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PORTSIDE SYNAESTHETICS:  
SENSING THE POLITICS OF PLACE IN MARSEILLE

By

MARY NELL QUEST

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Fran Mascia-Lees

And approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Portside Synaesthetics: Sensing the Politics of Place in Marseille

By MARY NELL QUEST

Dissertation Director:  
Fran Mascia-Lees

This dissertation examines sensory experiences of large-scale urban renewal in the diverse port city of Marseille, France, based on fifteen months of fieldwork between 2006 and 2009. Using a range of traditional and sensory ethnographic methods, I conducted research with city planners, architects, activists, social workers, and other residents from throughout the urban geography. By examining the ways Marseillais people experience the varied “renewal” projects’ attempts to change the city’s image, physical landscape, economy, and status nationally and transnationally, I demonstrate that shifting sensory experiences are a primary locus through which urban change can be understood.

The sorts of sensory encounters I examine here are, for example, when changes in the built landscape overwhelm a local resident, construction sounds from next door reconfigure one’s internal clock, gentrification and business turnover render familiar spaces unwelcoming, or an architectural model provokes particular bodily movements and a sense of the uncanny. By attending simultaneously to historical and cultural factors like the city’s immigration and port histories and phenomenological experiences, I show

the embeddedness of the city within a sensually and materially conceived Mediterranean world and demonstrate that embodied, sensory encounters are a fundamental way through which people come to form the collectivities necessary for politics. In particular, I discuss the formation of a sensually based “Mediterranean Enchantment” and analyze its abilities to connect people in political projects across differences in ethnicity, class, and original national origin.

Based on the ethnographic evidence, I argue that there is progressive potential in taking seriously the impacts material “objects” have on human “subjects,” and that therefore, it is important to move towards collapsing distinctions between “subjects” and “objects” and unidirectional conceptualizations of agency. I show that this process is facilitated by taking a mobile, sensory, ecological and experience-based approach that views people, time, space and the material world as in constant flux and recreation. I also demonstrate that a sensory approach to “renewal” is better able to capture projects’ everyday impacts on the broadest possible range of residents, including those who are not permanently displaced, and thereby show the large stakes involved in shifting the built environment.

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## Acknowledgments

A Ph.D. dissertation is supposed to be an independently made contribution to a discipline or field. Yet that model of thinking leaves a great deal out. This dissertation, of course, did not spring forth from my skull like Athena from Zeus, however similar the headaches involved. Given my research topics and arguments, it should come as no great shock that I credit a set of intersubjective engagements with yielding this work. These engagements have been overwhelming in generosity and in number, and diverse in kind. All together, they have made the last eight years of work toward the degree and this dissertation as their culmination possible. Even more so, though, in spite of my occasional whining, these engagements have made these years a rollicking good time. For that I am grateful beyond words.

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## Introduction

### *Marseille: The Capital of Shit*

On September 17, 2008, one month into my year of fieldwork, I had an encounter that was, in some ways, definitive of the experience of conducting sensory research in Marseille. It was eleven o'clock in the morning on a very bright, windy Thursday. In sandaled feet, I left my apartment on Rue Commandante Mages, made a right, and then, a few houses down, another right, heading down the slight hill on Rue Louis Grobet that gradually descends towards the tram stop at Boulevard Longchamps. As I walked, I was looking down, keeping an eye on the sidewalk in front of me, and carefully stepping around garbage, dog waste, and tripping hazards in the uneven pavement.

Ahead of me, I noticed a trickling of liquid running down the sidewalk and into the street. Expecting the stream to be laundry drainage from a nearby pipe, I looked up to confirm the source. As I did, I realized that the dribbling was coming from a man with greasy, long, graying hair, who was wearing muddy blue jeans and a dingy, wrinkled, short-sleeved, black button-down shirt. He was angled slightly away from me, and had visible sweat marks under his arms. In his left hand, he held a bottle wrapped in a brown paper bag. I thankfully couldn't see his right hand, but realized it was on his penis. He was urinating onto the side and front right tire of a dark blue Renault hatchback from the early 1990s, which was parked, in typical Marseille style, with its right tires up on the sidewalk. The gentleman by no means seemed to own the object of his aim, nor did he pay particular mind to its presence.

As my feet stopped, he turned his head towards me and our eyes met, mine startled by the scene and still straining at the brightness of the summer Mediterranean

sun. The man, who was now swaying on his feet drunkenly, looked me straight on before raising his arms and gesticulating toward the sky as he shouted, to anyone listening and to nobody in particular, “¿*Capital de la culture?* ¡*Capital de la merde!* ¡*C’est ce que je dis!*” (Capital of Culture? Capital of shit! That’s what I say!). I stood, dumbfounded, processing the interaction, as the man zipped his fly and stumbled past me, muttering an incomprehensible assessment about all that Marseille lacks. I shrugged my shoulders and continued on, stepping around the stream of evidence.

That encounter on Grobet occurred on the morning after Marseille was announced as the final recipient of one of Europe’s two designations as European Capitals of Culture for 2013. This is a project that would bring in millions of dollars of investment and, hopefully untold tourism revenue to the historically maligned port city, alongside the already heavily touristed and romanticized region that surrounds it. As I discuss in greater depth in Chapter 2, the text of Marseille-Provence’s bid had made significant arguments about how the city would be lastingly changed by the honor and funds of this designation. The Public Office for Euromediterranean Development, which runs *Projet Euroméditerranée*, the enormous urban renewal project that has been redefining and remaking Marseille’s urban landscape since 1995, was a “primary partner” in the bid. For most of Marseille, the details of the bid would not have sounded like new ideology. They probably wouldn’t even have sounded at all like a new idea.

Yet, despite Marseille-Provence 2013’s continuity with a long-existing vision for the city’s future, and the substantial financial commitment that would be brought into the city with the designation, the bid’s success was by no means a moment of mass exaltation. Many of Marseille’s residents, like my car-urinating acquaintance, reacted

with skepticism, even if not all of them expressed it with quite the clarity and bodily materiality with which he showed his indignation.

That meeting on Grobet was a one-time encounter—I never again saw that man. In retrospect, though, that meeting became a sort of broad allegory for my fieldwork experiences in Marseille. It expressed, although in extremis, a more widely-held attitude of disinvestment and scorn for the many urban projects going on in the city during my time there in 2008-2009, a general attitude, however, that remains tinged with hope.

It was not that Marseille didn't need such projects, or that people didn't care about the city more broadly—including, and perhaps especially, the planners actively working to shift the urban landscape. As this dissertation will demonstrate, the Marseillais people generally feel a strong affinity to the city, despite whatever problems it might have, and they have especially strong ties to their individual neighborhoods, ties rooted in their sensing bodies and sensory experiences of belonging in the city.

Rather, Marseille is the subject of so much intervention at this moment that such projects have become a nuisance. They threaten the coherence of embodied everyday experiences and disrupt usual routes of travel. In addition to this, there are widely held anxieties about the ultimate goals of Marseille's urban renewal projects, about who will have a place in the Marseille-in-the-making, if it is ever finished, and about whether the fundamental character of the city, something I explore through the experience of sensation, will be maintained even in the midst of ubiquitous urban change.

Nevertheless, Marseille was also, at the time of my fieldwork, quite clearly a poor city, and one where the organization of sanitation services seemed to be a constant problem. My encounter on Grobet also highlights the general ways that my body

interacted with the urban landscape during my year of fieldwork. It became a joke with my husband and friends who visited me in Marseille that I—and everyone else—spent all of our time actually traversing Marseille with eyes on the sidewalk, watching our steps. It was a funny position from which to study architectural renovation in the city.

Long after my encounter on Grobet, I learned that the city used to have fairly accessible public toilets, but that these were removed because the city decided it couldn't maintain them and didn't want them to become blights on the landscape or havens for drug use. I don't remember how I learned to hold my breath when going through tunnels and alleyways, but I know it quickly became habit. In addition to the pleasant warmth of the sun in my face and the wind in my hair, the noises of construction and the clanging of tram bells, the snoring of my upstairs neighbor and the constant faint smell of cigarette smoke, these routines for avoiding Marseille's putrid side became a part of the common sensory experiences involved in doing fieldwork there. I was simultaneously openly aware of my senses, and cautious with my body and my breath.

So when the man I encountered on Grobet made his mark upon and his exclamation about Marseille, it reflected more about my fieldwork than just the general attitudes circulating towards one renewal project. To understand its ultimate significance, though, it is important to first understand some basic facts about Marseille's history.

### ***Identifying the Problem: Imagining the History of the Post-Colonial Port***

For much of the last century, Marseille's architectural, racial, corrupt political, and shadow economy features and its overall poverty have caused the city to be portrayed as a national failure, the proverbial red-headed step-child of a prosperous, modern, and humanitarian France. The urban visibility of Marseille's high levels of poverty and ethnic

diversity, unique in France, have often been associated in the national imaginary with filth, decay, garbage in the street, rampant drug activity and general chaos.

When I first began to talk about doing fieldwork in Marseille, French people outside of the city would often reflect this attitude. “*Quel bordel*,” outsiders would say about the city when I talked about my work. “Why would you want to live and work *there*?” Sometimes, even, when they understood that I was a cultural anthropologist, they would indignantly scorn the project. “Marseille?” they would ask. “Marseille doesn’t have any culture for you to study.” This is a stereotype, surely, and one that rests on a lay and outdated model of what counts for culture, but it is also rooted partly in the realities of Marseille’s history and its recent material problems. Marseille’s reputation over time is not entirely undeserved, and it has deep historical and ideological roots.

Like many port cities, Marseille is linked in the national and transnational imagination to immigration, poverty, and degeneracy (Bondi 1998; Brown 2005; Markel and Stern 1999; Mayer 1999), especially since decolonization in the 1960s (Temime 1999; Temime, et al. 1991). Especially problematic for France is Marseille’s notable history as a city filled with migrants and refugees. This has most recently been identified with the city’s high population of North Africans, which are often thought to present a significant problem for a France that is simultaneously protective of its national identity and increasingly engaged in transnational politics, particularly those occurring at the level of the European Union (Balibar 2004).

This idea of the city as “Arab” can be seen in multiple arenas of French cultural production, but perhaps one of the most famous is in the following joke by the famous French comedic troupe Les Inconnus:



“What is the first Arab city on the Paris-Dakar [4x4 race]?” the first comedian asks, pretending to be a quiz show host.

“Marseille!” the second comedian says, without hesitation.

Yet, identifying Marseille as an “Arab” city is problematic on a number of levels. First, the term “Arab” conflates a very large population of people who have important and distinct differences, ethnicities, and even languages among them (Said 1978). Second, although the city has a high population of people with roots in the Maghreb, French statistics are not collected on the basis of ethnicity, so it is impossible to know how many people identify themselves in this way. Even many of those who might, Marseille’s—and France’s—so-called Arabs, are French citizens (see, e.g. Silverstein 2005). Third, Marseille is a city that has always been, through a very long history that goes back to its founding as a Greek outpost, influenced by the ebbs and flows of migration of many different people. The difference between North African migration and other forms of migration is that North African immigrants in France are especially visible, like Muslim immigrants all over Europe, and have been too often considered unable to assimilate, a belief directly linked to Islamophobia (Werbner 2005; Esposito & Kalin 2011; Keaton 2006).

Although I cannot in this space recount Marseille’s history since the city’s founding (see Temime 1999 for a history that goes back to the French Revolution), I do want to give a brief overview of the city’s more recent patterns of migration. From at least the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Marseille’s status as a major port city made it a major transit hub for immigration, whether towards America and the New World, towards Algeria and the French settler colony there, which lasted from 1830-1962, or towards other parts of Africa. Eventually, sometime in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more of the

people passing through the city from abroad started settling instead, whether Italians, who made up 25 percent of the population before World War I, 14,000 Armenian refugees fleeing the genocide in 1915, 150,000 *Pied-Noirs* by 1962, and a difficult to measure number of immigrants from the Maghreb in the 1960's and 1970's (according to Moore 1999, about 2 million came through but not all of them stayed long-term).

The migrations after World War II were especially significant in establishing Marseille's reputation as simultaneously needy and seedy. In the 14 years from 1954-1968, the population of Marseille grew by more than 34 percent. Extensive bombing during the War, coupled with decolonization across North Africa, left housing stocks decimated (Sayad 1991). This meant there was a conglomeration of migratory waves and architectural realities that made life for many in Marseille extremely difficult during this time and that also cemented the city's negative reputation.

In terms of migration, the city served as the primary destination of *Pied-Noirs* in mass exodus from Algeria, and a smaller but significant exodus from Morocco, where independence came in 1956, although less violently. Many Moroccan Jewish families in particular immigrated to France in the aftermath of independence. Many of these families had not lived in France in four or more generations and faced significant discrimination within France, partly due to the perception that they had caused the need for the Algerian War (Jordi 1993, 1995). There was also, at the same time, an influx of migrants from Algeria who had fought for the French and were displaced by the War as sympathizers to the colonial project (about 25,000 men and their families, often called *harkis*) (Crapanzano 2011). Furthermore, labor migrants were beginning to come into Marseille to take part in the city's reconstruction, and it came as a shock when many of them

decided to stay, and even, eventually, bring over their families and start making permanent lives (Sayad 1991). There was also an influx of migrants from Corsica and the French countryside seeking economic opportunities, but since these migrations are internal within France, they are not generally counted in most studies of immigration (although, see Fielding 1966).

In terms of the architectural issues of that particular moment, the damages to the built environment that Marseille sustained from the War were quite significant; the city was bombed by both Axis forces before they occupied the port from 1942-1944, and then bombed again by Allied forces as they prepared to liberate France in 1944 (Temime 1999). Much of the city thus had to be rebuilt from the 1950's onward, at a time period when there was not a high population of able-bodied men already in France ready to do such work.

At the time of the largest migratory wave, therefore, housing was extremely rare. In my fieldwork with long-term Marseille residents, I heard a lot of local lore about how, in that period, multiple families would move in to share unfinished basements with no facilities and migrants of all kinds would form makeshift camps that eventually became shanty-towns, some not demolished until as late as 1977. One still-standing Marseille neighborhood I visited began as one such camp, but became a permanent site of settlement when residents built longer-term housing on the land and ultimately settled with the state to be allowed to keep their homes.

