feel some sense of community and solidarity as a result of diversity, the type of events they organize and attend, and the overall presence of more people who identify as Black (than in other towns where they lived or grew up). The four sections that follow are only a few of the topics that came up in the interviews and fieldwork, though they resonated the most with the theoretical frameworks for this thesis and the most emphasized, impassioned points from the respondents.

Double Consciousness, Double Culture: Behavioural Black Geographies

W.E.B. Du Bois's oft-cited formulation of double-consciousness: "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (1903, p. 3), is present in the daily geographies of Black activists and artists. Their hyper awareness of their Blackness and how it relates to their surroundings is often times about negotiating one's view of yourself versus (White) society's view of you. It is a duality, being both Black and American or Black and Austrian, it is a sense of "twoness" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3) that exists for people with a double culture. How one decides to move through the city and the behaviour associated with this movement is often mediated through this double consciousness. This can dictate not only where a person decides to go and how they decide to get there, but also how they decide to move through the city as it relates to their visual presence and mannerisms. Being Black in the city, as expressed by the respondents, necessitates an awareness of the self that is both influenced by external factors and internal. As Tsedal says, it is "another lens I'm getting to observe my blackness from." In places respondents mentioned as being exclusionary or uncomfortable, this double consciousness results in a change or—at least hyper awareness—of one's behaviour and self.

The visible difference of Blackness along with its multiplicity of diaspora, nationality, and ethnicity is a certain type of marginalization; "a particular way of seeing reality: both from the 'outside in' and from the 'inside out' (Kilomba, 2010, p. 37). For the respondents, the city is not just a physical and social geography, it also necessitates a behavioural geography of which "survival depends on this awareness" (Kilomba, p. 37). The reality of Blackness and what it symbolizes in contrast to Whiteness, how colonial thought patterns shape views of the African diaspora, the respondents—by necessity—become "experts on critical Whiteness and postcolonialism" (Kilomba, p. 37) as they navigate their daily activities throughout the city. For some respondents these behaviours shifts are subtle and for others they are more substantial.

These shifts in behaviour are often times unconscious and are predicted on making daily life and leisure less mired by the burden of exclusion and racism, which happens when one is visibly different. The shift in behaviour, worrying about how one appears in public spaces as they traverse through the city are often connected to this external view of Blackness. Encounters Tonica explains in depth:

I'm definitely more aware of it [my Blackness]... of how I appear to others and people's reaction to me. You're constantly reminded of it

[being Black]...how that affects someone and how people react to that. That goes for anything from my hair being out and natural to my hair being wrapped in an African print...When I first got here I was wearing a lot of prints. I wear a lot of African print anyway and a lot of bright colors and people were really staring and I was like 'wow, um, okay.' I just kind of smiled and then that becomes tiring. Smiling. Then it also becomes tiring explaining where you're from... People come up to me and ask me where I'm from. It's okay from time to time, it does happen. Here there's a different vibe behind it, a fear of the unknown and trying to understand you rather than trying to get to know you. So I noticed that I was starting to change, subconsciously. And I was really worried by how that affected me subconsciously, actually. That I started to wear a lot more black and a lot more types of things where I didn't stand out. I definitely saw this change in the way I dressed more than anything, which shows how much this visibility thing is an issue for them [White Austrians] and being a Black person in Vienna.

Tonica's experience of dressing in a way that celebrates her culture, her Caribbean and African roots, has to then be mediated with people's perception of her as other. While she has always been prideful about where she comes from and how she chooses to dress herself, being confronted on a daily basis with her visible difference makes being in the city more difficult for her, forcing a subconscious shift in the way she chooses to express her culture. Instead of a singular focus on how she wants to exist in the city she now has to moderate "double aims, this seeking to satisfy two unreconciled ideals" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3) of which one is her own cultural expression and the other is how others view her cultural expression and the meanings they attribute to her as an outsider. For her, the city is a place of confrontational encounters where either she is too visible, having to constantly explain herself, or rendered invisible. These encounters in public space take multiple forms and at times not only limit how you dress yourself, but also how you decide to dwell in public space.

Being Black, or apart of any marginalized community, in the city can often mean that you are seen as an outsider and as deviant. Being both Black and in a European or American city creates certain types of racial antagonism, which often play out in public spaces. Racial antagonism, as defined by Westwood and Williams (1997):

emerges through the logic of a 'constitutive outside,' which describes the excluded relational elements (e.g. the non-Whites, multiculturalism) against which the privileged social identity (e.g. Whiteness) is defined. In this sense antagonism is an account of the process that eventuates in the 'dislocation' of social identities, describing how identities are blocked in their attempts to constitute themselves fully. Racial antagonisms... are a contested experience of the cultural limits of the city. (p. 96)

While Black artists and activists attempt to represent themselves and define themselves in the context of their subjectivity, they also have to adjust to the displacement of their identity which happens through encounters in the city and urban spaces. Adjusting to these instances of exclusion and being defined as an *outsider* and *peripheral* creates a geography of self-exclusion as a coping mechanism. Part of creating Black geographies of safe spaces within the city means avoiding spaces where one's identity is fragmented by external perceptions. One respondent, Amoako—a painter and student at the Academy of Fine Arts—mentioned not sitting in public spaces because often people come up to him and ask him for drugs. They assume because he is a Black man that he has drugs to sell. In this sense, public spaces are no longer spaces of leisure for him, they are spaces of racial antagonism.

Public spaces are not the only spaces of antagonistic encounters. The pervasiveness of the exclusion inherent in racial antagonism is its ability to invade all systems of the city. Amoako's mobility patterns were also shaped by these antagonistic racialized encounters, limiting the way he is able to get around the city. He changed his mobility behaviours in order to decrease how much he experienced explicit exclusion and disruptions in his daily activities:

I was using the metro a lot when I came to Vienna, but most times I would get stopped by the police to check if I am legal or illegal...Getting stopped or checked by 5 to 7 police makes me feel like I did something really wrong...and it's not right and I don't feel comfortable so I stopped using the U-Bahn (metro system) because I didn't want to continue to have this feeling. So I had to stop using the U-Bahn and had to find my way around the city by cycling.

Amoako as visibly different, and specifically a Black man in Vienna, means that he will always be seen as an outsider and this affects the way in which he can move through and use the city. While taking the metro is normally a mindless task for most White Austrians (with the exception of on the weekends or late at night when White women may also often be harassed by drunk men), for Amoako he had to always consider the time it would take to be stopped by the police and controlled. By reason of his appearance, his Blackness and maleness, his "presence necessarily constitutes deviance" (Sibley, 1995, introduction xii) to the metro police making it a common occurrence for him to be stopped. As such he adjusted his mobility patterns to what he thought would be a less violent alternative, which is cycling. The aggressions both explicit like that of Amoako's and subtle like that of Tonica's, and many other respondents, necessitate behavioural changes that are "different mechanisms of survival" as Njideka says, and reinforce why "we have created a lot of safe places for ourselves" (Njideka, 2016).

At times these behavioural geographies stemming from the double consciousness inherent in Blackness in a Western city are that of resistance and not only limits. In some ways "the local is seen as a site of defiant resistance" (Westwood and Williams, 1997, p. 72) where behaviour is not only a means of survival, but also one of resistance. Although respondents mentioned instances of limiting themselves or their existence in the city in order to make it less difficult, they also mentioned focusing on creating spaces where, according to Tsedal, "there is a lack of fear and you can speak more freely." They also mentioned behavioural resistance that intentionally does not limit their geography within the city. As Laura said "I refuse not to feel comfortable, I really feel entitled to be here [Brussels]." Appropriating spaces in the city center, which are normally majority White, for events like Sounds of Blackness and anti-colonial tours is one way this resistance unfolds. Additionally, the belief that one's historical geography is an entitlement to space within European and American cities is a form of resistance.

Melat, one of the founders of Belgian Resistance and a writer in Brussels, says she refuses to feel excluded in Brussels:

When I walk these streets, I feel very confident like I own this city. You make this city using money from Congo then this is an African city. This is as much an African city as it is a European city. So I feel very confident walking down the street; like yeah I'm Black and you're looking at me funny but I belong...Everywhere I go I claim that space and I own it... I never feel like I don't belong because I've told myself over and over I'm implicated in every cobblestone here.

Melat's behavioural micro-geography is related to the history of the built environment of Brussels. As a Black African in Brussels she recognizes that the double consciousness can mean that one imposes limits

on themselves based on feelings of otherness and the way they feel people perceive them, however she believes she belongs to the city because historically it is linked to Africa:

When I walk around in Brussels I feel like Congolese people built this, African people built this so that's the feeling I have everywhere... Brussels has a very bombastic like imperial feel to it; very 19th century buildings, broad boulevards... and we all know where it came from, the wealth of the colonies. So it's woven into the very structure of Brussels, every building, every street, every monument is linked to Congo.

In her opinion, the postcoloniality of Brussels is a way to justify her feeling of belonging as a Black African person living there. She refuses to be an outsider and limit her geography because the history of Brussels has a very tangible geography in the continent of Africa. This resistance is a way to reconcile the double consciousness and double culture of Blackness. It is neither a negation of multiplicity or limit to geography, it is rather a global consciousness of the geographies connecting Black people, Africa, Europe, and America that inform this resistance on a microgeographical level. This local behavioural resistance is an attempt "to merge his[her] double self into a better and truer self" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3), which is not limited by a double culture but is rather propelled by it.

Historical Black Geographies and Urban Memory

The perception of the history of Black and/or African presence in the city has an immense impact on sense of belonging for respondents, as we can see in the previous section with the example of Melat. In a city like Oakland where there is a clear historical link to the Black Panther Party, which all respondents mentioned in their interviews, Black people feel a sense of ownership and right to belong in the city. As mentioned by the respondents from Brussels, as a result of Belgium's colonial history, they believe Africans have a right to belong and stay in Brussels. Vienna was the city in which the historical presence of Blacks or Africans was less salient. Njideka mentioned that if people knew the history of Blacks and Africans in Vienna, they may feel more comfortable belonging there. Regardless, historically, Black activist geographies have always been about the right to the city; a claim to space, political representation, social services and acknowledgement.

Historical geographies are defining factors in the current microgeographies. Matongé is known as the African neighborhood because historically it was where the African students could afford to live and where they were concentrated because they were not always welcome in other parts of the city. Similarly, West Oakland was the headquarters for the Black Panther party, in part because of the racial segregation of the city taking place during and after World War II. In Vienna the 15th district has historically been linked to immigrants because it is an area outside of the Gürtel where there was cheaper housing, which immigrants could afford. Many of the historical geographies of Blackness in a way still shape the current geographies of Blackness: behaviourally, socially, culturally, and politically. One's sense of belonging is inevitably tied to this and continually transforms as neighborhoods, districts, and cities change. Matongé is now a place where Africans go in their leisure time, but is not necessarily affordable to live in as it is getting gentrified; similarly West Oakland is among one of the fastest gentrifying areas of Oakland. As Bressey (2013) remarks:

a sense of belonging is not a fixed state 'nor just a material one; it involves also emotional and psychological dimensions' operational in many different places and geographical scales. (p. 542)

The historical geographies for the respondents in these three cities helped to facilitate and justify their sense of belonging. Whether issues of ownership, the need to create more spaces, or colonialism historical geographies of Blackness was an important aspect in the relevance of their work.

Matongé developed as the African neighborhood throughout the 1960s and 1970s. According to Demart (2013) this neighborhood was focused around three focal points: “a reception and accommodation center (the ‘African House’), the Shopping malls (Ixelles galleries between the Ixelles and Wavre roads and between the Chaussée de Wavre and the Namur gate) and a nightclub (‘Le Mambo’).”¹¹ Matongé was a meeting place for the postcolonial migration of Congolese students coming to Brussels, but the neighborhood since the 1970s and especially since the 1990s has been a mainstay for many ethnicities and nationalities from various African countries as well as the Caribbean, South Asia, Latin America and Europe (Demart, 2013). In the late 1970s Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo, began to decrease and eventually stopped—in the 1980s—scholarships for Congolese students to study in Brussels (Demart, 2013). According to Belgian laws these students were unable to legally work in Brussels so some immigrated to France while others turned to informal work. This shift is one factor contributing to the view of Matongé, especially in the 1980s, as a dangerous area full of Black African gangs and crime.¹² Regardless, over the past two decades Matongé has become a more widely desirable area of which Black Belgians and Africans feel a sense of ownership over.

The sense of ownership over the Matongé neighborhood is one of the reasons why Calvin says that gentrification in Matongé is a big issue, despite the fact that since the 1970s it has been a neighborhood of diversity, half of the inhabitants are Belgians (about 55 percent residents in Matongé are Belgian according to Diekmann and Maulet, 2009). A crucial element of belonging is the feeling of ownership and an ‘imagined idea’ of a place, even if it does not reflect the actual reality of the place. Belonging is a type of placement where one feels like they have a stake in a certain place or space. Calvin’s relationship to Matongé is about his “stake in preserving and changing both local and diasporic spaces,” (McKittrick and Woods, 2007, p. 150) of which Matongé represents both. Therefore, he is skeptical of a change that he feels is not initiated by or for the African community, whether the density of their presence in the neighborhood is real or imagined.

Calvin’s strong feelings about having historical spaces and areas for Black Africans in Brussels, like Matongé and the proposed *Place Patrice Lumumba*, is about relating history to current realities. He believes these spaces provide a sense of ownership and pride in belonging to Brussels. As such with the gentrifying nature of Matongé he says in Brussels “the last place left for Africans is getting taken away.” He believes this is because of inherent spatial racism and exclusion stating that this is happening because “Rich White Europeans don’t want to live where there are many Black people.” Gentrification is a consequence of neoliberal capitalist urban development not wholly initiated by a certain population not wanting to live by another. For Calvin, the discrimination and stereotypes associated with Black people in Brussels is what makes these historical geographies of Blackness so necessary. It is not only about belonging, it also about educating White Belgians about the history of Black Africans in Brussels, and colonialism more widely, to change their perceptions and prejudices. Matongé is a historical geography related to current Black identity in Brussels and is an opportunity to educate others about Black African realities in the city.

¹¹ Text has no page numbers. Author’s translation from French, original reads: “autour de trois points de concentration : un centre d'accueil et d'hébergement (la « Maison africaine »), des galeries marchandes (les galeries d'Ixelles situées entre les chaussées d'Ixelles et de Wavre, et entre la chaussée de Wavre et la porte de Namur) et une boîte de nuit (« Le Mambo »).”

¹² There are articles referencing “African gangs” in Matongé in the 1980s and on some tourists boards people still ask if it is a safe neighborhood to visit.

Historical geographies of Blackness in Europe “confront...myths and assumptions and sketch out new narratives and possibilities” (Bressey and Adi, 2010, p. 106) for belonging. Laura says when she was looking for an apartment she knew she could not live too far from Matongé. She laughs: “even though I am second generation, I am still attached to Matongé.” The feeling of belonging in Matongé is transferred intergenerationally and is integrated into the Black African identity in Brussels, it creates a space where the possibility of being Belgian and Black are not at odds—in fact they exist together quite well in Matongé. Even though Matongé is a historical place, associated with Laura’s parents’ generation, it still provides comfortability and ultimately new possibilities for Black Belgian identity.