During this period, the government began building social housing in massive estates on the city's outskirts, especially on the Northern and Northeastern city edges. Supply of these units, however, has never kept up with demand in Marseille. Both

historically and in the contemporary moment, many of the city's poorest residents and newest arrivals therefore move into the downtown, into a cluster of neighborhoods around the port: La Joliette, Belsunce, Le Panier, Noaille, Sainte-Lazare, and Belle-de-Mai. Those without immigration papers are also ineligible for social housing, so tend to move into these same neighborhoods.

The 1970s and early 1980s only made things worse for the city, both economically and in terms of its criminal reputation, as the port's automatization and partial relocation led to a decrease in available jobs (Levinson 2006). The manufacturing industry, which had boomed because of its ties in the port sector and then-inexpensive labor, decreased production too. Simultaneously, a heroin epidemic overtook much of the city's youth; Marseille was a major drug hub, then controlled by the Corsican mafia. At the time of my research, the city was still a major entry point for drugs into Europe, although the trade in hashish was the most visible aspect of this trade.

It is important to note that, in addition to the large social housing estates, some of the same neighborhoods that housed the poor in the 1960s are still largely poor today, and the physical conditions of their housing stock have generally deteriorated. During my time in Marseille, the small neighborhood of Belsunce alone experienced two major, fatal building fires. Bad electrical wiring was the cause in one case and in the other, over-reliance on makeshift propane appliances due to a lack of permanent heat or cooking appliances.

Although architectural rebuilding is a part of current urban renewal projects in Marseille it is closely accompanied by gentrification (Smith 1996, 2002). So, while some housing stock is receiving significant improvements, and some being demolished and

rebuilt, such projects in the private sector increase rent levels and render new housing inaccessible to its former residents. Even neighborhoods undergoing renewal retain traits that echo Marseille's overall long-standing reputation as filthy, full of garbage, chaotic, drug-controlled, or dangerous, all things that non-locals expressed to me in their stereotypes about the city.

These features form important parts of the sensory experiences of downtown Marseille and of the renewal process. They also are posed as particular problems that need to be dealt with in planners' articulations of their renewal projects and ideas. Yet, in spite of these problems, and owing partially to the diversity of the city's population, Marseille was a pleasant place for me to conduct research. In the next section, I attempt to specify why and to outline what brought me to this project.

### *An Aesthetics of Grit: Building the Anatomy of a Project*

Unlike my dissertation project's naysayers across France, part of what drew me to Marseille for my fieldwork was precisely its grit—used in both its sense of grainy dirt or sand and in its sense of determination. The grit from dirt and sand is a literal fact of life in the city. During my stay, it would pile on my back terrace when the mistral winds blew in and be picked up in my shoes and on my skin as I navigated through the city and its construction dust. It expressed the continuity that exists in Marseille between interior and exterior space, since it is a city where one can get by equally well out of doors for most of the year.

With the mistral winds, however minor they were on a given day, physical, material grit consistently blew into my eyes, compelling me to spend at least a small part of most days navigating the city partially blinded or with my eyes streaming. Although

this tormented me, and I developed an ability to dig tiny foreign objects out of my eyes quickly. This grit contributed to my sense of the city's relationship to the Sea, the direction from which the winds blew. It also made the city feel open and—it is important to acknowledge this even knowing that it should also be examined and critiqued—somehow “authentic.” This is a city without pretension, neither trying to cover anything up nor present itself as anything other than what it is.

The second sense of grit refers to a mood of the city's residents, a hardened determination to make things work, *de bric et de broc*, with whatever they had available. This atmosphere was something my interlocutors remarked on too, whether they were residents of Marseille or its urban planners. It stemmed partially from a shared history of poverty and just getting by, and it felt both collaborative and familiar to me. Marseille maintained its gritty feeling despite so much ideological and physical work being done on the landscape.

My first research trip to Marseille in the summer of 2006 lasted only two and a half weeks, since I also explored Paris and Toulouse that summer. When I was 19, I had conducted my undergraduate research in Morocco on topics of political and familial intimacy, and I knew how important the post-colonial relationship was on the Mediterranean's southern coast. I entered graduate school wanting to understand that relationship from the reverse perspective, which initially meant going to wherever there were the largest numbers of North African immigrants and seeing what I could find out, although I also made an obligatory trip to Brest to spend time with my sister, who was seven months pregnant, and my two year-old nephew, as they were patching their way

through a summer alone while my brother-in-law completed an advanced medical rotation in Paris.

While their place in Brest and my brother-in-law's tiny, temporary apartment in Paris provided generous and comfortable bases for me to land, neither of them panned out as research sites. My sister was part of a vibrant and interesting community of immigrant mothers in Brest, and I expect she might have hoped I would eventually choose to do fieldwork there. She introduced me to several helpful local academics, but I doubted very much that studying her prenatal yoga classes would yield research funding. I also knew that Brest got a lot of very cold rain for much of the year, which was an unattractive prospect, and Brest's population of North African immigrants is, understandably, quite small—although by no means absent.

As for Paris, there had been a lot of research about immigrant communities already done there, and I had no particular “in” to those communities. The marginal geographical location of Parisians without means also made finding such “ins” extremely complicated. Most of the people who had done it had used either schools or associations as platforms for entering the community. I didn't particularly want to focus on youth and didn't feel I knew enough about French associational structures to feel comfortable latching on to one. I ultimately decided that Paris was too large and too cold—in a different way than Brest—and made my way down to the sunny South.

As my instincts had predicted, Marseille had a lot going for it and soon swept me off my feet. I spent my initial weeks there in a tiny, very overpriced vacation rental in Le Panier, minutes on foot from the Vieux Port. My back windows opened out onto a tiny park where neighborhood mothers took their small children. Though perfect strangers,

the ladies would exchange pleasantries through my open windows in the early evening, knowing immediately from my accent that I wasn't French, and asking inquisitively about what brought me to Marseille of all places.

Almost immediately, and very much unintentionally, I established a routine. The building across the street from me, like much of the neighborhood, was under renovation. I was awakened fairly early each morning when the noise from the construction work would begin. I would then try to explore a new piece of the city's vast geography everyday before retreating to a teashop near the apartment to write my experiences into fieldnotes. The shop had a vibrant community of regulars, and they too were curious about my presence and what, exactly, I was doing in Marseille. Although I didn't yet know enough to recognize what a boon it would be, I loved how open the Marseillais were to talking to me and was overwhelmed by just how much they had to say.

I also had a few contacts and appointments that I had been able to set up before leaving for France—the god-mother of a college friend, an academic contact in Aix-en-Provence, and a couple of leaders of immigrant associations. Initially, I thought my project was about Marseille's particular brand and processes of immigrant integration. The city had received almost no Anglophone scholarly attention that I knew about, and so the directions my project could take were wide open. Through snowball sampling from multiple starting points, I collected 25 life history interviews in 15 days, and very much enjoyed myself while doing it. Although I don't remember the exact moment that I settled on the city, I think it was about then when it dawned on me that I had stumbled upon a place where I could work long-term. Toulouse, although I visited it briefly and spoke with quite a few people, didn't really stand a chance after that.



From my position in Le Panier that first summer, the projects to renew Marseille were literally all around me, touching every single one of the neighborhood's borders. I couldn't exit the neighborhood in any direction without stumbling onto some aspect of Marseille in transition. The construction in the neighborhood was my first clue, and then I spent some time on the rapidly changing Rue de la République and walking along the Vieux Port near the Fort Saint-Jean. I also got to know Belsunce, after someone recommended that I go to the neighborhood to watch the Tunisian team play in a World Cup match. Although that didn't work out, the stroll I took through the neighborhood showed me its density and, given the shopkeepers who expanded their space by setting up wares outside of their stores, its feel of a Mediterranean bazaar. I even made it out to L'Estaque—the furthest outskirt within the city of Marseille—and spent a lovely afternoon there with masses of teenagers just let out of school for the summer and harried mothers and their smaller children.

One contact also introduced me to a sizable group of people who lived in her neighborhood, La Plaine—most of whom were part of interethnic couples. When I tried to talk about immigration, though, the urban change occurring throughout the city kept coming up anyway. Within a few days of my arrival, although I didn't have the significance of the urban projects worked out yet, I was aware that they were happening and was caught up in the swirl of rapid-fire urban change. Marseille, I knew, was very much on the move. I made it my mission to find out more about the impetus and process of those movements.

My second summer in Marseille proved even more productive. Thinking it would help me meet more people, I decided to take a room in a shared apartment. My

roommate, just by happenstance, had spent years in a live-in romantic relationship with a sociology doctoral student whose own thesis project was partly qualitative and had a Marseille-based component. Thankfully, it was radically different in subject matter from my own. Since they had broken up quite recently, some of my engagements in the academic community became a bit tricky to navigate, but my roommate understood the processes of fieldwork and ended up becoming a key interlocutor on the project.

He was amazing at putting me together with people who would have a lot to say about Marseille, and about urban renewal in particular, including one sociologist friend with whom he was still close. She ended up helping me secure my affiliations, strategizing with me about the project, and helping me to identify the most useful French-language academic resources that summer. She continued to influence and help me think through the project in my longer-term research, as well, and together we discovered important differences between French sociological approaches and U.S. anthropological ones.

My roommate and I also became fast friends, and, since he was between jobs and quite depressed, he had a fair amount of time on his hands and threw himself into showing me around the city. In preparing my funding proposals for that summer of work, I had come up with the initial versions of what would become my walking-tour method, which I hoped would highlight sensory experiences of change. The time we spent walking the city together, although unstructured, helped me think through that approach. Along with these experiences, conducting more interviews and attending a couple of association meetings, I also had the chance to complete walking tours with several other

people, proving that they would work as a way to collect data, and that those data would be different from those collected in stationary interviews.

Ultimately, when I designed my longer-term research in Marseille, I positioned it around Marseille's exceptionalism within French urban landscapes due to its visible diversity. How, I asked, would the many urban renewal projects going on there change the city's exceptionalism? What sorts of racial processes and ideologies might they embed? How were they being experienced by Marseille's population on the ground? To get at issues of how race, urban renewal, and spatialization within the built environment were connected, I proposed a two-neighborhood design. I would work in Belsunce, the central neighborhood most often considered a transitory stop on paths of immigration, which was filled with a run-down housing stock and was largely made up of immigrants. At the same time, I would explore L'Estaque, a seaside village on Marseille's outskirts that had long been based in fishing, was ethnically more mixed, and was becoming heavily marketed as a tourist destination as part of renewal efforts.

I proposed to use each neighborhood's "social center"—an organization that provides everything from activities for children after school to arts exhibits to yearly festivals showcasing each neighborhood—as an entry point to gain access to residents. Partly, my study was designed to explore how much difference it made to immigrant families whether they were located centrally or marginally to Marseille's downtown.

When I arrived in Marseille, however, this project design proved unfeasible and unable to capture the vibrancy of what was happening in downtown Marseille. Since I had left, my "fieldsite" had changed—as living, breathing cities and the people in them

are wont to do. Each social center, for example, had experienced significant disruptions and changes in staffing, and some of my contacts in each neighborhood had moved.

Furthermore, the urban change happening in Marseille seemed to be picking up pace. As I acquainted myself with the urban renewal projects, I recognized that these projects were not designed just to target particular neighborhoods, but to make a difference in broader conceptualizations of the city. If Marseille was interesting for its overall level of diversity and the ways that renewal projects conceptualize and use that diversity, then it would prove more interesting to explore residents of the city more broadly. This enabled including those who lived in wealthier neighborhoods alongside those who lived in poorer ones. It also allowed me to devote more attention to planning and architectural agencies to understand their goals, their conceptualizations of the city and its potential, and their views of its problems and its future.

Although my research questions and overall research design therefore shifted somewhat, I was fortunate to have already proposed a phenomenological and sensory-based approach focused on accessing experiences of urban change. Many of my methods, therefore, did not require total rethinking, but rather expansion out to a larger number of groups within Marseille's landscape. Here, I provide an outline of the methods used.

### ***Experiencing Marseille Intersubjectively: An Outline of Research Methods***

Fieldnotes

December 2, 2012

10:37 pm:

So, today, I got mistaken for a street prostitute:

Today I did a walking tour around Belsunce with Ahmed. The gas had been off at home overnight, but they came to fix it just before I left. Ahmed had called to change the rendezvous several times, and ended up being late nonetheless. I waited for him outside his apartment for about twenty minutes...

While I was waiting, it was 3:30 in the afternoon, a bunch of people passed, mostly doing petit commerce, shopping in the bazaars, or normal circulation...One man in a little white truck passed, and thought that I was saving the parking space for someone. I tried to signal that I was not, and he waved, but I think didn't need the spot after all...

At the same time as that was happening (truck incident), two little old men passed. They were in traditional Arab style pants and hats. I didn't see their shirts, since they were wearing big jackets, one red and one blue. The blue-jacketed one walked with a cane. Both of them were missing teeth. They said "Bonjour," so I said, "Bonjour." They walked about ten feet further, then stopped. The blue-jacketed man objected as the red-jacketed one turned around, walked towards me slowly, and got very very close to me, like, within eight inches. He leaned in to whisper to me, and I turned my head to put my ear a little closer to him. I thought perhaps he couldn't hear well. He started saying something, but it was in a very strong accent with some Arabic words mixed in. I couldn't understand what he was saying. He took my look of attempt to understand, which was accompanied with a small nod and a simultaneous shrug, meant to signal that I was listening...Then, still whispering, he started saying "*combien combien combien est-ce que vous voulez?*" (how much how much how much do you want?), and doing something with his right hand to the left side of his jacket. I jumped back, since I didn't know what he was talking about, and said, "Je suis désolée. J'attends mon ami, seulement." (I'm sorry. I'm waiting for my friend, only). The man started apologizing profusely, and turned very, very, very red. He walked as quickly as he could to catch up with his friend with the cane, and then started dragging him away, down the street and around the corner.