As the Brussels respondents demonstrate with regards to colonial history and their engagement with it, “diasporic minorities descended from colonized peoples nonetheless [make] significant contributions to ongoing debates” (Buettner, 2016, p. 463), of which Black activists and artists in Brussels are apart. These debates are the reason why *Memoire Coloniale* and other Black African activists are fighting for *Place Patrice Lumumba*. This fight for recognition within a public space in Ixelles not only has to do with the historical geographies of Blackness in Brussels, but also with the legacies of colonialism and Belgian intervention in independent Congo. Like the Black Panthers and West Oakland, Patrice Lumumba and Matongé, are facets of pride and belonging for Blacks and Africans in Brussels justifying their current entitlement to spaces in the city.

The Black Panthers are not only a symbol of Black activism and pride in Oakland, they are also positioned specifically within the West Oakland neighborhood. 2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the Black Panther Party and Oakland had a series of events and exhibitions celebrating this organization and their presence in the city. The history of the Black Panthers is often misunderstood and construed as violent and reactionary despite their immense work in community building and providing community services. Their work was not violent, in fact most of the violence surrounding the Black Panthers was initiated by the state and included other methods of political repression (Jones, 1988). The Black Panthers produced local initiatives necessary to help Black communities in Oakland and other cities around the nation, both as an attempt to address social ills and to achieve a sense of self-determination.

The Black Panthers headquarters was in West Oakland, though their reach was throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and the nation. Despite the fact that “most avenues of political power [in the municipality] remained closed” (Murch, 2010, p. 197) to them, they were focused on getting political representation in local government for the more than 40 percent Black residents in Oakland in the 1960s. Their legacy is still entrenched in the identity of Blacks in Oakland. As Murch articulates:

This historical feature of the East Bay combined with a faltering local economy... of the late 1960s helped to foster the rich culture of Black radicalism that the Black Panther Party dominated. (p. 197)

Some of the Black radicalist ideology extended to the Black activists and artists who still consider the Black Panther Party the ‘four-fathers’ and mothers of Black Oakland and it being seen as an historically Black place. When I asked Tsedal what places in the city she feels are historically linked to Blackness she responded: “Oakland,” and we both laughed. To Tsedal, and another respondent—Ziada, all of Oakland is historically Black because of the history of Blacks presence there and the Black Panther Party.

Tsedal continues by saying that with her constant feelings of isolation as a minority at UC Berkeley (at the time out of 40,000 students only 2 percent were Black) she could never just fully *be* while on campus,

so luckily she “had the luxury to escape to Oakland.” While being in Oakland she would think “this feels right,” as she continues to talk about the community in Oakland of Black artists she encountered:

...and [I] met so many dope artists here who, you know, preach on that stage. I remember moments seeing her [a specific artist] perform on the stage and just ballin’ [crying] and being like ‘yeah, exactly!’... Most recently I feel like even my presence now [in Oakland] is being seen differently because I’ve seen the shift in my own neighborhood.”

While these historical geographies inform current Black identities, the consequences of gentrification and the local shifts that happen as a result create a tension between how perennial these historical geographies are in situating a Black identity with a sense of local belonging. The reality of Black historical geographies is that, like Blackness, they are constantly shifting and being redefined in contemporary discourses around Black activism, artistry, access to political influence, and microgeographical changes brought on by globalization, gentrification, and revitalization. Articulated by Paul Gilroy (1993) Black geography in the modern world “represents a response to successive displacements, migrations, journeys... which have come to constitute these Black cultures’ special conditions of existence” (p. 111).

In the same way Calvin’s feeling of ownership over Matongé as a Black African area is threatened by gentrification, Tsedal feels like Oakland is transforming into a place that is no longer for or belonging to Black people in the same way it once did when she was in college, which was less than a decade ago. Despite the continued legacy of the Black Panthers in Oakland, the current demographic shifts seem to outweigh the relevance of this history of Black identity since it was very connected to having a high concentration of Blacks in the city; something that is changing rapidly in Oakland. An article in SF Gate, released in 2011, said that over the past 10 years according to the U.S. Census there has been a “25% drop in African American population in Oakland.”¹³ History, ownership, and identity cannot be divorced from each other for the Black geographies of artists and activists.

Gentrification is commonly discussed in urban studies. However, it often omits the explicit relationship to race, especially in the European context. Many Black people, such as the respondents in this thesis from Oakland and Brussels, understand gentrification as an indication of racial tensions and ethnic displacement. According to Elizabeth Kirkland (2008), “much of the gentrification debate is actually a coded reference to the contestation of blacks and whites for urban space” (p. 19) or in other words: a contestation over the right to take up space in the city. Gentrification dislodges a sense of belonging for people like Calvin and Tsedal because it removes them and people who look like them, in this case Black people, from a certain area as if to erase their presence there all together. It dislocates spatial ownership, whether real or imagined, to a place outside of and away from Black identity. For Black communities gentrification reinforces “endemic racism, which is manifested particularly through control of geographic access and ownership” (Kirkland, 2008, p. 28).

When certain areas, neighborhoods like Matongé and West Oakland, become gentrified they somehow become less accessible for these Black artists and activists, Black communities and poor people more generally. This sometimes happens through institutional structures like increased policing, as well as other means such as subtle exclusion and interpersonal racism. Without a feeling of ownership, which gentrification can destroy, it is difficult for Black communities to feel like they belong. Although the disconnection based on the consequences of gentrification between historical geographies and

¹³ This was the headline of the article. The article made this claim based on analyzing U.S. Census data from 2001-2011. The decline of African-Americans in Oakland also contributed to the overall decline of population in the whole city. Among things listed as reasons was cost of living and jobs.

contemporary feelings of belonging is seemingly recent for Brussels and Oakland respondents, it is a common feeling for respondents in Vienna.

In all three cities in some way or another the activism was inspired by historical migration. Although in Oakland the Blacks did not initially migrate from the continent of Africa or the Caribbean, they did migrate from the deep South creating a large Black population increase between the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, in both Brussels and Vienna Black Africans began to migrate to these cities in the 1950s and 1960s as former colonies began to gain their independence. World War II and decolonization are major pull factors in the migrations of Blacks globally, but especially to and within Europe and the United States. Both World Wars, but especially World War II, were interrelated with the period of decolonization in Africa, and other former colonies in the Middle East and Asia.

Out of the five Vienna respondents three of them spoke about the history of Blacks and Africans in Vienna. Both Njideka and Jennie, co-founder of Black Her*stories Project, are half Austrian and half Nigerian. Cliff, a photographer and organizer in the Edo Nigerian community, is from Nigeria and has been living in Vienna for 12 years. Between these three one can begin to map a historical Black African presence in Vienna, which is largely dominated by Nigerians who began to come to Vienna in the late 1950's and 1960s. Njideka with Pamoja and Cliff with Naija Akatarians have both done extensive research on the history of Black Africans in Vienna.

There is little institutional archival data or records about the lives, experiences, or immigration of Nigerians to Vienna. Much of the research this project did was based on newspaper clippings, information from and kept by African organizations, information kept by individuals, interviews, and immigration data. Cliff begins:

They [Nigerians] started to come together to exchange information and to celebrate with each other, keep each other company, etcetera... In 1974 they were able to start a student union association. Many Nigerians came for schooling and even those who didn't come for schooling learned about the possibilities to study at any of the high institutions from other students and decided to study. It was for self empowerment and had roots in survival, how to make it in this place. Also what was happening in Nigeria affected people's movement to Vienna, so people started to send their children abroad for education.