I was wearing my black hoodie dress, two layers of leggings, a long-sleeve shirt, and my big red sweater. I assumed that they had been trying to sell me drugs. Just at almost exactly the same time, Ahmed approached from the other direction, apologizing profusely...When I told him about what happened, and my drug theory, Ahmed immediately said, "That can't be..." "But it happened, I promise..." I said. When we got upstairs, still saying it was very strange, Ahmed started making coffee. From the kitchen, he asked, delicately, "Do you think they maybe thought you were waiting for clients?" Although I resisted this at first, I eventually said, "I don't know. Maybe." I'm now convinced this is the correct interpretation, and they thought I was a prostitute. It makes sense. Women don't just hang out on street corners in Belsunce. Men, par contre, absolutely do.

Later, as we were walking, Ahmed asked if I was very cold, and said he thought I might not have enough layers on for the wind. I didn't feel cold, but got very nervous about my own body language and the vibe I might be giving off. More and more, though, I don't think it was about that, although it does say

something about bodily control. I think I had more than enough clothes on. Ahmed really was worried about me being cold, only. It had been chilly. It was very windy, especially as it got dark. Plus, Marseillais always think it's cold when it doesn't feel that cold to me.

I do think this was a reinforcement of several things. For one, I didn't make sense in the neighborhood doing what I was doing. I didn't make any sense at all. Women in Belsunce don't just hang around like that, or at least I've never noticed one who did. Sure, mothers hang out and watch while their children play, and men hang out on the streets, sometimes selling contraband cigarettes, and youth hang out in groups doing various activities. But single women don't do that, especially when it's cold out. Women do shop alone, etc. But just as they wouldn't ordinarily be at the bars or cafés inside the *quartier* by themselves, it's very unlikely they would just be hanging out on the streets.

Second, people notice that I'm different here. It's not just a question of appearance or of the fact that I don't look the same in body type, style of dress, etc., as most of the people here. My behavior also stands out. This came up again when I was talking to Ahmed after the walking tour, and we talked about passport control, something that came up in our discussion. He talked about how frequently the police will be on the outskirts of Belsunce, how frequently they will have a checkpoint and ask everyone for identification. I remarked that I don't carry identification very often. Which is only partly true. I usually have my debit cards on me, enough that people would be able to tell who I was in an accident, but I don't carry passports or major documents, though it is required here by law.

Ahmed said it didn't matter, because no one would ever trouble me for my papers. "From the moment where you say 'bonjour,' they would wave you through." I asked if he meant because I was American, and he said, "*bah, oui.*" ("But of course!"). It feels odd that I am not subject to the same rules as everyone else in that regard, or even that anybody thinks I'm not. Although of course it's true. Then again, I felt even stranger about being subject to being thought of as a prostitute because I was behaving strangely. I felt unsavory or judged, even though I know it's not really about that.

On the other hand, I doubt I ever would have known what a prostitution solicitation looked like here any other way, and that is on its own very interesting. Still, I feel funny about it. Still.

Fieldwork in a place you don't know well involves an odd and constant negotiation of borders and boundaries. In Marseille, I found myself continually trying to learn what these boundaries were while, at the same time, even in the same moment,

transgressing them in ways I couldn't help or control. In the excerpt from my fieldnotes presented above, I was reminded, twice in one day in the Belsunce neighborhood, about the impassable cavern that constituted my difference from my interlocutors.

Ahmed and I knew each other well. I spent many quiet afternoons in his salon reading or working between appointments downtown while he chain-smoked cigarettes and worked on his laptop. When we were walking together somewhere, I could anticipate his movements. He knew what I meant even when I was too tired to put language together in ways that were accurate or, for most people, comprehensible. On the days when I could find the accurate tense, I could sometimes finish his sentences. Yet on that particular afternoon in Belsunce, he reminded me that there were ways that I would never be like him. I would never be subject to the same kind of control in France that he experiences daily. I would rarely be perceived as an object of threat needing state intervention. No matter how embodied I made my research, I could never incorporate those experiences, never really know, in my bones and on my skin, how those experiences felt.

At the same time, Ahmed would never be mistaken for a prostitute. While it initially bothered me that I had, and the experience made me self-conscious and hyperaware of my body and my clothes, that incident eventually became one of my favorite moments of misrecognition in the field. Mostly, this is because I began to acknowledge just how slight the misrecognition really was. The old man was perfectly right that I didn't make sense in that setting, that I didn't quite belong. He just got the why of that wrong; tragically, unrelentingly wrong. Eventually, what bothered me most was how much he had been embarrassed by his mistake.

What both of these moments show is that, however hard I hoped to try, there are limitations to the intersubjectivity possible in an anthropological encounter. Nonetheless, my field approach was designed to surpass those limits to whatever degree possible. I reached, with empathy and compassion, as far as I could towards the experiences of my interlocutors. As much as possible, I resisted partitioning off little moments of their lives and voiding them of their places in continua of experiences. In addition to this overall attitude I took into the fieldwork encounter, and into my standard methodologies of participant observation and interviews, some specific methods helped me attempt to access dimensions of experience particularly sensory in nature.

*Walking tours:* I conducted thirty-seven walking tours with residents of Marseille from different neighborhoods, social classes, ethnic backgrounds, professions, and opinions towards the renewal projects at work in their city. In an effort to bring out whatever my interlocutors found most significant in the urban landscape, I left these as open-ended as possible. In explaining what I wanted to do, I asked people to take me through their neighborhood or another that had significance to them and to show me what was important there. I gave them my camera, allowing them to take pictures of whatever they wanted, and, usually when they did so, I asked them why they were photographing that particular building, object, or scene. I sound recorded these tours using a very sensitive digital recorder, specifically chosen for its ability to pick up both whatever conversations we were having on the tour and the significant noises in the neighborhood's background, and I spatially recorded the tours' routes using a portable hiking GPS unit with specially loaded maps. In analyzing these materials, time-syncing the GIS data with the recording and the photographs allowed me to ensure I was



accurately presenting what locations had been emphasized. I did similar tours with architects and urban planners about their areas of concentration, using the same basic methodological toolkit.

*Soundscape recordings:* In addition to recording the background noise present during neighborhood tours, I also traveled around to different locations in the city and took general soundscape recordings of what those neighborhoods sounded like. I would also use a GPS with these tours, so that I could mark the soundscape by location. I also used the sound recording on various routes of public transportation around the city. Ultimately, I ended up with more than a hundred hours of such recordings from all over the city.

*Imagery & Sound Analysis:* I worked with certain interlocutors to elicit opinions about the city and its specific neighborhoods by using photographs taken from around the city and soundscape recordings. I would ask my interlocutors whether they could identify the locations captured pictorially or sonically, and to tell me what they particularly noticed about these images or recordings.

*Attunement to Movement:* As part of my participant observation, I paid close attention to bodily movements of both myself and my informants. I recorded such movements, as much as possible, in field jottings which I then translated into, and made a major part of, my fieldnotes.

*Community Meeting Observations:* I attended any meetings or open-houses I could where planners and architects were discussing renewal plans with Marseille residents. Where feasible, I took sound recordings of these meetings. In an effort to maintain confidentiality, I did not photograph community meetings, although where

possible I obtained images of any visual aids used at such meetings, such as CAD images and architectural models. These play a central role in Chapter 4.

*Dream Collection:* In interviews, conversations undertaken during participant observation, and sometimes in walking tours, I would elicit descriptions of dreams my interlocutors had had. I ultimately collected about 40 dreams. Some of these became the subject of inquiry in Chapter 5. Originally, asking about dreams started as a way to retain control of interviews, especially when I was working with planning professionals who spent a lot of time talking to press or community members and seemed to be giving me rehearsed answers. It began to yield such interesting data, however, that I eventually made sure to ask it in every interview, even though not everyone cared to or felt capable of responding to the question. I also paid attention to my own dreams during fieldwork and during the analysis of the data my fieldwork yielded.

*A note about Participants:* Ultimately, I worked with more than 80 people from throughout Marseille's physical geography and social landscape, not counting those who simply attended community meetings or whom I encountered while doing participant observation in public places, and not including members of associations where I observed if I did not also interview them or conduct a walking tour with them. This included about 20 planners and architects, about ten activists, community leaders, social workers, and association organizers of various kinds, about ten artists, and about forty other residents whose work status varied widely. My sample of residents was somewhat skewed towards those who lived downtown or in the Quartiers Nords, but I did a number of interviews with people who lived in the wealthier Southern outskirts of town. I gained access to participants mostly through snowball sampling, although I generally got a particular

strand of snowball sampling started through either cold-calling someone or having a chance encounter with them.

*Data Analysis:* Ultimately, especially given the number of hours I had collected of sound recordings, it was not feasible to closely analyze all the data I collected in the field. I thus relied on a number of techniques to guide me in my data analysis. During the early data analysis phases, I would listen to at least one recording selected at random every day, whether a soundscape recording, an interview recording, a community meeting, or a walking tour. I ultimately listened to all of the walking tour and interview recordings during the analysis phase of the project.

In addition to the things I found in those recordings, I generally relied on memory and fieldnotes to determine other portions of data to which I would devote especially detailed analyses. Where necessary, I selectively transcribed and translated recorded conversations. I also used soundscape recordings as background noise during many phases of writing up the dissertation. It is also important to note that while many other meaningful encounters occurred in the field, this dissertation cannot present all of them. The ethnographic examples presented here are those that stay closest to my topics of inquiry, while demonstrating as much diversity in Marseillais' experiences as the format allows. In the next section, I present an outline of my chapters and also develop some of the overarching themes that connect them.

### ***Outline of the Chapters***

#### *Chapter One: Places in Motion: Experiences of Walking Marseille's Renewal*

This chapter's broad focus is on a single, critically-oriented question: what happens to the ethnographic encounter when we approach our objects of inquiry, whether

people or places, from the perspective of their constant motion and mobility, rather than from a perspective of social “position” or a partitioning of the fluidity of experience into the time-space of the event? The chapter takes walking as the particular kind of movement which it explores, and undulates between theory and ethnography, using three particular walks in Marseille as its ethnographic cases—alone in the Vieux Port, with Ahmed in Belsunce, and with another interlocutor, Samira, along the heavily under-construction area of the Rue de la République. Beginning with a critique of the notion of “position” and other scholarly metaphors that emphasize stillness or fixity, the chapter then takes a walk through the history of social thought, and highlights problems with philosophies that impose dualisms between subject and object.

Ultimately, the chapter argues for combining two theoretical approaches to combat these oppositions: on the one hand, a cautious phenomenology that is careful to take cultural and historical circumstance into adequate account; on the other, an “urban ecology of motion” that takes seriously the influence of material objects and landscapes in the world on human bodies. It emphasizes the political potential of such approaches, and ultimately concludes by highlighting the ways that non-dualistic theoretical approaches and mobile methodological ones lay bare the violence of urban renewal processes, while also better attending to nuance, contradiction, simultaneity, and non-linear experiences of everyday life.

*Chapter Two: Marseille (Euro)Mediterranée: History, Future, and Beauty in the Process of Renewal*

This chapter explores the history of Marseille and its renewal projects, and particularly their connection with transnational history and aspirations, on the one hand,

and particular conceptualizations of the Mediterranean, on the other. It presents information about Marseille's history and geographic specificity, before examining two common, circulating discourses about the Mediterranean. The first, which I call, following Huntington (1992, 1997), a "Clash of Civilizations" framework, invokes the Sea and region as a source of potential corruption, violence, and pathology, and includes no space for sensory experience within it. The other, most commonly evoked in travel writing, I refer to as a discourse of "Mediterranean Romance." It has its basis in a fundamentally depoliticized conceptualization of sensory experience. The chapter demonstrates that both discourses, though fundamentally inadequate in describing Marseille's historical, economic and cultural connection to the Mediterranean, are frequently deployed in Marseille's contemporary "renewal" projects.

Ethnographically, the chapter is based around an analysis of four encounters or moments within Marseille's renewal: the first and second of these are interviews with two administrators of the large *Projet Euroméditerranée*, in which they articulated two separate and quite different conceptualizations of renewal. The third concerns the city's bid and selection as European Capital of Culture for 2013, which centers on highlighting Marseille's status as a point of productive cultural connection between Europe and the Mediterranean. The fourth analysis focuses on the construction of the new "J4" building that will architecturally connect to the 17<sup>th</sup> century Fort Saint-Jean, and, along with the Fort, house the new Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilization (MuCEM, the first French national museum outside of Paris). In analyzing these projects, I demonstrate that the efforts to renew Marseille are based in both a partially socialist political economics and in renewed architectural aesthetics.

I also explore, but ultimately discard, an explanation of the projects that focuses exclusively on neoliberalism, and attempt to position the interventions in Marseille within the French nation, the European Union, and the (largely stalled) Union for the Mediterranean. The chapter finishes by arguing that the material impacts of the Sea on the city should be taken very seriously, and in so doing, follows and specifies Chapter One's argument about the affects of materiality on people and places. It also paves the way for Chapter Three's exploration of the politically generative connections across difference allowed by a common Marseillais conception of trans-Mediterranean identity.

*Chapter Three: Sensing Politics: Embodying Collectivities in Marseille*

This chapter converses with three areas of literature: sensory anthropology, interdisciplinary theories of affect, and the study of materiality. Using the premises of these areas and an extension of the cautious phenomenological methods I outline in Chapter One, this chapter tries to demonstrate the ways that the commonly-held Marseillais sensory experience of the Mediterranean Sea and its crossing engenders shared identifications across difference in Marseille. I argue that these identifications, though they face certain limitations, make possible the formation of collectivities that in turn promote a progressive politics within Marseille.

Ethnographically, the chapter draws on three cases. First, that of Elliane, whose sensory experiences of her neighborhood enabled her to build a surprising interpersonal connection with her neighbor based on a familial history they shared, but from opposite sides of colonial rule. I show that this allowed Elliane to become part of the collectivity of her neighborhood, and to participate along with her neighbors in political organizing. I also discuss the case of an association that, based on collective experiences and ideas

about couscous, was able to transcend a moment of division in its ranks and get back to working towards its political goals. My third case explores how a recent immigrant, through her material experience of the Sea, can feel herself to belong in the city and to be Marseillais. Drawing on Jane Bennett (2001), I advocate for viewing the deployment of trans-Mediterranean identifications as part of a broader, everyday sense of Mediterranean Enchantment within the city, and demonstrate how that can help to overcome postcolonial divisions.