In addition to relaying to me some of the history of Nigerians migrating to Vienna, Cliff tells me that among the places he associated historically with Black

Africans in Vienna is the Afro-Asiatic Institute (Afro-Asiatisches Institut Vienna) founded in 1959. According to their website the Afro-Asiatic Institute "was founded as a meeting place for people from all over the world in Vienna. They should meet with each other and with Austrians, exchange and learn from

each other.” Although he mentions Black Africans didn’t go there much, he says it was an important historical space to have. It closed in 2016.

In 2006 Pamoja did a research project about Black people in Vienna in the 18th century. Pamoja is a Pan-African organization started in 1996. It was an organization founded by the younger generation or children of Africans about getting connected and organized. It was in part inspired by the organizing of Blacks in Germany, so it had an additional focus about the experiences of Blacks within the German-speaking world. Pamoja created a research working group on Black Austrian History, known as The Research Group on Black Austrian History and Presence. Njideka remembers certain questions and thoughts that were central to the purpose of this group:

How can we talk about Black Austrian history in the light of Nazi history? With the reality of that history, and of aryanization. And the colonial and neocolonial realities we have in Austria are connected to Nazi realities. The question is also the perspective... And what was really important about that project at that time is that Black people are researching their own history. So it’s not just a documentation of history it is also who is talking about this, who is making these realities visible. It was an important process on different levels because it made us more aware of ourselves as well.

This project was in the context of a larger project called “Hidden Histories: Remapping Mozart,” which corresponded with Austria’s celebration of Mozart’s 250th birthday.

Njideka believes that a greater understanding of the presence of Blacks in Vienna before the 20th century will help Blacks in Austria today foster a sense of belonging. She believes the exclusion of Blacks, and non-White people, from Austrian history is an issue of representation and national identity. This project aimed to reposition Viennese history from the perspective of Blackness in the time of Mozart. It aimed to expand what it means to be Black Austrian and Black in Austria, especially with the overshadowing history of Nazism and fascism, which often leaves out how this period persecuted Blacks. Notwithstanding Germany’s violence towards Black Africans in its colonies, which they lost during World War I.

An internet forum circulating in May of 2017 was about a film: Black Survivors of the Holocaust (1997), outside the United States the film is entitled: Hitler’s Forgotten Victims, which chronicles the Blacks oppression and extermination in Nazi Germany adding another dimension to the “Never Forget” Holocaust story. The year before, in 2016, an article in the independent entitled “What happened to black Germans under the Nazis” by Eve Rosenhaft was a catalyst to this conversation. The article begins:

The fact that we officially commemorate the Holocaust on January 27, the date of the liberation of Auschwitz, means that remembrance of Nazi crimes focuses on the systematic mass murder of Europe’s Jews... The other victims of Nazi racism, including Europe’s Sinti and Roma are now routinely named in commemoration, but not all survivors have had equal opportunities to have their story heard. One group of victims who have yet to be publicly memorialised is black Germans.

Although during World War II there were not many Black Austrians, there were definitely some and those stories have to be exposed. Regardless, Black activists in Vienna are acutely aware of the intersections between Nazi Austria and Germany and experiences of Black Europeans and Black Africans in the German speaking world. In some instances, this Nazi history intersects quite literally with Black geographies as is the case with Planet (10) Zehn in Vienna’s tenth district.

Austrians in Vienna use the word “*arisiert*” to refer to buildings that were “aryanized” during World War II. *Arisierung*, from which *arisiert* derives, refers to the process of aryanization in Austria in 1938 when Jewish property, enterprises, and businesses were taken over by the Nazi officials (Wien Geschichte, 2017). After the Nazis were kicked out and World War II ended, later on some of the children of Nazis used their inheritance to make these *arisiert* spaces (buildings, houses, etc.) open for people who are discriminated against (Jennie, 2016). The house Planet 10 is in is one such place, having previously been an *arisiert*, it is now a space for Black people, queer people, marginalized communities and anyone else who is interested in equality.

According to their website, Planet 10 is a “queer, feminist, participatory” space about “redistribution of privileges, money, work, papers, places to live, space, etc.” (Planet 10, 2017). Planet 10 was founded and named by a Black queer woman of Nigerian origin, Linda Nkechi Louis, in 2009. Unfortunately Linda died of cancer in 2014, but not before completely transforming this space, which historically was a place of fascism and discrimination into the opposite—a place for liberation and acceptance. Although founded recently, Jennie considers this place historically linked to Black (and queer) activist geographies in Vienna because it was first a place of inherent exclusion and has now been transformed into a place of inclusion for Black queer people and many others in Vienna.

[source: Planet 10 Facebook page]



Jennie clearly articulates the importance and relevance of this place in her interview with me. After detailing the history of the building complex which it is in, she continues:

This building complex... has historical relevance, like how the space has been transformed. It's a space for Black people and migrant people, right. And this space was basically led by a Black queer woman called Linda who has passed, she died of cancer... We asked for her approval to use this space, as a Black women space.

Linda was a very very powerful woman. She took many people under her wing, made a space for Black queer people, but not specifically or exclusively... but also did. So that is for me, one of the most important historical references concerning these spaces.

As the conversation goes on, Jennie begins to discuss the work, outlined above, done by Pamoja around Blacks in Austria in the 18th century. She brings up Angelo Soliman as one of these historical figures. Angelo Soliman was a former slave and servant who ascended to the most distinguished ranks of high Viennese culture.

Born in West Africa and enslaved as a child, Soliman first arrived to Marseille before making his way through Europe to Vienna. Initially coming as a slave, he then became a servant, afterwards a valet to an Austrian prince, before finally ascending the ranks of Viennese high culture (Nettl, 1946). Despite his prominence, because he was Black African, many people do not know about Soliman. According to Nettl, Angelo Soliman was:

A negro who was tutor to Vienna's richest and most eminent aristocrat; who enjoyed the confidence of Emperor Joseph II; who frequented Vienna's most exclusive Masonic Lodge arm in arm with mankind's greatest musical genius, Mozart... (Nettl, p. 41).

This description of Soliman continues for a few more sentences, but it is now clear how important a figure he is for the Black Austrian historical geographies within Vienna. His daughter, Josephine Soliman, is of equal importance to the Black Austrian historical landscape. As such The Research Group on Black Austrian History and Presence wanted to get the street (Leuengasse) in the third district where Angelo Soliman lived renamed after his daughter. The significance of political representation through historical acknowledgment for Blacks in public space is one way in which traversing through the city is less burdensome. The importance of Black identity being reflected in the buildings, streets, symbolism: urban memory and spaces within the city is vital to Black activists and artists, but often incredibly difficult to attain. Like the continued fight in Brussels for *Place Patrice Lumumba*, the fight for Josephine Soliman Strasse was met with much resistance.

Jennie says that Josephine Soliman is one of, if not, “the first resistance of a Black woman that we have written down in Austria.” The campaign for Josephine Soliman Strasse didn't work, but the city ended up naming a place near the Donau river Ufer Angelo Soliman. Ufer means shore, however it's unclear whether this place is steps or the entrance to a part of the Donau. Regardless, it is an ambiguous place that is not known in the city and does not hold any actual significance. Furthermore, the naming of this obscure *ufer* reinforces the peripheralization of these historical Black geographies “because it's apart of the city that doesn't actually have to be named” (Jennie, 2016). In Vienna Black spatialized geographies have to be created because the ones that do exist historically are either unknown or ignored in contemporary mainstream life in the city. This is why the Black artists and activists feel it is their obligation to create and support (safe) cultural spaces for and by Black people in the city. Black geographies, historical or otherwise, are not stagnant—they are series of active spatial production in which “the invisible/forgettable is producing space - always, and in all sorts of ways” (McKittrick and Woods, p. 4).

Black Owned, Black Adjacent, Black Spaces & Inclusivity

In all three cities the respondents mentioned a conscious effort to support businesses, events, and initiatives by Black/African people. These were places in which they usually feel comfortable and also the creation of certain spaces as a way to combat some of the exclusion experienced in these cities. Many of the places that were categorized as being relatively safe, spaces of belonging, or spaces where they frequent were those that were owned by Blacks/Africans or at least had a higher concentration of Black/Africans and people of color—in general. Including Matongé in Brussels, the 15th district in Vienna, or

AU in Oakland—an African club/lounge owned by an Ethiopian. Even in places where they do not necessarily feel comfortable all of the time, they would go there when an event organized by Black or African people was happening or if their friends were going there. In Brussels this was Bozar, in Vienna it was Heuer, and in Oakland it was Lake Merritt. While Matongé and the 15th district are neighborhoods (or areas), AU is a specific place. However, Bozar and Heuer are specific places and Lake Merritt is an area. In Oakland, in this case, the relation to a created space versus a specified place is inverted to Brussels and Vienna.

The spaces and places which are Black owned, Black initiated, or Black adjacent are usually frequented by people within the Black/African diaspora in general. They are manifestations of not only this Black diasporic reality, but also the tensions between identity, belonging, and Black subjectivity. Whether it is a restaurant owned by a Rwandan in Vienna, an event organized by *Memoire Coloniale* about the decolonization process in central Africa, or an afternoon of reggae music at Lake Merritt in Oakland, these events and particular places are creating space in which Black identity is performed and reproduced. In these places and spaces one can see:

the broader process of diaspora formation...[which] resonates with the tropes of longing and belonging, between nation and the making of a Black diasporic subjectivity... The fact that people of the African diaspora live in two worlds is nothing new. (Rosenhaft and Aitken, 2013, p. 203)

These constructed spaces, especially, bring those two worlds into one reality and locality with the premise of a global Black identity. As a result of this of ownership of a place or reclamation of space, whether temporary or permanent, the feeling of belonging and comfort is ultimately the process of inclusion, of which the outer city is in many ways the opposite. Thus, even in temporary spaces of Black subjectivity and belonging, produced by specific events or initiatives, this sense of ownership is realized as comfort and temporal belonging.

While places such as Black/African owned restaurants or cultural centers appeal to a larger audience, the constructed spaces—which may even happen in a particular place—are usually produced specifically for the comfort of a Black diasporic identity and other marginalized communities. Essentially they are created to be inclusive because of the acute feelings of exclusion that Black people experience on a daily basis in their cities of residence. Guled believes it does not necessarily matter what race or ethnicity you identify with, it is about creating spaces where you “have a community of people that still understand their struggle,” even if their struggle is different from his. What is apparent is that even while these Black artists and activists feel comfortable in particular Black/African owned places more generally, it is the intentionally produced spaces that operate based on the purposeful inclusion and an understanding of, or at least willingness to understand, the experiences of Black people and other marginalized communities.

An understanding of the continued struggle of Black people and other marginalized communities is a common theme in postcolonial discourses, and this is especially the case with Brussels. As such, Bozar—the cultural center for Fine Arts in Brussels, was brought up as a contested place. Respondents mentioned going there when there are certain events catering to or organized by Blacks and Africans, such as the *Afropolitan Festival*, but still feeling like it was problematic. Laura, who studied architecture in Brussels, mentioned Bozar’s construction being directly linked with the colonial atrocities in the Congo saying, among other things, “it was one of the buildings built from colonial money, so we (Black African people) should have a place there.”

This discussion about Bozar for the Brussels respondents is inextricably linked to postcolonial issues. As one Brussels respondent said: “the whole African interest of Bozar is very very problematic.” One reason is because certain exhibitions or events representing Africans and Black people are usually organized by White Belgians and rarely include Blacks or Africans in the leadership or organizing of the event. Additionally, especially when these events and exhibitions are not organized by Blacks or Africans, they cater largely to a White audience and the *White gaze*. This feeling of inadequate representation is why Bozar is a contested place in which the respondents only go for certain events. Representation is also why Anne’s work with museums and cultural centers in Brussels is about “promot[ing] and giv[ing] visibility to the African people in Brussels” with Black and African people at the forefront of this.

Similarly to Bozar, Heuer in Vienna is a place that is not always comfortable for Blacks. Heuer Am Karlsplatz is a restaurant-bar-lounge in Vienna. All respondents in Vienna mentioned going to Heuer when there is a Sounds of Blackness event. These events usually take place at Heuer once or twice a week depending on the season. Tonica, one of the co-founders of SOB, mentioned hearing about young Blacks in Vienna not being able to get into certain clubs and had immense experiences of the pervasiveness of cultural appropriation of Black and African diaspora music in Vienna without any representation of the people who created it. Further, she feels it is important to have “something that was owned by Black and Brown people in Vienna and promoted Black music and celebrating that in a way that is inclusive.” Thus in 2015 the SOB Collective was created along with their manifesto written by Tonica a few months after their inception:

[SOB] **is a collective of artists (of various forms), activists, entrepreneurs and DJs based in Vienna celebrating the cultural and ethnic diversity in urban space in European cities.** We express the celebration of diversity through visuals, sound & dance amongst other art forms and events.

[SOB] is not tied to any particular political party but **are political in the sense of being engaged and community-focused to achieve visibility and recognition in the spaces we inhabit** by credible and non-combative, nondiscriminatory means.

‘[SOB]’ as a term connotes any art form stemming from, created by, influenced by endorsed by originally black art forms. **We believe in inclusive methods of creating awareness about the existence and struggles of people of colour in the modern European city.**

Through our actions and events we aim to bring together (black/brown/minority) Diasporas and mobilise, connect, and empower ourselves for active engagement in our society as well as **promoting our positive visibility and representation in all aspects of day to day life.**

Our aim is equally **to educate others about the diversity, strength and beauty of the black community** to others and to share this knowledge **for the bettering of society as a whole.**¹⁴

¹⁴ (Bolded) Emphasis was done by author to highlight particular points of interest, the manifesto created by SOB does not emphasis statements through differential formatting.

Sounds of Blackness events are about visibility and ownership in public space, therefore creating a comfortable and joyful space for Black people. Even though Heuer is not a Black owned place or particularly diverse place, when the SOB events happen there it becomes a Black adjacent and inclusive space. SOB events create a space where the behaviour of Blacks is not dictated by the judgements of their White counterparts. As Amoako says, he goes to Heuer for SOB events:

because I meet friends there and people I can relate to. It's not super White because then you see Black and Brown people who you can actually have a conversation with and will not look at you in a [funny] way... I get to listen to music that I actually want to listen to and I can dance to.

During these SOB events a temporal space of belonging is created in a place that is not otherwise associated with or inclusive of Blackness in Vienna. Like Bozar, it is the spaces created by Black people within these particular places that create a sense of ownership and comfortability even when the particular place is problematic or not exceptionally inclusive of minority communities.