*Chapter Four: Modeling the Future: Miniatures, Prospection, and the Ideological Uncanny*

This chapter explicitly draws together theoretical issues that have been implicit, but thematic, in earlier chapters that take seriously material objects' effects on the human body. I explore the particular kinds of sensory experience generated by architectural models and prospective images produced in CAD (Computer Assisted Design). These are common elements that planners and architects in Marseille use to present their ideas for renewal projects to the broader community. Although it is somewhat paradoxical to examine materiality through the lens of digital CAD imagery, doing so demonstrates important relationships between materiality and temporality.

Elizabeth Grosz (2001), in her problematization of the idea of Utopic articulations (of which models and CAD images can be seen as an example), draws on a Bergsonian conception of time that views the past as virtual, contained in its entirety but in compressed form within the present, and the future as an "openness of becoming that enables divergence from what exists" (2001:142). Materializing the future is thus impossible in experience because it cuts off other potential courses of reality. Therefore,

in closing the loop of indeterminacy inherent in the experience of time, models and CAD prospectives cannot be experienced as potential views of the future. Rather, they are, in a Freudian sense, uncanny doubles, simultaneously material and impossible to interpret. While planners and architects experience models and projective imagery as processual—as a way to think through ideas that are both collaborative and in-formation—bodies not specifically trained in these tools react differently, recoiling, experiencing the object as somehow disruptive.

Althusser adds that, “ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (1971:109), and believes it must remain imaginary for it to function, including to successfully interpellate a subject. I therefore argue that, because of their odd temporality and the degree to which they lay ideologies bare, architectural models and projections in Marseille are experienced as uncanny, rather than as communicative. I also articulate a Merleau-Pontian conceptualization of the unconscious which is better able to do away with subject/object dualisms. This framework begins to propose and to theorize an unconscious dimension of sensory experience, which I elaborate further in Chapter 5.

#### *Chapter 5: Dreamscapes in Flux: An Ethnography of Fleshy Anticipation*

This chapter explores sensory experiences of dreams about urban change. I recount three examples of dreams wherein the dreamscape consisted of the dreamer’s neighborhood, except with material differences from the neighborhood as experienced in waking life. Trying to move beyond a Freudian conception of dreams as arenas of wish fulfillment in which the dream is entirely about the individual, or an anthropological perspective that views dreams as sensorally impoverished, I instead take dreams seriously



as experiences where the dreamer interacts with the material environment of waking life, thereby challenging strict divisions in dream studies between conscious and unconscious, material and dreamt. I also critique notions of subjectivity as the exclusive locus of agency, and of subjects or dreams as primarily anxious, cautioning anthropologists about the risks inherent in “diagnosing” anxiety in our interlocutors. Instead, I explore the intersubjective and interobjective potentials of dreams and argue that the particular dreams I explore exhibit a collective mood in Marseille of “fleshy anticipation”—a materially interwoven, future-oriented openness to the constant fact of change.

I build on Walter Benjamin’s (1977:403) notion of the optical unconscious—through which he explains how film shifted vision’s possibilities—to argue that familiarity with rapid-fire architectural change renders architecture as ephemeral for people in Marseille and opens up the sensory possibilities of their architectural dreamscapes. Merleau-Ponty’s conceptualization of the flesh helps me to articulate the particular material relationship between dreamers and architecture. He uses “flesh” to denote both the origin of thinking subjects and the realm in which they operate, binding humans into, as part of, their material world. Vivian Sobchak’s interpretation of Merleau-Ponty’s flesh as an unselfish subjectivity in which subjects “reach toward” objects which might themselves be considered subjects (2004:289-90), and consider themselves as objects, undoes anthropocentric subjectivities. In this new light, I interpret the three dreams as fundamentally about the sensory and material interactions they express, and argue for how this expands the potentials of a sensory politics.

### *Interventions in the Literature*

I see my work intervening in important ways in several literatures both within and beyond anthropology. Although each of the individual chapters in the dissertation includes a robust engagement with literature both within and beyond the discipline, here, I sketch out the moves it makes as an overall project. Highlighting these moves is important in order to more easily conceptualize and place the importance of the smaller, individual, and more specific interventions each chapter attempts.

The first move is to rethink anthropological approaches to renewal or redevelopment of the urban environment. While it is important to pay attention to how such processes might exacerbate inequalities or be(come) complicit in processes of gentrification and neoliberal control by, for example, painting certain populations as threatening or undesirable, it is equally important to recognize that many urban projects are, at their roots, fundamentally hopeful. If anthropologists interpret such projects as though their conclusions are foregone to be negative, or rely exclusively on methodological approaches that look backwards on such projects historically rather than examining them in the moment, we miss important opportunities to recognize the progressive potentials of urban space, brought about partially by cities' abilities to concentrate diversity in meaningful ways that allow for new forms of connection and political action.

Closely related to the first intervention, is a methodological one designed to expand the ways anthropologists think about concepts like immigration, race and ethnicity. If we want to gain more robust understandings of the ways boundaries are drawn between groups in society, it is insufficient to design studies that primarily include only the members of one such group. Doing so reinforces the kinds of difference such

studies are attempting to interrogate. If our studies approach one “ethnic group” and ask them questions about and interpret their behavior for ways that it shows the importance of their “ethnicity”—a category that I believe is real, profoundly important, and socially operational in Marseille and elsewhere—we are quite likely to get answers that demonstrate that ethnicity is a primary category of social import. It may well be; nonetheless, we may have changed its level of emphasis because of the way we designed the question. Because I began my studies in Marseille interested in questions of immigration, and the project expanded out to include a wide variety of Marseillais people with as many different perspectives as possible, I learned that such a design did not obscure conceptualizations of race or ethnicity and the ways they are at work in this particular setting. Instead, it allowed me to see a broader diversity of ways in which such distinctions operate, including, at least in Marseille, the widespread formation of bonds across what we usually think of as ethnic divisions. In fact, in Marseille, I argue that those bonds play a critical role in the formations I refer to as “Mediterranean Enchantments,” which, I argue, fundamentally enable a particular kind of progressive politics in Marseille.

This work also intervenes in its conceptualization of what counts as and in political action. This mediation includes multiple steps and iterations over the course of the dissertation. One move—and this connects ideas of the political to the senses—is to demonstrate that collectivities, even if one only counts their human constituents, fundamentally depend on shared sensory experiences of the material environment. I show that embodied sensations of the material world are *preconditions* for meaningful political action, even when the ways action is expressed have little to do with the original

sensations that helped to formulate it. Rather than seeing sensory experiences as “mere” objects of aesthetic concern, then, scholars need to recognize that sensory experiences are primary to political (among other kinds of) engagements. Importantly, this also includes sensory experiences and reconfigurations of the material world that take place within the unconscious, especially when those experiences help us to build intersubjective communities. It also highlights the transformative potential of experiences of beauty, desire, Enchantment, or the Sublime.

Yet even this conceptualization of politics does not go far enough, though it usefully highlights the importance of human sensation. In an era when the most pressing concerns of human beings may be the massive catastrophes wrought by climate change and our overwhelming production of waste require a rethinking of agency. Emphasizing human agency might be helpful in encouraging responsibility, but clear limitations can be seen in the ways such theorizations fail to encourage similar responsibility from corporations, for example. Conceptualizations of agency that limit it to the human subject thus constrain our potential to respond to these problems. It is critical that we learn to recognize the fundamental interconnections between people and the material and natural forms around us. The fact that the flow of influences between people and the material world and environment are not unidirectional, as this dissertation repeatedly shows, raises important political questions and expands the scope of who counts politically, in a way that I find generative.

This dissertation also makes important methodological claims, based partly on an understanding and use of phenomenology that is importantly nuanced by its critiques. Within this dissertation, then, phenomenology is somewhat fraught, a methodology and

philosophy I undulate towards and then against. On the one hand, I argue for methods that take mobility, embodiment, and material interaction as their starting point, and continually attempt to point out ways that anthropologists can explore features of experience that are not exclusively linguistic, symbolic, or privileging of visual or auditory experience. At the same time, I argue that the renewal projects I study in Marseille cannot be understood outside of their particular historical and cultural context. Rather, it is within this context that they reveal the most about how humans interact with their material surroundings.

# **Chapter One**

## **Places in Motion:**

### **Experiences of Walking Marseille's Renewal**

Walking is a common, everyday action, both a means of getting around and a way of experiencing the world. In the under-revision urban environment of Marseille, France, walking is something most people do quite regularly, and one of the most quotidian means by which they come to experience the shifting landscape of the city. Yet, while walking and broader everyday experience are inherently mobile in both time and space, and fundamentally embodied, many of the most common scholarly metaphors and narrative frameworks used to represent and analyze urban renewal projects ethnographically present moments as fixable in time and space, and separable from the overall fluidity of our interlocutors' experience. As other anthropologists have shown, "Walking is suffused with a kaleidoscope of intermingling thoughts, experiences and sensations, so that the character of a walk is continually shifting" (Edensor 2008:136).

This chapter starts from experiences of walking Marseille's renewal, and uses them as a springboard to critique scholarly metaphors of "positionality" (Bourdieu 1977) and oppositions between global and local, space and place, and subject and object, pointing out everyday kinds of nuance, conflict, and simultaneity of experience they prevent us from accessing ethnographically. In their place, I propose and present an ethnographic framework that begins with walking and the mobility of everyday life, and an ecological approach to space that considers people, objects, and landscape as created, and consistently remade, through the mobile interactions of beings and objects that are usually philosophically divided into separate categories. I demonstrate that this allows

for an analysis of the flux inherent in environments, people's lives, and their intermingling, while remaining closer to interlocutors' experiences of everyday life.

*Walking is what most people in Marseille do. As I skip up the metro stairs, around the newspaper vendor, I smell fish from the morning market. I notice the odor, growing stronger, changing my breathing-- more slowly, less deeply—as it overpowers. At the surface, I blink against the sun as I step out onto the wide concrete sidewalk tracing the three sides of the Vieux Port. My transition lenses start to change, and I see that the last few stalls are still open, under blue Ville de Marseille umbrellas; their wares, still-live porgy and monkfish, sit in blue plastic bins on hip-high metal legs. I step out of the way of the foot-traffic and watch, for a second, remembering where I am headed, checking my phone for the time. It's noon. I walk. On the concrete walk, at the port's short mouth, the fish swim, in four inches of water in blue bins in front of the boats that snared them at first morning light. The last few of the morning vendors, many of them women, in jean shorts, t-shirts, and aprons covered in fish scales, yell their offerings, between conversations with those who approach to inquire or buy, attempting to attract any last remaining clientele before they boat home to prepare their lunches "Porgy! Monkfish! Sorry, madame. All out of Sardines. Barbecue season again, I suppose. Come back tomorrow. Porgy! Monkfish!" I navigate around those finished buying as they rush off in different directions; just-cleaned and scaled fish still flip in reflex, in double bags against their legs, in coolers and shopping bags, on motorbikes, buses, metros and trams. As they walk along, and I watch them, I remember. For an instant, I can feel the porgy I bought last week, flipping against my thigh. In this moment, fish-seekers bargain with the vegetable vendor who has recently set up here, for bright lemons, parsley, garlic, and*

*tomatoes in fast-paced conversation, shifting on their feet. I shift on my feet and keep walking, north to the block's edge, then west along the water.*

***To walk—some definitions: [Merriam-Webster]***

- [1] to move at a regular and fairly slow pace by lifting and setting down each foot in turn, never having both feet off the ground at once;
- [2] to go on foot for recreation or exercise;
- [3] to travel along or over (a route or area) on foot...

I walk. In a catalogue of actions the human body can undertake, walking is among the most quotidian. Surprisingly simple, the act of swinging one foot, however tentatively, in front of the other, shifting the weight, and then repeating the swing—it is remarkable that something so mundane could become so vital to conceptualizations of who and what humans are. Yet, as we will see, walking—a slow, basic action of mobility—is central to many historical conceptualizations of the human, from the Greek peripatetic philosophers like Aristotle and Theophrastus, with their pacing lectures, to human evolutionary studies' hero-myth tropes of our first bipedal ancestors, forever changing their beings and bodies with a descent from the trees and a gradually achieved upright step (Lewin 2005, Solnit 2000, Rose & Gamble 1994; Ingold 2004).

As numerous academic and popular histories and anthologies on walking reveal (Amato 2004; Solnit 2000; Minshull 2000; Nicholson 2008; Ingold 2004), walking is a diverse activity, at once a primary form of bodily locomotion, a way to get from point a to point b, a means of experiencing the world in fuller geographical terms and from different sensory and environmental perspectives, a romantic strategy, a first step marking infants' progress towards greater self-sufficiency, a capability that reworks our bodies and brains as we begin to move more easily as a neighborhood becomes familiar or we wear pedometers to "Walk Away the Pounds" (Sansone 2001), a meditative action



(Hanh & Nguyen 1996), a moment of scientific intervention on the body in medicine (McWhinnie et al. 1994), a form of political activism in protest marches or fundraising in walkathons... the list goes on.<sup>1</sup>

In anthropology, walking, and other ways of moving alongside others in unfamiliar environments, as I did in Marseille's Vieux Port and describe throughout this section, has long been implicitly present in the canon, from the songs of walking Boas compiled (1897, 1900, 1925) to Malinowski's Diary, in which he recounts singing "Kiss my ass" to the lurking flying witches as he walked through the jungle after dark (Malinowski 1989; Hsu 1977), to Geertz's felicitous entry into Balinese society by running alongside the commoners to escape the authorities breaking up his famously analyzed cockfight (2005). Anthropologists unreflectedly walk in most ethnographic encounters. It is central to some of the people anthropologists study as well, for example in the Australian "walk-about" or myriad religious pilgrimages (Eade & Sallnow 1991; Hammoudi 2006). Ethnographies, both classic and contemporary, are full of anthropologists walking places, alone and with interlocutors, or should we say "interambulators," although when written about at all, the emphasis tends to be on the things that are said or seen en route rather than the knowledge gained from walking itself—from moving one's body through paths in "the field" alongside the people one seeks to understand.