Gentrification in the San Francisco Bay Area means there is, according to Halston, a “disappearing of people of color owned businesses in the Bay Area” and what follows is a feeling that “Oakland’s not being shaped for us anymore.” Consequently the creation of Black spaces in places that may not be Black owned or necessarily inclusive is becoming a necessary where it may have always been a necessity in places like Vienna, especially, and Brussels where there is a lot less Black owned businesses. Halston is the founder and owner of a business that facilitates trade throughout the African Diaspora, specifically with the import and export of beer from Ethiopia and Nigeria. His company Ourobos Noir International (ONI) is in part about the ability to “navigate different diasporic spaces” founded upon this notion of a global Black consciousness and how this is perpetuated on a local level, in multiple localities at the same time and creating links between them. ONI does not exist in a particular place, however it helps to create and support Black spaces and Black adjacent spaces in Oakland, especially as Black owned businesses are decreasing.

The Black owned, Black adjacent, and Black spaces mentioned by respondents aim to do two things. The first is to combat exclusion by allowing and encouraging a multitude of Black identities to coexist in a space, in a joyful, comfortable, and—at times—safe way. Secondly, by making conscious efforts to create inclusive spaces where celebrating Blackness and Black culture is representative of the actual diverse reality of Blacks in any of these three cities and allows others to be included in this subjective, representative Black space. The artists and activists interviewed for this thesis understand Black owned places, Black adjacent and Black spaces as inclusive, created for and by Black people—like themselves—doing this work. In many cases, the spaces and places that make up the microgeographies of these artists and activists, as well as a great deal of other Black people in these cities, are created by the work that they do and owned by other Black people in these types of diasporic, postcolonial communities.

Bhabha describes subalternity as the “agencies of the marginal” (p. 31) of which the production of socio-cultural spaces and ownership of places are political and social manifestation of this. The aforementioned Black spatialized realities are a result of:

A long process of political struggle by black people [that] has also resulted in the provision of numerous spaces in which some autonomy is claimed and preserved, filling out meanings used to the sustain the cultural life of those who refuse to succumb to the homogenising, and often impoverishing, forces of global culture. (Westwood and Williams, 1997, p. 121)

Ultimately, the intention of the places and spaces that respondents create and go to during their leisure time is to visibilize and imagine an urban reality that is inclusive of their experiences, allows for autonomy of self-representation, and is a safe space for them to express joy in celebrating Black diasporic culture. Not all Black or African owned places support or cater to the Black global consciousness described in this thesis, however in some cases simply being in a place where one is not the minority is enough for a temporal sense of belonging. It is in the constructed Black spaces where this Black global consciousness and association with the African/Black diaspora are uplifted. Places like AU in Oakland and businesses like ONI, events by SOB and Bodies of Knowledge in Vienna, as well as events by Memoire Coloniale and Belgian Renaissance in Brussels make up the geographies of Blackness in these cities uplifting the “the culture and the heart of the people. The consciousness. The duality,” as Jesus—an Oakland native—said.

The City as a Haven

For respondents who were born and raised in small towns and suburbs surrounding the case study city, they all stated that these cities were so much better in terms of diversity and openness than the places where they grew up. Even while they had many critiques about their city of residence, they did not forget how much more comfortable they feel in these cities than in the towns where they grew up. This was the case for at least one respondent in each of the three case study cities. Additionally, all respondents acknowledged the city as a place where they are able to reclaim and transform spaces in a way that would not be possible in a rural or suburban setting. The fact of collaboration and solidarity is ever present in activism and art in urban contexts—especially in the three case study cities for this thesis.

Out of all three cities, Oakland is the city most associated with Black people historically and, to a lesser extent, presently. Specifically it is a place of Black arts and activism, where a general sense of community is a key component. Even as a neighbor to San Francisco, which is known as a diverse and accepting city, Oakland is seen by many Blacks as being more comfortable for Black people according to the respondents. As Ziada remarked, “it always felt like Oakland was *the* place... well, until now.” Although three respondents grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area or greater Bay Area, there was still this sense that Oakland was an escape from the other more exclusionary and homogenous parts of the Bay Area. While Halston did not willingly move to Oakland, he was financially pushed out of San Francisco after several years due to the expanding technology sector, he immediately felt and saw a difference in the way people in Oakland interacted with him. They were “making eye contact with me... nodding at me,” he continues with a chuckle, “it felt like I found the *Promised Land*.” Oakland is not the Promised Land, but this feeling of the city as some sort of haven, at least at first, was present in all three cities.

These cities present more opportunities to be seen in a positive way and have access to resources, which are used to challenge and combat racism experienced on a daily basis as well as create spaces of resistance. When talking about her first years living in Oakland Ziada articulates these feelings:

I felt for a very long time I could walk around and be seen...

I love that there is a vibrant art scene here. And the support for artists of color, musicians, visual artists. And there are friends who are just doing really amazing things. So just being able to go and see their work is really awesome.

Despite tensions that may exist in Oakland, Ziada still feels like it provides support and spaces to people of color who are doing positive things. To her, and other respondents in Oakland, this is what makes the city special and distinct from San Francisco—for example. The support of artists, specifically non-White

artists, was important to seeing the city as an oasis. Similarly Jennie talks about how Vienna allows for collective situations that are good for sharing resources, which support artists of color. She says organizations like Kueltuer Gemma and city grants are important aspects of Vienna. In her own words referring to Kueltuer Gemma and city grants: “those are things that I like and think are important, for me and others” (Jennie, 2016).

Having the spaces to create culture and art as well as developing activism is crucial to city life, especially when experiences of racism and exclusion are common. Being able to create cultural spaces, art, events, and otherwise is an aspect of these cities that respondents are particularly drawn to. Guled reflected:

“I’m a creator.” People are trying to create. Having the ability to create is one of the most powerful traits. Here we are not being confined to society... we’re all trying to make it. We’re all trying to celebrate our individuality and have our creations be an extension of that. And that’s why I feel like being in Oakland I was on the same wavelength as everybody.

Coming to Oakland for Guled, even though he grew up about 30 minutes away, marked a transition to a city of like-minded people where creation, art, and activism were commonplace. Similarly, Melat—originally from Flanders—talked about the Black activism in Brussels being much more present than in the place she grew up. After mentioning Memoire Coloniale and Warrior Poets, she says of Black activism in Brussels, “for me it was a revelation.” The city for Melat and Guled was a revelation in comparison to where they spent their time before they were adults.

The respondents are not romanticising any of these cities, rather they understand how one’s perspective is relative and affects one’s perception of a city. This subjective experience of the city means that it can be a haven in comparison to one place and backwards in comparison to somewhere else. The city is neither “a work of art or a diseased organism. It is a process, an unique, ongoing time/space event” (Westwood and Williams, 1997, p. 126) in which at some moments it like a haven and over time it can feel like something very opposite to that. Many of the respondents who mentioned their city feeling like an escape, Promised Land, or revelation talked about this sentiment in past tense and—having gotten used to it—realizing that it is not actively a haven in the same way they remember. Just as an event that creates a Black space providing a temporary reality of belonging and comfort, the city as a haven seems to be a fleeting feeling that comes and goes depending on the changes and time spent in the city.

The duality, aforementioned by Jesus, is very present in the Black artists’ and activists’ relationship to their cities. This binary of the city as both a place of exclusion, but also as a place that allows for the creation of inclusion. The city as being local, but relating to it from a global Black perspective. The city as being both a place of isolation in these moments of racism and subtle exclusion, while also providing spaces for immense moments of community and togetherness. Thus, the city as a haven is not at all implying perfection or complete comfort; rather it means that the cities, in this case, are providing a place in which spaces of safety, refuge, and community can be created, even if temporarily.

VII Conclusion: From Culture to Art to Inclusion

**“There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city;
people make it, and it is to them, not buildings,
that we must fit our plans.”**

-Jane Jacobs, *Downtown is for People*¹⁵

One of the first things Guled said in his interview with me is, “Black Lives Matter equates across the board anywhere in the African Diaspora.” This sentiment of solidarity and knowledge that anti-Black racism is everywhere (in the Western World, especially) is an example of how a global Black consciousness frames itself. It is both a celebration of blackness anywhere and an acknowledgement of the racism Blacks face everywhere. It is from this mindset that people like Guled and the other artists and activists I interviewed begin to make the city for themselves. They move through it in a way and create spaces that understand this Black consciousness as a foundation for their city life. Black urbanism is in part about the conditions of possibility. The artists and activists in this thesis are creating and believing in a narrative that another more inclusive city is possible. Since they know most urban planning and city discourses do not have issues of Blackness and subtle exclusion of people who are visibly different in mind, they themselves create possibilities in urban space where inclusive Blackness can exist.

In Europe, especially with shifting demographics, it’s important not only to study Blacks as immigrants, but also as citizens and as residents. This change in perspective alone will aid in more nuanced discussions of race and how it affects city life. It is not only about how the culture of the city shapes the “others,” but also how the others shape and contribute to the culture of the city. Much the same as the Jane Jacobs quote articulates, it is to the architecture of the people that our plans must suit. Moreover, how well a city addresses the needs of their most vulnerable and excluded populations is a testament to how liveable it is—for all.

While the artists and activists interviewed for this thesis felt connected to a Black/African diaspora and notions of political Blackness, “diasporic unity is not automatically a given, and... blackness cannot be reduced to a single, universal condition” (Hawthorne, 2017, p. 164). There is not one universal Black experience in any city, but between the United States and Europe similarities and patterns of exclusion can be seen. Additionally, methods of resistance and struggles for space reclamation are happening on both continents simultaneously and, in many cases, under the framework of global cultural Blackness.

Through this research it is clear that the identification with Blackness and being externally identified as non-White, thus visibly different, affects the way the artists and activists are able to move through their city in their leisure time, where they decide to go, as well as what spaces they feel comfortable in. Many of them mentioned going to places or spaces that are a direct result of the work they do in their community and/or adjacent to the work they do regarding Blackness, postcoloniality, and diasporic identity. Ultimately, even if their Blackness does not diametrically limit where they go it is taken into account as they traverse through their urban settings.

As aforementioned the creation of spaces that are reflective of this Black subaltern identity is integral to the time, both leisurely and working, spent outside of the home. Even if a place is not reflective of a

¹⁵ Jane Jacobs authored this article in 1958 for Fortune Magazine. It was republished on their website in 2011 as apart of Fortune Classics and their magazine archives series.

Black identity, the respondents in this thesis go there when a certain event is happening that may be more inclusive of or pertaining to a Black identity. Thus, their presence in the space and ultimate appropriation of it makes it more inclusive of their multiple identities, even if temporarily. The spaces created by Black artists and activists or temporarily transformed into Black spaces create a sense of belonging and wider inclusivity, even if not permanently. Having these spaces to enjoy and not be seen as “other” is important to the urban life of Black artists and activists in terms of being able to *be* freely in an urban space when instances of exclusion are so ordinary.

The places and spaces the respondents go to, support, and create for leisure are testaments to positive ways to resist exclusion and racism. These spaces attempt to create a safe haven, albeit briefly and sometimes unsuccessfully, from everyday racism and the exclusion that happens in other urban settings. These spaces allow for a unapologetic expression of Black joy, culture, and diversity. Something which is rarely understood or acceptable in certain public spaces within the city. Discussions about racism and diasporic identity can happen without having to explain why they are necessary, thus providing emotional and physical safety. The Black spaces, Black adjacent spaces, and struggle for Black acknowledgment in urban memory are forms of resistance and provide alternative ways for Blacks to exist in a city.

Subaltern and postcolonial identity are not only markers of Black people’s relationship to European and American cities, they are also lenses through which Blacks relate to the city. Whether it’s producing a party that plays music from the African diaspora (places formerly colonized by European countries) or fighting for a plaza that commemorates postcolonial struggles, Blackness in cities is inevitably entangled with postcolonial identity. This holds true in a different way even in the United States where citizenship is connected to freedom and independence from the British, while Blacks were still enslaved. Postcolonial theory and subaltern critique posit themselves on subjectivity and the discussions in this thesis centralize the subjectivity of Black artists and activists in these three cities. It is from this position of Black subjectivity that other possibilities for the city are being born.

Recommendations

Many of the respondents mentioned that discussions about race and racism need to be more comprehensive, holistic, and centralize the voices of those affected by it. Acknowledgment about racism was a key point for many of the respondents in Vienna and Brussels. While the European Union acknowledges discrimination according to ethnicity, sex, religion, among other things race is not listed. Thus, many respondents believe until Europe decides to acknowledge race and the continuing legacies of colonialism there can be no real change. This point of acknowledgement was echoed by respondents in Oakland with regards to the pervasiveness of racism in American society and how it is perpetuated throughout the entire system. In all three cities, respondents mentioned issues of policing and brutality, employment, nightlife discrimination, economic foreign policy, and academic isolation disproportionately affecting Blacks among the topics needing to be addressed and acknowledged in a comprehensive way. It was clear that discussions of race can not be in isolation or only pertaining to one issue. Most societies are not plagued by a single issues, so it follows that race is entangled into a multitude of issues in both the United States and Europe.

In addition to promoting more nuanced dialogue about racism and colonialism, respondents mentioned the necessity for accurate and self-directed representation in the city. This not only includes monuments and street names recognizing the presence of people of African descent in the city, but also the ability to celebrate and uplift Black cultures with Black people at the forefront or at least intimately involved as

more than just tokens. This is in the form of city events, cultural institutions, and public space as well as by supporting and attempting to understand the need for Black, Black adjacent and safe spaces in the city where Blackness is not seen as “other” or abnormal. While the work of the artists and activists featured in this thesis helps to create more diverse forms of city life and inclusive spaces of belonging for Blacks and other marginalized populations, city governments and other organizations that work in urban contexts can step up to support alternative notions of European and American city identity.

Epilogue: A City of Necessity

Since there is no “Negro Motorist Green-Book” that tells Black people where they can and cannot go without “embarrassments,” we have to create safe spaces where we can move through the city and find little *havens*—so to speak—where we can be without being considered “other.” The “Negro Motorist Green-Book” was published from 1936-1964 by Victor H. Green as a way for Black people traveling by car throughout the United States to avoid places of explicit discrimination and danger, explains DeNeed L. Brown in the article “Life or death for black travelers: How fear led to ‘The Negro Motorist Green-Book’ ” (2017). During that time in the U.S. travelling was really a matter of life and death because of lynching and *sundown towns*. It is still not always safe for Black people in European and American cities. As one respondent Tonica said: “There’s never been anywhere to, 100%, be safely black in Europe.” Thus creating urban spaces where Black people can be safe physically, emotionally, and psychologically is truly a necessity.

The making and remaking of the city is a collective effort, which is never done only by planning departments or architecture firms even though those are the people we officially delineate as “city planners.” Part of remaking the city in a way that reflects the diversity and multiple identities of Blacks is the need for us to represent ourselves. While subjectivity is normally seen as less valid in scientific-based academia, it is subjectivity that most clearly articulates the experience of urban existence. This is why creating urban spaces through legitimizing subjective marginalized experiences creates more inclusive and decolonial city life for everyone in the city: not just people who identify as or with Blackness. Subjectivity is not a weakness, rather it is a strength and necessity.