*It's noon. Church bells ring. It's May. Early lunch diners are gathering on the long sides of the port, at terrace restaurants across the street. They sit at restaurants that*

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<sup>1</sup> Alongside a characteristic penchant for speech, walking makes humans identifiable as such, in ways importantly noted as problematic by disability scholars, who demonstrate that some humans are excluded by conceptualizations of a walking humanity (Linton 1998; Serlin 2006).

*weren't there fifteen years ago, but are now central places to gather for morning coffee and bread, for lunches, for lingering afternoon café chats, for tourist-watching, for apéros and a smoke, a rest of the feet, for one last late-night drink. I check my phone again, and decide I don't have enough time to stop, anticipating whether the friend I am meeting is likely to be late, deciding it doesn't matter. I look back up, and step left, avoiding a crowd of teenagers heading my way. The traffic light changes and they rush towards the crosswalk. others sit, at terraced restaurants, in t-shirts and jeans, in flowing linen or spandex dresses, under awnings, white and blue umbrellas, canvass tarps, cooling in the breeze. I see the restaurant servers circle, dodging close-together tables and spirited conversations, menus under their arms. From across the street, I can faintly smell the aroma of the coffee they carry, mixed with traffic fumes and sea salt. They pass, with trays of espresso cups and saucers held on extended forearms and palms, as the wind blows grit into my face, turning me away so I can shield my eyes. I keep walking, straight west now, and then move left, closer to the water's edge, to avoid the line of tourists who wait for the blue and white mini train to take them on tours to Le Panier, the neighborhood north of here, or Notre Dame de la Garde at the top of the hill to the south. I hear the Petit Train's audio system start as I walk. To my right, across the street, the waiters turn, not yet busy, their faces blank or bemused, faces towards the breeze. Near the water, there's sand in the air— a mistral starting—I'll have to sweep the terrace this weekend. I walk.*

Despite the centrality of walking to everyday life and philosophical and theoretical conceptualizations of “humanness,” cultural anthropologists have only recently begun to produce close analyses of walking to see what it reveals about the

assumptions that underlay typical and scholarly thinking about humans and what they do (see Ingold & Vergunst 2008; Ingold 2004). In anthropology, still, ethnographic analyses tend to ignore—or at least deemphasize—the everyday bodily motions humans go through, instead considering our interlocutors’ “positionality” (Bourdieu 1977: 35, 45, 50, 68, 69)—a combination of class, race, gender, and historical experience, and how these influence humans’ actions and relationships to institutions and each other. Importantly, conceptualizations of “positionality,” including both Bourdieu’s social theoretical work and Audre Lorde’s work on feminism and race, historically brought important issues to light, like how gender, race, and class intersect and cannot be considered separately. I acknowledge these contributions.

And yet, position—when used to describe lived experience or to say something about “subjectivity”—is a starkly immobile term.<sup>2</sup> As a scholarly metaphor, I argue that it is insufficient for understanding the commonplace passing-throughs that make up quotidian experience, which is lived in a state of fluidity and motion, from home to work and back, out to pick up groceries, through Marseille’s Vieux Port, around the block with the dog or a stroller, or even, when still, watching the constantly-moving images on screens and hearing the sounds of atmosphere or radio advance with the—forgive the pun—so-called “march of time.” Rather than addressing such motions, “position” partitions off local, ethnographic experiences as snapshots, moments of rest in the otherwise swirling cacophony of people, products, and capital thought to characterize many people’s lives under globalization. “Position” makes it seem as if people’s lives can be frozen, and then scholarly analysis can be used to trace isolated moments outwards for

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<sup>2</sup> Position is shockingly ubiquitous as a metaphor in contemporary anthropology, turning up more than 1,000 examples on Anthrosource alone.

global resonance or backwards for implications of their history. This artificially separates categories of analysis from categories of experience, where time is not commonly frozen, creating a major problem between the emic and the etic.<sup>3</sup>

Although fixed moments facilitate analysis, their lack of attention to movement is problematic, leading to misleading diagnoses of meaning, subjectivity and agency—and their reinscription in overly simplistic ways, despite scholarly efforts to complicate these notions in the recent decades of post-structuralism (Foucault 1977, 1990). These conceptualizations can be exacerbated by the very structure of language. For example, in English or French, we say: “I walk”: subject/action or “I walk in Marseille”: subject/action/constant place. This produces a particular imagining of human action in the world, one that is embedded in the very constitutive elements of a sentence. The problem is that this construction contains within it bounded divisions among actor, action, and world: a clearly identifiable subject, undertakes one action at a time, in a semi-bounded place. These implied divisions do not necessarily hold true on the level of experiences, whether of anthropologists or their interlocutors (Howes 2005; Ingold 2000; Latour 1999; Merleau-Ponty 2002).

Allowing linguistic sentence structure to predetermine our analytical categories risks losing access to the complexities of people’s felt and lived mobility, which transcends language to include the motions of their bodies, and the feeling of the world’s motions on and through their bodies—much as I felt Marseille move through my body in the walk I present in this section. This limits our understanding not only of people’s

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<sup>3</sup> The different ways people experience time today is a topic absolutely worthy of anthropological consideration, but, within everyday life, its freezing does not seem to be a common experience.

experiences of space, but also how they—and we anthropologists—come to know through the body, a form of knowledge that is mobile, subject to constant revision, only partially conscious, and formed and reformed in constant, shifting relationships with people and objects around us (Merleau-Ponty 2002).

*I walk, along the northern side of the Port, towards the Fort Saint-Jean, towards the promenade behind it, along the dark, glassy harbor. In my head, to the rhythm of my feet, I anticipate the conversation I will have with the friend I'm meeting there, taking steps to think through it. I have to ask him what he thinks about something a developer told me; the plan for a street near his neighborhood. It's a complicated question. For a few steps, I conjugate verbs to the rhythms of my feet, a search for the subjunctive in my tread down the sidewalk. I can almost hear his response, faintly in the back of my imagination. I do hear the water, and moving chains of the port, and traffic rushing by in the road to my right, the puttering of a particularly loud moped. I walk and look left. I see the boats, and the ongoing boat repairs. I am between the workers and some families playing on the sidewalk along the water. A raven-haired toddler grins at the sky, toothily, flying a rainbow kite from his father's arms; his veiled mother looks on, snapping photos with her cell phone, calling, sing-song, "Look here, Nabil, look here." I step out of the way of her photo, pause, and grin too. "Merci" she says, quietly, under her breath, and I think about an interaction with another child that size this morning on the metro, who showed me her doll's sparkling pink dress. Across the honking cars of the street, from the wide concrete plaza between the Vieux Port and the Panier, I hear a choir from a neighborhood primary school. They practice, under a blue and white banner, on a festival platform. They will give a concert that evening. I hear their last two lines—the*

*melody over the traffic, but not the words. They head off, stage right. A nursing home chorus ambles in stage left. The grandmothers practice, shake tambourines and warble off-key, swaying in the breeze. They remind me of someone I need to follow up with, but who? I pause to think, but someone sidesteps to get out of my way. I am in a crowd again; I refocus on the walking. I continue. I walk, towards Saint-Jean, towards the staircase, towards the Sea, toward the conversation, already playing out in my head, away from last week's barbecued fish, towards the plans to pedestrianize this area. I walk, sun in my eyes over my glasses, along the harbor, along the dark water.*

Mobility characterizes everyday life, including the everyday life of urban settings. However, the overlooking of this mobility is particularly acute in the urban anthropology literatures, through their clear distinguishing between “space” and “place,” (Low 2006a, Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2002), a division that is ubiquitous across a range of other literatures as well, including urban planning discourses. This framework importantly highlights a separation between space as it is structurally produced and place as lived, felt, or experienced (Low 2006a), which opens attention to place as a realm where the human experience of space unfolds. However, as Edward Casey points out in his landmark essay on the space/place distinction (1996), the division between space and place is based partly on an Enlightenment-derived belief that time and space are already given categories in the world, an attitude he refers to as “naturalistic.” (11-12). For Casey, “once it is assumed [after Newton and Kant] that space is absolute and infinite as well as empty and a priori in status, places become the mere apportionings of space, its compartmentalizations.” Although anthropologists who use the space/place binary generally do so to highlight the way spaces are politically and unevenly structured, the

framework risks creating an artificial distinction between processes of urban design or redesign and the feelings, sensory engagements, attachments, and use patterns of local populations.<sup>4</sup> The structural changes in space are assumed to trickle down into shifts in people's sense of place, representing the latter as artificially and causatively fixed by the former. Furthermore, as Casey shows (1996), the distinction between space and place reestablishes binaries between subjects and the world, and privileges, particular, modern, Enlightenment-based conceptual frameworks, common to scholars, over everyday experiential ones. It sets up space and time as primary, *a priori*, and universal categories, and place as merely particular (or local), and implies that anthropologists, philosophers, or other social analysts have the ability to access space's universality even when others cannot. This creates a bind for anthropology in the contemporary moment, reinscribing modes of ethnographic authority that have long been decentered (Mascia-Lees 1989; Clifford 1983), and raising difficult conceptual and methodological questions about where scholarly analysis should begin. In a phenomenological perspective, I argue that analyses can usefully begin in everyday experience.

In my walk through Marseille, I was adding to and using my knowledge of the local environment, both consciously and—I presume—not. Through my bodily movements and the everyday mobility that characterizes the atmosphere of the Vieux Port, I was immersing myself in patterns of navigation crucial to Marseille's urban change in the everyday. This embodied knowledge was based on soaking, becoming

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<sup>4</sup> Although recent work using actor network theory approaches has attempted to show architectural design as mobile and processual (Yaneva 2009a; Yaneva 2009b; Yaneva & Latour 2008), this approach remains rare, and focuses more attention on the ways architects and planning activists experience buildings' mobility than on the ways people in general experience space by moving through it.

immersed in a fluid ambience, shifting my body through a moving, changing locale, even as I shifted mentally between different time periods (memory, observation of the present, anticipation) and different, sometimes simultaneous orientations to the world (walker, thinker, observer). This fluid simultaneity, although relatively commonly experienced, if unnoticed, in everyday life, is difficult to express ethnographically by either fixing moments or through linear narration, both common writing strategies even after calls for reflexivity and decentering of the authoritative ethnographic voice in the 1980s (Marcus & Clifford 1986). Yet, unlike the important but tired forms of self-critique engendered by that move to reflexivity, keeping the contingent mobility of our knowledge collection in our accounts can decenter authority—revealing that the ethnographic subject is not bounded and separable from the contexts that surround her, and more accurately portraying the fluidity and worldly embedding of epistemological practices.

*The Sea; its floating garbage; the steadily blue sky and wispy clouds; the 19<sup>th</sup> century pastel and white buildings; the 1970s concrete ones; the blue ferries to If & Frioul; the old, chess-pawn-shaped metal stakes for tying up boats; the unceasing vehicular traffic surrounding on all sides; the wooden marina docks that jut out to welcome pleasure craft; the breeze; the new cafés; they ground Marseille's center of activity, through which I walk. They enter into my thoughts, half-finished and in-motion. As I write, I feel again: the smooth sidewalk against my feet, the nearness of people all around me, and the circling of the waiters, with their fragrant coffee, across the street. Marseille's Vieux Port is a constant bustle.*

As my walk demonstrates, humans do not walk in voids, or in places entirely pre-configured by the spatial actions of planning and governance. On this walk, as on many



others, the movements of my feet and my body, my memories, my thoughts and anticipations, were triggered by my interactions with the objects, forces, and people around me—in short, the complex ecological environment in which I was immersed.<sup>5</sup> When walking, the world acts upon me as much, if not more than I act upon the world. Bumps in the sidewalk trip, winds cool, as they did for me in the May Mediterranean sun, or bring sand or grit to the face, or encourage January strollers inside to seek warmth. Objects and the formations people take within a geographic landscape redirect us—the smells emanating from the fish market, the tourist crowds waiting for the Petit Train—demanding circumnavigation.

From the perspective of experience, humans walk *somewhere*, and that *somewhere* is configured and reconfigured in its walking (Jacobs 1961; Ingold 2004), recreated through its mobile experience, rather than existing out there to be perceived at will. Whether directed or wandering, in the galleries of museums originally developed for walking rather than display (Falk & Dierking 1992; Solnit 2000), the corridors of hospitals, the snowy woods of New England (Frost 1978), detachedly observing in the arcades of Paris (Benjamin 2002), making “large leap[s] for mankind” on the moon, losing one’s self in the disorienting maze of the Bonaventure Hotel (Jameson 1992) or the Marrakesh medina, failing to find a way in the quintessential “non-place” of an airport (Augé 1995), navigating Marseille’s streets through the feeling of the breeze and the people around me, or unconsciously wandering the strange landscapes of dreams and remembering them in waking life (Freud 1915; Nolan 2010; Chapter 5 of this dissertation), people encounter places in motion. They move through them, both

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<sup>5</sup> Importantly, the conceptualization of ecology I present in this chapter is distinctly not limited to common sense notions of the natural world.

physically and conceptually, rather than meeting places as fixed, unchanging entities. Walking is motion, and the continuity and circularity of everyday paths opens up the possibility to conceptualize both place and anthropological knowledge in new ways (Ingold & Vergunst 2008), as shifting, fluid, active, and unbounded.

In this chapter, I search for alternatives to “positionality” that might better account for this fluidity and motion and the ways it plays into experiences of shifting “place,” while not wishing to do away with the attention “position” calls to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other kinds of inequality. I therefore experiment with ethnographic analysis of everyday mobility, considering experiences of walking Marseille’s changing urban landscape. In that capacity, this chapter joins alongside a recent edited volume (Ingold & Vergunst 2008) to begin to explore walking as a common, mobile mode of experiencing and knowing the world. As this work and the broader phenomenological perspective with which it is engaged demonstrate, a walker’s relationship with space eschews simple fixity (Ingold & Lee 2008), engaging geography as traversed-through, and undoing dualisms between not only space and place but also body and environment, and subject and object. Following Ingold & Vergunst, I argue that,

To think and feel is not to set up a relation of external contact or correspondence between subjective states of mind and objectively given conditions of the material world, but rather to make one’s way *through* a world-in-formation, in a movement that is both rhythmically resonant with the movements of others around us—whose journeys we share or whose paths we cross- and open-ended, having neither a point of origin nor any final destination. [2008:2]

In addition to highlighting this epistemological fluidity, walking in Marseille adds another dimension as well. The anthropology of urban renewal tends to highlight large-scale shifts that take place in the local landscape, tracing their history and connecting

them to national and global economic imperatives, and following the anthropology of globalization, distinguishing between global forces as active configurers of space and local places as passive, experiential recipients of this action (Mascia-Lees and Himpele n.d.) However, in Marseille in this present moment, such shifts in local landscape, however large-scale, are most commonly experienced in quotidian, bodily ways. Analyzing how people walk through Marseille's urban setting thus helps show how large-scale shifts in landscape impose themselves within ongoing, mobile everyday life. By grounding analyses firmly in embodied experiences of walking, and leaving movement in our accounts, I argue that it is possible to avoid fixing ethnographic interlocutors in steady states that do not seem to exist from the perspective of lived experience. With this strategy, anthropologists may be able not only to more closely represent our "interambulators'" experiences of their worlds but to rethink categories of urban, global, and spatially-informed social analysis, and avoid narrative strategies which sneak in reinscriptions of ethnographic authority.

***Subjects, Objects and Actions in Motion: Walking in the History of Social Thought***

If walking is to be understood as an action that undoes major categories in social thought, as I suggest here, it is also one that has often been unreflectively incorporated into many of social thought's major movements. A number of interesting histories of walking already exist (Amato 2004; Solnit 2000; Minshull 2000; Nicholson 2008; Gilbert 1990; Ingold 2004), and I have neither the space nor the need to replicate these in their entirety here. However, to examine whether walking might be able to problematize sneaky anthropological dualisms between subjects and objects, minds and bodies, temporal flux and event, or space and place, it is useful to think through a few significant

ways walking has figured in key moments of Western philosophy, and been implicated in the creation of such dualisms.

Many critics of subject/object and mind/body distinctions trace the roots of dualist thinking back to Ancient Greece, to the works of Plato, Aristotle, and their contemporaries, and then into Enlightenment philosophy via Descartes' "cogito," "I think, therefore I am." (Robinson 2009). Plato proposed a major, irreconcilable division between body and soul in *Phaedo* (Bostock 1986), arguing that bodies and the material world exist only as imperfect ephemera, fleeting copies of immortal souls/forms, and that moving beyond this material realm into pure intellectualism is the only means to achieve real knowledge (Robinson 2009). For, Plato, walking is relegated to this material world, which is to be dismissed. Not so for Aristotle, whose project of division, classification, and categorization divided the world similarly (Kirwan 1993), but placed more emphasis on the importance of sensory and material worlds to the production of empirical knowledge, a trend which became important in the development of empiricism as central to science (Robinson 2009). For Aristotle, founder of the peripatetic school,<sup>6</sup> walking presented an important challenge to neat typologies of the world, particularly those posed between potentiality and actuality, since walking is capable of being both potential and actual at once—when one is walking, one has also already walked (Pickering 1977). Artistic depictions of Aristotle tend to portray him as a walking thinker (Raphael 1510), in sharp contradistinction to Rodin's depiction of *The Thinker*, immobile and with head

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<sup>6</sup> Even if it was so named only because of an architectural feature—the colonnades—on the land given Aristotle to meet with his followers, it is still interesting that this school of thought became so closely identified with walking, and demonstrates that minor features of environment can come to influence human thinking in ways that are both durable and profound (Solnit 2000).

on fist (1902). Yet, both Plato and Aristotle helped to institute dualism by arguing for the importance of the knowledge of knowledge (Hamlyn & Aisthis 1978), fundamentally separating philosophy from everyday embodied life. Enlightenment trajectories further distilled the distinction, beginning with Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" (1984).<sup>7</sup>

As Enlightenment thought developed, however, despite all of this tireless emphasis on thinking, humans continued to walk. Indeed, their walking in some cases expanded dramatically, becoming valued for its health-giving benefits and as a means for travel (Solnit 2000; Ingold 2004; Robinson 1989). Philosophers were no exception, as they discussed in writings that were separated from their philosophical arguments, furthering distinct dualisms between thinking and the everyday, actors and non-actors, and subjects and objects (Amato 2004). For example (see Solnit 2000 for many more), Rousseau discusses walking in his descriptions of his personal practices and happiest moments (2000), Hobbes as part and parcel of sensing the state of nature (1998), and the reclusive Kierkegaard in his diaries as a primary arena of his limited interaction with other people (1960). Yet, though walking figured prominently in diaries and memoirs of these and other philosophers, scholars have rarely reflected theoretically upon these acts of walking, despite their potential connections with enlightenment thinkers' being-in-the-world.

By the time of Marx, walking had begun to take on further meaning, serving as a narrative strategy that imbued authors' voices with a near-ethnographic authority,

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<sup>7</sup> In Latour's analysis, Western notions of modernism depended on cordoning off the Modern West to encompass those who believed in limiting agency to human subjects and, when convenient, an omniscient, singular God, to the exclusion of the rest of the world, which held to beliefs in natural and object forces, dismissed by Europeans as fetishism and animism (1993; For critique of the concept of fetishism see Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988).

presenting a means for gathering empirical evidence through the body and a source of pleasure (Engels 1844; Marx & Engels 1969). This was especially the case in cities. Engels, in his discussion of urbanism in the *Conditions of the Working Class in England*, draws on his walks through London, Manchester, and Leeds, and the misery this enabled him to *see with his own eyes* (see Scott 1991 for an analysis of the problems with considering experience as evidence). Much like Rousseau (1997), Engels saw human nature as inherently cooperative, and humans as dependant on an ability to stay connected with nature, their bodies, each other and the fruits of their labor. The city, and its organization of capital, violently interrupted this social organization. It especially cut off lower-class people from embodiment and the fruits of their labor, in particular from physically working the land, making them instead subject to unpredictable whims of capital and those who controlled it. In making this argument, Engels relied on describing the abject poverty of workers in London and Manchester, a life which frequently included starvation, residences in crowded squalor, and dependence on crime, all of which Engels experienced visually and empathetically through his walks. Engels also apparently equated walking with a kind of embodied attachment at risk in capitalist production. In a seemingly quickly-jotted, and actually disconnected notation he made on his voyage through America and Canada, Engels wrote, “The Americans *unable to enjoy*. The Americans unable to walk—either rush or loaf” (Marx and Engels 2002: 190).

Reflections on the *flâneur*, or urban stroller, as originally theorized by Baudelaire (1972) were similarly responses to urban environments and their capitalist excesses, and attempts to explain how a subject alienated from their body by modernity and capitalism would respond to a new materiality of the environment. For Benjamin, the *flâneur*

provided a way of thinking through the idea of the urban crowd and its impacts on individuality. Benjamin remarks that Engels saw the crowd as an overwhelming entity, absolutely precluding individual human interaction, whereas for Baudelaire, the crowd was a way for the *flâneur* to hone and demonstrate a capacity for urban interaction (Benjamin 2002), if only an accessible way for some—namely men of a particular social class (Mazlich 1994:52). For Marx, Engels, Benjamin and Baudelaire, the city was not the city without masses of people, who acted often as crowds rather than individuals. However, the *flâneur*, as a street level participant and mobile, walking critic of urban life, reinscribes an individual subject, by allowing a separation between the walking spectator and the mass. As Benjamin describes:

There was the pedestrian, who would let himself be jostled by the crowd, but there was also the *flâneur*, who demanded elbow room and was unwilling to forego the life of a gentlemen of leisure. Let the many attend to their daily affairs; the man of leisure can indulge in the perambulations of the *flâneur*, only if, as such, he is already out of place. He is as much out of place in an atmosphere of complete leisure as in the feverish turmoil of the city. [1968:172-173]

As post-Enlightenment writers, Engels, Benjamin, Baudelaire and Marx philosophized about worlds where objects and individual subjects were problematically cut off from one another. In their analyses of capitalism, they hypothesized its alienation of people from their own bodies as well as their labor, instituting a paradigm for narratives of disenchantment which have become ubiquitous in understandings of how late capitalist subjects relate to the world around them (Davies & Dwyer 2007; Gauchet 1999; Jameson 1992). Yet, importantly, these thinkers also saw experience, and experiences of mobility, empathy, and walking in particular, as important epistemological grounds—as empirical ways of building knowledge about the world. If one takes those insights as a starting

point, without assuming *a priori* that the world is divided, or that alienation and Enchantment are mutually exclusive sentiments, it is possible to open up new conceptualizations of how bodies navigate their worlds in relation to the objects around them, including within the global capitalist processes within which Marseille's renewal is embedded.

### ***Displacements and Emplacements***

Phenomenology has recently been embraced in some corners of anthropology as a way to move beyond the dilemmas of divided bodies and minds, subjects and objects, and people and their environments, which were set up by the philosophers and writers discussed above. Phenomenological thinkers argue that, when one begins with experience—and, in particular, sensory experience—place becomes primary, mobile and bodily (Casey 1996). Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002) has been especially influential in embodiment studies in anthropology, which have now led to research on sensory experience specifically (see Stoller 1997, Pink 2009).

For Merleau-Ponty, the body is fundamentally the means of experiencing the world, and not just another object within it. Merleau-Ponty critiques both empiricism—the idea that it is possible to trace sensory experiences to root causes in the world—and intellectualism—the idea that human minds produce experiences of sensation. Both of these were central Enlightenment ideas, which for Merleau-Ponty derive from and reinscribe dualistic thinking. Privileging either the subject or the object of perception posits that objects and meanings are simply “out there” to be perceived (Merleau-Ponty 2002:45-46). The essential status of the subject and object as becoming meaningful through interaction with each other is obscured. I see his move, therefore, as one aimed at



emphasizing subjects' *engagements with* the world.

Some sensory anthropologists, however, have critiqued the use of phenomenology, and particularly Merleau-Ponty's vision of it, in projects to revalue sensory experience. Importantly, David Howes draws attention to the fact that phenomenology sometimes "has the drawback, particularly for the social sciences, of emphasizing the individual and the subjective over the communal and social, and in consequence having little to say about the politics of perception" (Howes 2010:335). Furthermore, he claims that Merleau-Ponty's view of the senses was naïve and unable to account for

all the ways the senses conflict with one another as regards both physical experience and cultural values: for example, the sensory dissonance produced by encountering a holy man who looks ugly but emits a fragrant odour of sanctity, or the stick in water that looks different to the eye from how it feels in the hand. The senses do not always work together or convey the same message. This makes sensory perception far more complex – and interesting – than phenomenologists imagine. [Howes 2010:335]

I share Howes's concerns about phenomenology as a philosophy that sometimes overemphasizes divides between the individual and her larger social context. I also recognize that Merleau-Ponty's view of how the senses work lacks nuance, although this is less surprising given its time and Merleau-Ponty's initial training in empirical psychology. As sensory anthropology has come of age, anthropologists have developed a much more comprehensive view of how the senses work—and work differently—in different societies.

Phenomenologically-attuned studies can have other problems as well. As Olsen points out, even in the finest of these works, and in Merleau-Ponty's theory itself, an emphasis on human experience makes it feel like "there is something missing... the

materiality that the body relates to; the material world it is being-in. One only vaguely realizes that this world has other inhabitants than the humans” (2003:97).

Inevitably, phenomenology is also, always, one method of interpretation that is available among others. As Knibbe and Versteeg note in an article analyzing phenomenological approaches to the anthropology of religion:

Despite the emphasis on ‘things as they are’ in phenomenologically inspired anthropology, we should not forget that phenomenology is still interpretation and that it uses referents alien to the local culture. In the act of writing, researchers create and maintain a distance between ‘science’ and the people they are writing about. They abstract and condense meaning from what they themselves say can only be understood through lived experience. Phenomenology should not try to hide this fact with an overly politically correct emphasis on ‘experience’ and the anthropologist as a participant. [2008:60]

These critiques are all quite sensible. Nonetheless, I still find Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the mobility of people and phenomenology’s complex theorizations of what makes up experience to be useful, and I especially appreciate the places where he highlights intersubjectivity and interobjectivity with the material world. I use Merleau-Ponty, however, with a caveat that the environment and people’s processes of perception are always embedded in complex processes of both physical and social history. If one understands these historical factors to be always at play in subjects’ mobile engagements with the world—as aggregating to color their perceptions of and processes of engaging with and experiencing the world over time—then, as I try to show in this dissertation, phenomenological methods might become a way to more precisely access the ways that politics in general as well as the politics of perception actually play out in everyday life. This, however, necessitates knowledge of a person’s and her society’s history when interpreting her mobile sensory experiences, which expands phenomenology from just an

emphasis on the immediate. In other words, just because experiences are created in intersubjective and interobjective engagement and motion does not mean that they are a constantly blank slate. Rather, mobility emphasizes the historicity as well as the potentiality of a given experiential moment.

By phenomenological methods, then, I am referring to those in which the anthropologist attempts to feel the world together with her interlocutors and acknowledge the open-endedness of their material and intersubjective encounters, especially by moving through the world along their sides. Sometimes, this means asking them to take opportunities to feel in their worlds, and my walking tours were one such opportunity. Nonetheless, there are limitations in ability to “feel together,” and I believe that, in fact, attempting to do so can highlight my differences from my interlocutors, marking things that are important to them that might not at first be obvious to me, and vice versa. Inevitably, the critical training inherent in my socialization into anthropology is one of these differences.

As Knibbe and Verstig conclude in their analysis:

The language of phenomenology is clearly a language of the immediate, appearing to our consciousness. This kind of language tends to obscure the social shaping of lived cultural reality and thereby makes a critical stance towards the conditions that underlie this reality more difficult. Recognizing that anthropologists create their own unique position, and thereby inevitably move away from the experience and understanding of the people they have studied with, should lead to the realization that a critical stance, not only towards the pretensions of science, is both possible and necessary. Why not a critical phenomenology of power? [2008: 61]

It is precisely this “critical phenomenology of power” that I am trying to achieve in the approach I take to urban planning processes in Marseille. I work to do this by simultaneously emphasizing the importance of experiential encounters and analyzing

them in a way that views their social and historical implications as integral components of the process by which people engage with the world.