Part of the conflict of being Black in Europe or America is that Europe does not necessarily know what it is, thus Black Europeans are trying to figure out where they belong. America has long since been struggling with its identity, thus Black Americans and Blacks in America are trying to claim their belonging. In both cases, these national (or continental, in the case of Europe) constructed discourses of identity are played out locally through the geographies of Blackness both historical and contemporary. As scholar Kwame Nimako said at Collegium for African American Research’s “Diasporic Encounters, Subjectivities in Transit” conference in June of 2017: “Black Europe is a contested project, because Europe is a contested project.” These conflicts, contestations, and reimaginings take place through the production of space happening by Black artists and activists in cities in Europe and America. Of course European and American identities can be expanded because they are not solidified, stagnant, or biological. They are constructed, thus the reconstruction of a more varied, expansive European and American identity is not only a possibility—it is a necessity.

I will continue my research on Black geographies in European and American cities as a doctoral student, most likely at the University of Vienna, where I will go more in depth about the topics brought up in this thesis, the actual work of Black artists and activists in urban space, and alternative views of city culture from the perspective of the Black/African Diaspora. I believe the city is a space of necessity because people mold it to their social, cultural, political, and economic needs with the hopes of expanding its identity and exposing its limits.

Acknowledgements

“It takes a village.”

In addition to the 4Cities program and my thesis advisor, Nick Schuermans, I’d like to acknowledge several people who were instrumental in making this thesis happen.

Firstly, all of my interviewees and people who were points of connection within these networks: Tonica, Njideka, Jennie, Amoako, Cliff, Happy, Durotimi, Calvin, Melat, Laura, Anne, Tsedal, Halston, Guled, Ziada, Jesus, and Effie. Additionally, friends in the case study cities and beyond with whom I talked with extensively and supported me throughout the thesis-writing process: Lorna, Shae, Hannah, Stephani, Jayme, Brukab and my best friend Heran.

Secondly, Astride Charles was integral in the first phase of development for my thesis. Her academic and intellectual guidance, advice, and support was fundamental to being able to produce this work. Additionally, conversations with friends and colleagues in Copenhagen were also significant in the intellectual and cultural positioning of this work, including: Lesley-Ann, Adelina, Aka, Amelie, and Oda.

Thirdly, support and inspiration came from communities and organizations in each case study city with whom I am affiliated, including: Sounds of Blackness, Bodies of Knowledge, We Dey, Radio Orange, Belgian Resistance, Memoire Coloniale, Warrior Poets, Le Space, Umoja Festival, Mondial Afrique, Ourobos Noir International, Speak with Beats, and Oakland Museum of California.

Finally—and very importantly—I’d like to appreciate the enormous emotional support of my parents Opal Palmer Adisa and Tarikhu Farrar, my sister Shola Adisa-Farrar, and the rest of my family and extended family who continually support all my academic and personal endeavors.

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Appendices

I. General research questionnaire

Self Reported

City:

Duration of time as resident:

Name:

Gender:

Activist/Community work:

Art/Expression work:

Current project or initiative focus:

Nationality:

Ethnicity:

Race (identified with):

Age:

Occupation (if not above):

Outline of Questions/Conversation

- What kind of art and/or activist work you do?
 - how does it relate to your identity?
- Is this work you do on a daily basis and how is it structured?
- What is your understanding of the historical context for this work?
- Do you feel there are any places in this city historically linked to Black people (the type of work you do) and the community you work with? If so where?
- How does being black in this city impact your daily life, if at all?
- How do you feel your blackness impacts your experience in this city?
- What kind of things do you do when you are not working?
- In the past three months where have you spent the most time (outside of your home) when you are not working?
 - Why do you go to these places? How long have you been going to these places?
- In what type of districts and/or neighborhoods are these places you frequent?
- Are there places you no longer go or have only gone once because you experienced racially motivated exclusion or discrimination?
- Are there places that you do not go at all? If so, why?
- Are there certain places you go where you feel hyper aware of your blackness?
- Do you feel that your race affects where you go in your leisure time and how you spend time in the city?

- If you have lived in other cities, how is it different being black there than in this particular city?
 - Is it easier to be black in some cities you've lived and visited rather than others, if so why?
- What do you like most about living in this city?
- What don't you like about living in this city?
- What is the one place in the city (outside of your home) you'd say you have spent the most time and why?
- What do you think about how black people move through the city currently?

II. Spreadsheet of all places respondents listed

								Black/African owned
	Frequented Places	type	No-go places	type		Historic places	type	
Brussels	Matonge	neighborhood	Uccle	neighborhood		Matonge	neighborhood	
	Flagey	neighborhood	Woluwe-Saint-Pierre	neighborhood		Rue Heyvaert/market near Gare du Midi	street/market area	
	Le Space	cafe/cultural center	South communes (generally)	southeastern districts		Royal Museum for Central Africa	Colonial African Museum	
	Bozar	cultural center	City centre: De Brouckere, Bourse	neighborhood				
	Muntpunt	Library/Cultural place	Sint-Gilles	neighborhood				
	Le Pelisson	Restaurant	Bonnefoi	club in city center				
	Ixelles Cemetery	neighborhood						
	Beursschouwburg	performance venue						
	Toukoul	Restaurant						
	Anderlecht (Anderlecht Market)	neighborhood						
	Botanique	for concerts						
	Josaphat park	park						
	Cinema Galerie	cinema						
	Annesans	neighborhood						
	Dansaert	neighborhood area						
	Maison de Culture	cultural center						
	Bazaar	club						
	O'Regua	Portugese Bar						
	Frequented Places	type	No-go places	type		Historic places	type	
Vienna	Heuer am Karlsplatz	bar/lounge	1st district	historic/central district		15th District	area (like neighborhood)	
	15th District	area neighborhood	certain night clubs	night clubs, especially in Swedenplatz		Planet 10	WOC queer space	
	20th District	area neighborhood	Tunnel	fast food chain		Afro-Asiatisches Institut Vienna	Research institute	
	Galaxy	bar/restaurant	Cafe Liebmann	cafe		Leuengasse	street Angelo Soliman lived	
	Maria Alter	queer bar						
	Brunnenmarkt	market						

	MaizeMarkt	market						
	Rungang Gallery	art gallery						
	Museumsquartier	neighborhood/quar-ter						
	Titanic	club						
	Opera Club	club						
	Academy of Fine Arts	university						
	University of Applied Arts	university						
	Hauptbibliothek	library						
	Schonbrunn	palace and gardens						
	Jimmy's	ice cream place						
	Motel One	near Messe Prater						
	Pavilion	event venue						
	Frequented Places	type		No-go places	type		Historic places	type
Oakland	AU Lounge	lounge/bar		Ruby Room	lounge/bar		West Oakland	neighborhood
	Era Art Bar & Lounge	lounge/bar		Starline Social Club	bar/event venue		African-American Museum and Library	museum
	Somar	lounge/bar		Montclair/Piedmont	neighborhoods/areas		Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts	cultural center/community dance space
	Boabab	lounge/bar		Napa/East County	other Bay Area regions			
	Halftime Sports Bar	lounge/bar		Fillmore Karaoke Corporation	karaoke bar			
	389	bar		Golden Bull	bar			
	Parliament	bar/club						
	Liege	lounge/bar						
	Legionnaire	bar/music venue						
	New Parish	bar/music venue						
	Lake Merritt	lake/park						
	Old Oakland	historic neighborhood downtown						
	Naming Gallery	art gallery space						
	Betty Ono	art gallery space						
	OakStop	co-working event space and gallery						
	Alena Studios	art gallery space						
	Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts	cultural center/community dance space						