The emphasis on viewing the world as a process of engagement is critical to this project, and was fruitfully taken up in the anthropology of embodiment, which began to emerge in the 1990s, and led to a parallel anthropology of the senses, which works to understand how people use their bodies, and live in the world through bodies, cross-culturally (Csordas 1990). Key players in building this literature wrote and continue to write ethnographies that are carefully attuned to sensory experiences, both their own and those of their interlocutors, and the position of the senses within the politics of everyday life (Classen 1993, 1998; Csordas 1997, 2002; Desjarlais 1992, 1997; Feld and Basso 1996; Howes 2005; Seremetakis 1994; Stoller 1989, 1997, 2002). More recently, Howes and other anthropologists of the senses have begun to push to understand their shared project as the ethnographic exploration of “emplacement:”

While the paradigm of “embodiment” implied an integration of mind and body, the emergent paradigm of emplacement suggests the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment. This environment is both physical and social, as is well illustrated by the bundle of sensory and social values contained in the feeling of “home” (see Tuan 1995). The counterpart to emplacement is displacement, the feeling that one is homeless, disconnected from one's physical and social environment. A sense of displacement is often the plight of the socially marginal.' [Howes 2005:7]

This idea of emplacement better encompasses the crucial importance of the material and social environment in producing and provoking sensory experiences than does phenomenology alone. With its prefix, em/en, which expresses conversion or entry into a specified *state or locale*, the term emplacement risks unintentionally promoting a method that takes an analytical snapshot, freezing the ongoing life-paths of our interlocutors into

ethnographic moments taken out of their constantly evolving context. What a cautious phenomenology can add to it is an emphasis on motion, potentiality, and open-endedness.

The pervasive oppositions between space and place in anthropology, while important as a step in conceptualizing the importance and structuring of the urban environment, render space as large, general, structural, and active, and place as merely particular, passive, and receptive of structural changes, (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga 2002, Harvey 1989; see also Casey 1996). Because of this, emplacement as a metaphor also risks undermining the project of sensory anthropology by reinscribing bodily experience as merely another iteration of the local and particular. Indeed, displacement is already a fundamental category within studies of urban renewal and gentrification (Cahill 2007; Atkinson 2000a, 2000b), which often trace its root causes to large-scale structures of political economy and discuss experience primarily as a micro-dimension that results from and demonstrates these large-scale shifts. While this focus points out some of the most dramatic effects of renewal, it seems to me to de-emphasize experience, including sensory experience, as an important unit of analysis. It also neuters people's abilities to participate in meaningfully changing the dominant ideology.

A mobile, sensory perspective on urban change can highlight the ways that people, in fact, experience urban projects, power, and global and social histories through their mobile bodies, as they encounter material objects and physical and social landscapes around them, rather than as impalpable global forces that reconfigure their lives and to which they can merely and barely respond. As Ingold argues, "It is in the very 'tuning' of movement in response to the ever-changing conditions of an unfolding task that the skill of walking, as that of any other bodily technique, ultimately resides" (Ingold 2004:19). I

take this one step further in arguing that it is in this tuning of movement, which is always based partially on accumulated social and historical knowledge, that everyday political experience and action resides, making it impossible for “position,” “emplacement,” or other metaphors of fixity to fully account for such experiences. Ahmed’s walk is illustrative:

***Walking Unbounded—Mobile Experience of Ahmed’s Neighborhood***

Ahmed is 41, and within Marseille’s racial landscape, he is clearly Arab. Of Moroccan origin, Ahmed has lived in France since he was four, and in Marseille for fifteen years, mostly in downtown Belsunce, an historical ‘transit quarter’ of insalubrious buildings. Ahmed and a girlfriend, who has since left, rented a two-bedroom apartment, just as the buildings a few streets over were being bought for gallery space. Ahmed told me the apartment and the neighborhood, “feel like home.” On a walk through his neighborhood, I interrogated what he meant. As we walked, he said, “When I first got here, I had this sense of displacement, of being somewhere totally foreign, of not being in France... maybe an African country.” I asked him to clarify. In my own thinking, I was reflecting on how odd it was that Ahmed, as a so-called “racial other,” would express his sentiments in Marseille in these terms.

He continued, bringing me back to the present, “because of the agitation, the noise in the streets, the people who talk so loud, the badly-organized trash pickup.” He gestured to piled up garbage, cardboard boxes from the wholesalers that define his district, mixed with restaurant and domestic garbage, overflowing from street-side dumpsters. “More than anything else, the sheer amount of diversity in the streets. The different music you hear, the different colors and styles of dress.” Ahmed paused. “I’m talking about from

that angle, the Mediterraneanness of the city.”

I asked him to elaborate: “All of that stuff I was just talking about is Mediterranean” he said. “The smells of different spices and pastries. Of kebabs and of trash and bus fumes. The snackbars, when you pass them.” We were approaching one at that moment, and could smell roasting meat and french fries, and hear a couple of teenagers discussing strategies from last night’s Olympique Marseille game. “The people who talk loud, the crowds. The approachability of people here. Everyone talks to each other easily.... You’re rude if you don’t talk here. Elsewhere, there’s not this facility.”

“Even with that, though, there are two groups of residents in Belsunce. The new, higher-class ones, and the old, the retired construction workers and the old immigrants. I was seen as a new resident, here. Now, I’m sort of between the two groups. Ay ay ay.” Ahmed motioned to his ears, and then was quiet for a long while, waiting for us to pass a jackhammer. A block further down, he continued, “For a couple of years, the construction noise has been drowning out the sound of people talking, of the traffic, of the arguments in the street... They’re renovating that building there,” He pointed back towards the jackhammer. “I used to know a family that lived there, but they’re some of the people we just don’t see around here anymore. We don’t see some whole groups of people who have just left. Disappeared.”



**Figure 1. Belsunce Business. Photograph taken by Ahmed and used with permission.**

“But at the same time, I’m more at home now here than before. In some ways. I’m part of the neighborhood. When I pass in the streets, there are youth, and shopkeepers, who will call out my name from a little ways away, or signal to me when they see me. You’ve seen. Today.” I had. We had stopped numerous times for him to greet people and exchange pleasantries.

“Now, *I know when I’m getting into Belsunce*. I can feel it. When I start to hear Arabic spoken. Usually. There are borders, and inside the borders, it feels different. The restaurant where we ate? That’s at the very end of the neighborhood. One side of the sidewalk is a part of it. The other one isn’t. Over by the library, we passed earlier, the tobacco shop there? The patisserie there? That’s another border. The streets at the base



[he points]. When we started walking up hill, that's right inside the limits. You can feel yourself entering, right? Barely, if you pay close attention? You can smell it... But there are places in the neighborhood which aren't within these borders: the university buildings just across from the library, the street where all the galleries are isn't at all a part. The real residents don't go there. The restaurants aren't designed to serve them. The street behind the library, too, that was so changed a few years ago. And the monastery, the religious order. Over in front of that place, it's a different place."

As Ahmed said this, we passed the neighborhood mosque, in the basement of a residential building. The sun was setting on the gray afternoon, and I pulled my sweater around me. The call to prayer started as we passed. We stopped still, a beat apart, stopped walking and fell quiet, heads down, listening, waiting for it to finish. When it had ended, without a word, Ahmed pushed my right elbow to encourage me to keep moving. After a few minutes of brooding and listening to the sounds of the neighborhood as it shifted into evening, a few blocks further down, he continued, wistful, with a knowing smile, "I have hope that the neighborhood won't change too much. I have hope I'll still feel this here. They'll never get rid of all of Marseille's diversity."

As we walked, Ahmed showed me what we passed, and spoke about it discursively, but more importantly, he encouraged me to feel it with him. My feet, my body, responded to his lead, as we moved through the neighborhood together, and responded to the ambience of the streets as he described it. As we walked, back through places he knew I had been before, I felt his invisible, sentimental borders, listened for the shifts in sound, felt the ghosts and traces of the friends he's had who have moved away. Importantly, in his action, his posture, and his movements through the streets, as much as

in his words, Ahmed reflected his feelings for the gradual shifts in his neighborhood. He invited me to feel them too, to smell the roasting chicken and spice of the butcher shop; to hear the sounds of chatting, pleasantries, and the call to prayer; to feel the recoil and rerouting imposed by overflowing dumpsters, jackhammers, and rough sidewalks, to anticipate the moment he would reach for his packet of cigarettes. These mirror the experiences he encounters in his moves through everyday life—experiences he has built into something he calls home, something he hopes to protect and anticipates continuing. Through our walk, I began not only to understand what Ahmed thinks of his neighborhood, but to value what he feels in it, both in terms of his social interactions and in terms of what the general atmosphere of this landscape does for him, the multiple, simultaneous encounters, emotions, memories, hopes and reflections it engenders in his body and his life.

Home, for Ahmed, is not a fixed location, but a way of knowing and feeling. His methods of knowing the spaces around him, as this walk demonstrates, are fixed neither in time nor in location. Rather, they are gradual, rife with conflict, fluid and shifting, from moment to moment, block to block, day to day. In Ahmed's case, the sites and sounds he encountered on our route brought out complex, shifting, conflicting sentiments. To attempt to clearly diagnose one meaning, or a clear trajectory between a cause of "spatial change" and an effect of "em/displaced feeling"—would be to miss the richness of his mobile everyday experience. Such an approach is inadequate in accounting for the fluid actions of landscape, and its conglomeration of objects, sounds, smells, and ambience on Ahmed, his words, thoughts, emotions and body. The shifts in Ahmed's emotions and experiences, gradual though they are, sometimes worry him, playing into

the wistfulness in his voice when he talks about the changes, his palpable anxieties about what is to come, his memories of people who have long left. I felt these in his pauses, in his quiet hand on my elbow, as much as I heard them in his words. Yet, Ahmed expresses not just optimism, but a certainty that the diversity he loves, and that he finds home-making in his neighborhood, will remain, in some form. Its continuity in his fluid sensory experiences of the material environment and its shifts provide stability as he moves through the world. Even that stability should be seen as highly mobile, rather than “positioned.”

### *Urban Ecologies of Motion*

What my experience of walking with Ahmed shows is that, for at least some people, coming to know and feel a place happens not only through sociality, but through mobile, shifting encounters with objects, in constantly-reconfigured landscapes-in-formation. Encounters with objects, like built environmental structures—dumpsters, storefronts, sidewalks, mosques, tramways, to name but a few—play into ephemeral sensations: smells, sounds, haptic experiences. These ephemeral sensations then have an enormous impact on everyday life, in embodied practice—how people move their bodies through landscapes—and in people’s so-called “conceptual” frames about their neighborhoods and cities—what people come to know about, feel and value in them, commitments that can make them ultimately—and I think this word is illustrative—mobilize.

Part of what is important about motion is its role enabling people’s simultaneously generative and fleeting encounters with objects and material worlds. While some explicit work on materiality in anthropology does exist (e.g. Miller 2008,

2005), it has importantly tended to emphasize the things people do with objects, and the ways they use them to craft “selves,” in consumption theories that take for granted a starting point of alienation under capitalism (Appadurai 1986). Here, though, as the walks I am describing suggest, embodied experiences of motion can instead highlight the ways objects act upon people and function as pieces of broader ecologies, influencing how humans perceive, feel, act, and live. In addition to being seen as the background of human action or as tools of human use, then, objects can also to be understood as productive, as companions and elements of a living, fluctuating, unpredictable ecology, in which humans diversely take part.

Recent work, largely outside of anthropology, has attempted to take material objects more seriously for such actions upon humans and their worlds (e.g., Stewart 1993; Bennett 2001), in particular, Jane Bennett’s recent book *Vibrant Matter*, and Timothy Morton’s recent work on ecology within literature (Morton 2007, 2010). These works build on centuries of political philosophy that has explored the divide between subject and object in the history of Western epistemology, such as Lucretius (1995), Kant (1987), Nietzsche (1967), Deleuze & Guattari, (1977, 1987), and Bruno Latour (1993, 1999).

Bennett approaches life and its adumbration and vibrancy as forces animating some kinds of matter, hierarchically elevating them to the status of living beings instead of inanimate things, a category to which they are relegated in work that focuses on commodity fetishism, or the philosophies I outlined above centered on dualism. She asks what happens if vibrancy is viewed differently, as inherent in all matter, from metal to garbage to food. She explores these as examples of objects that act upon the world and

humans in various ways, alone and within systems— for example, garbage by releasing gases and chemicals into the atmosphere or food by merging with our bodies to change their shapes, health, and capabilities. In her careful work, Bennett asks what kinds of epistemological and political possibilities such a line of thinking might allow. In particular, she points to a potential for opening up of environmental awareness, goals, and activism if people are able to acknowledge the influence, or even agency, that objects have, and view them as companions and actors within our political worlds and lives.

Morton, likewise, points to these possibilities, but argues for moving what we imagine as possible beyond just environmental impacts, asking what broad political possibilities open up with a thorough decentering of the human subject, a scaling back of the human hubris which may very well lead to our eventual demise (2007). This hubris is particularly evident in cities, where human mastery of nature is often described as reaching its peak (Light 2001). As reviews of urban anthropological literature show, the architectural built environment, specifically that of large cities, is especially prone to social constructionist critique and analysis for what objects symbolize and represent, rather than what they do to the people who come in contact with them (Gottdiener and Lagopoulos 1986). Indeed, city landscapes are often viewed in the ethnographic literature as a prime example of this hubris, marked by economic inequality, concentrations of people so large they simply can not be supported by local landscapes without massive and complex trade infrastructures, globally heavy-handed planning (Bullard et al. 2000), and a plethora of symbols of wealth and concentrated social power.

For politically-minded academics, like many urban ethnographers, cities symbolize the nefarious underbelly of human innovation, representing a broader lack of

sustainable thinking and despotic attempts on the part of some humans to control the movements and resources available to others (Caldeira 2000; Scott 1998). More romantic attachments to the city were also prevalent in some early urban studies (e. g. Jacobs 1961), and recent studies of cities across disciplines have also highlighted the creative force of the urban environment (e.g. Savage & Miles 2012; Goldstein 2005, 2012), or, in a few recent works, seen cities as spaces for utopian possibility and complex intercultural interaction (Gunder 2005). These hopeful approaches are also present in the attitudes of some of the urban planners and designers with whom I interacted in Marseille. On the whole, however, within anthropology it has become more common to read cities as examples of humans' most unwise attempts to control the world around us, as spaces that concentrate and further neoliberal politics (Harvey 2005; Sassen 2001, Smith 2002), exacerbate inequality (Shihadeh & Steffensmeier 1994), and simultaneously enable environmental catastrophe (e.g., Elliott & Pais 2006). Although these perspectives do important critical work, emphasizing the role of human agency in making over the world, they do not give enough attention to the role of humans as perceptive and receptive beings, embedded in complex "multispecies" and material contexts (Haraway 2008; Kirksey & Helmreich 2010). They also reinscribe the authority of the ethnographer as someone especially able to discern the complex social processes of space, and to diagnose people's experiences of place for what they mean within these spatial processes. In laudable efforts to highlight urban structural inequalities, this social scientific study of architectural processes, perhaps more than any other field, has left relatively little room for understanding the consequential but unintentional ways objects in the built

environment act upon us, necessitating the kind of ecological approach for which I am advocating.

Here, I want to suggest that such approaches can also do important work within anthropology more broadly. For, just as highlighting the action of non-humans upon the world can decenter the Enlightenment emphasis on individual subjects as actors in control of the environments around them, grounding ethnographic descriptions in ecologies of motion serves to highlight the contingencies, fluidities, revisions, and accidents of everyday life, and the important roles they play in engendering affect and searching for knowledge, anthropological or otherwise. This can further decenter ethnographic authority, to a degree not possible in the attempts—important for other reasons—to push for greater reflexivity, since those reinscribe the anthropologist as an individual knowing subject (Mascia-Lees et al 1989). Rather than presenting other people's lived experiences as objects to be “diagnosed” for their underlying meaning, or traced for their root causes from the particular subject-position of a knowledgeable anthropologist, a focus on motion highlights the ways we and our interlocutors create knowledge in intersubjective and interobjective encounters with each other and the material environments around us (Sobchak 2004). This approach is valuable for revealing the experiences and everyday epistemological methods of the people with whom we work over our own, preconceived ideas of how structure, spatial change, or Marxist dialectics play out in people's lives. Walking, as a way of experiencing the world in motion *together*, can provide access to such encounters.

***Shifting the landscape, shifting the sense-scape: Samira's walk***

A bright, breezy, Marseille Saturday afternoon in June. Samira, a thirty-three

year-old, self-described "black Moroccan" mother of four, was leading me around downtown Marseille, where she has lived for the past seven years, since leaving Lyon with her husband and then-infant son. Like many of my Marseillais interlocutors, I had asked Samira to lead me on a tour through her district, to "give me a feel" for it, and to describe the "feel" the environment gives to her. I tried to leave this intentionally open-ended. Samira took an historical approach, narrating as we went along, describing the present and pasts of the locations we passed, and discussing how those changes had taken place.

She began at the more centrally located, renovated end of the Rue de la République, which connects Marseille's established Vieux Port heart with the commercial port neighborhood, subject to the most intervention by current renewal projects like *Projet Euroméditerranée*, and the site of the in-progress business district. Where we started, a crop of new boutiques has opened in what used to be a line of discount stores: an H&M, hairdressers, a Benetton, several upscale clothing and shoe stores, and a variety of expensive ice cream shops and cafés, a new Orange store entirely made of glass. Recently, the city redesigned the vehicular and pedestrian traffic patterns and repaved the sidewalks. The new sidewalks, fencing, scaffolding, and detour signs shift the ways people navigate this street. For the first couple of blocks, Samira could barely keep up with describing the changes that had recently occurred. She pointed to practically every store. "Yep, that's new," she said. "That too. That used to be the luggage store. This is all new." Then, pointing to an upscale, pink café: "Oh, look what they've done with that! It's hideous. The café that was there used to have good pastries, but I'd never go in this one." These descriptions were interspersed with details about friends she had had who had



lived in this neighborhood and since moved, whose memory and absence Samira seemed to feel in the air around her, with a recounting of what sorts of transactions used to be carried out in the individual storefronts, ongoing in her memory, and with complaints about the havoc the construction wreaked on pedestrian traffic patterns. “For a while,” she said, “the construction on this street made it so you could walk its whole length and never feel the sun on your back.”

A few blocks further down from the shopping district, la Rue de la République is lined with elaborate and imposing Hausmannian buildings, five to eight-or-more stories high. Until recently, they were almost black with filth, but now, they gleam white in the Mediterranean sun, and the only dark color on them is their ornate wrought iron balconies and window screens. Despite their new look, at the time of our walk they sat largely empty, the low-rent tenants vacated by any means necessary, elevators intentionally put out of service, hallway lights broken, gas leaks left unattended. In finished buildings, the interiors were turned into lofts, although sales were slower than expected. During the time of my walk with Samira, many of these buildings were still works in progress, stalled due to the impacts of the global financial crisis, as the European Lehman Brothers was a major investor in the project to remake République.

As Samira led me down the street, after a short block or two, we entered a section where flux outstripped finish. The Saturday crowd thinned out, from mildly hectic to nonexistent. We found ourselves alone on the block, dwarfed by the bright, newly cleaned architectural facades, and their close relatives, scaffolding and netting. On the newly wide, empty sidewalk, Samira paused in place for a long moment, before turning her gaze upwards and making a full turn on her feet. She drew in a deep breath. "You

know," she said, "this street used to be alive all the time. They had the best hallal butcher, and a green grocer that got the freshest fruits and vegetables, right off the ships. And a spice market there," she gestured in the direction we had been walking... "where *everyone* went... There were traffic jams all the time, and you could hear the horns all day long... It annoyed me... But this now... *this... this emptiness* is what it's like all the way along this street. Except it gets even emptier..." She drew in a deep breath, sighing. "I understand it. The shops that were affordable? Closed. And the ones that aren't closed yet? Well, it's strange to go to the only open store on a block, to never see another person, even in the middle of the day... Where it's finished, it's cleaner than by my house, sure, but *at what cost?*" Another breath. "*What is cleanliness if it's empty?*"

For Samira, Marseille's recent urban changes have been significant, and connected with large changes in her life and personal circumstances. As local "renewal" has occurred, property values risen, and the economy shifted, she moved her family out of an adored but expensive private apartment a few blocks south of where we were walking, south of La Canebière, the street that divides the city. They have moved instead into a dingy, run-down social housing apartment, nonetheless much coveted for its central Marseille location.<sup>8</sup> In the face of rising prices and a growing family, Samira's husband has had to take seasonal work in Corsica, leaving her alone with their primary school-aged children seven months a year. Given Marseille's limited employment options, she has been unable to find work in the office jobs she trained for and held in Lyon, and has

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<sup>8</sup> The social housing stock in Marseille is extremely limited compared to need, with wait lists that can last, in cases I myself witnessed, up to twelve years. It is especially difficult in this context to get an apartment downtown and near public transportation. Even so, Samira said she often referred to where she lived as "La République" instead of the correct, adjacent "Le Panier," especially when trying to get work. "It changes the way people think of you if you say you live three blocks over in the renovated part," she said.

instead taken a course, and subsequently a job, in domestic cleaning.

All of these developments in Samira's life can be read, in retrospect, for the ways they are enmeshed with the organized projects underway to alter the urban landscape and identity of Marseille. But for Samira, the most immediately remarkable feature of the changes taking place in her city, on an everyday basis, is how different things *feel* as she navigates it; the requisite changes in her daily routes; a constant, usually slight, but occasionally overwhelming sensation of unfamiliarity in places she knows intimately, and lost or troubled social connections brought about alongside these aesthetic shifts. As we walked, this feeling emanated through her, culminating with her spin on her feet, and a corresponding narration of displacement in process, on a sidewalk she knew well, on a sunny day in a town she loves. Her memories, her anticipations of the good jobs and more culturally integrated schools she hopes will come with the renewal projects, these moments were equally present on our walk, in the remembered former cafés and apartments where she gathered with friends, in the new apartments she has since helped to squat with a community organization with which she affiliates. To analyze only her narrative of displacement would be to disconnect this moment from her larger trajectory of movement through the city, to partition it from her embodied and affective sentiments, to trace from a snapshot what was—and perhaps only can be—experienced in motion.

As Samira's walk demonstrates, architecture has the potential to impact bodily experiences and senses of belonging. When experiencing shifts in the environment around her, Samira knew its built features, intimately, through her body, even if she did not consciously think or talk about them. It was through her body, then, that she felt them change, and came to question her belonging within the city. The objects that surround

Samira, the bustling, shifting and eerily calm material world we encountered that day, the contrasts between its different elements that she navigates in motion, in the course of one mobile walk, between a Marseille of the future, a remembered past, and its current state, and the roles of these particular landscapes, their current and former stories and contents in the history by which she arrived at that moment, all are essential to crafting a multi-layered, experiential understanding of our walk.

***Conclusion: Walking Flux, an Argument for the Ecological Perspective***

Ecologies are a revealing way to look at cities because they disrupt our traditional notions of the person, better accounting for the strength and importance of personhood's relationship with material worlds, highlighting the ways people can be moved by their material surroundings *because* they constantly move through those surroundings.

Although grounded in a phenomenological emphasis on experience and its immediacy, this approach highlights rather than downplays the importance of history, pointing out the ways that accumulating an aggregation of experiences in the same way or the same area over time leaves one vulnerable to the overwhelming disruption that accompanies material and aesthetic changes within it. Renewal is like a slow earthquake, causing the earth to tremble lightly below your feet; in the case of Euroméditerranée, this trembling has been ongoing for almost twenty years.

When viewed as a part of urban ecologies of motion, renewal projects are not only violent economically if they eventually result in gentrification, or violent racially if they create new forms of exclusion, although the fears such projects raise about these issues are very real and quite important to consider. Rather, urban renewal enacts violence on the everyday, taking the already-existing powers material objects have over

the population and cathecting them by radically altering the configurations of and feelings evoked by local material worlds. Especially in a port city like Marseille, so marked by its history as transitory, by migration, and by its multiculturalism, a sense of home or comfort or security is a fragile thing, acquired gradually as one learns to navigate the shadows cast by particular objects in the late afternoon sun, the chills brought about by the way the buildings redirect the wind and the rain, the smells of the tunnel one must traverse to get to work. As much as with physical violence, one's comfort can be disrupted by a pizza shop or a grocery stand that changes purpose and with it the olfactory and gustatory atmosphere of the neighborhood, or the sounds of construction noise or the redirected rush of cars, the feel of new sidewalks and their literal impact against your feet, the closing of streets and the redirection they render necessary of your old bicycle routes, the reconfiguration of buildings and the dispersal of the social networks they once allowed. Even for those people whom renewal never permanently moves, who the literature too often thinks of as untouched or even enhanced by the march of progress, urban projects can easily disrupt their sense of belonging and redefine their experiences of comfort and security. Even those who have reflectively decided to ideologically support a given project have the potential to experience this violence, as the constellation of their surroundings shift, or the installation of a new tramline runs headlong into the sensory experiences of their commutes.

My experience of my own apartment in Marseille, for example, included the predictable clanging of tram bells I would hear from my back terrace, a sound that had only even existed in my neighborhood for a year before my arrival, and one that still sometimes startles me awake from a dream, even as I lay in a bed thousands of miles,

four years, and two major moves away. I often wonder how much more it must have, at least initially, startled Nadine, the wife of the owner of a local gourmet Italian food store, who had lived in the same five-block radius for all of her forty-something years.

Ahmed's, Samira's, and my walking experiences of Marseille's changing neighborhoods highlight the ways people are constantly interacting with, taking part in, being a part of a broader material world. Our experiences do not fit into standard ethnographic narrative strategies, either linear with beginning, middle, and end, or positioned, with root, traceable causes and impacts, because, as the walks show, time shifts in the realm of experience in a different way than its abstracted march forward, as people simultaneously remember, feel, engage and hope in relationship to the sensations the environment produces. This has important implications for both the ways anthropologists can conduct fieldwork and for the ethnographies we eventually produce.

Narrative forms of description—including narratives about walking—can risk inscribing time as linear and progressive, and walking as a way of collecting it proprietarily (see also Ingold & Vergunst 2008:9).

Walking is often assumed to be like a narrative, in the sense that walkers in the city are held heroically to inscribe their presence and meanings on space... But by foregrounding the metaphor of walking as narrative inscription, the affective, sensual dimensions of walking are apt to disappear. When considering the politics of walking as narration, it is important to acknowledge that walking narratives have been highly complicit in entrenching representations of otherness. Like travel narratives that attempt to capture in sequence the 'essential' elements of a journey, accounts by Westerners of walking 'exotic' spaces are colonizing maneuvers that assert an authoritative understanding of the land. Through walking, the expert confidently discerns cultural traces in the landscape, and charts its 'natural history' along with other 'key features' which mark the space traversed, so that otherness—whether natural, cultural or historical—may be 'known.' [Edensor 2008:136]

Focusing on walking is therefore not enough to do the kinds of work I have laid out in this chapter, to disrupt distinctions between subjects, objects, and environment, to acknowledge the actions of objects within the landscape, to destabilize ethnographic authority, and to highlight the simultaneity and politics contained within everyday realms of experience.

However, ethnographies-in-motion, those that through their method, and importantly, their writing, attend to the mobility of everyday life and the ways people experience their lives and their material worlds through their moving bodies in non-linear ways, are capable of highlighting life's nuances and contradictions. Focusing only on the way people's stories and discourses reflect global processes or problems, or how people are emplaced in given, fixed snapshots, misses much of that experience, even if it enables analysis with cleaner lines.

The urban projects at work in Marseille are fundamentally making over the local landscape, yet, as I have shown, the categories anthropologists usually use in analyzing such processes, including tracing the social construction of space and place, remain unable to fully account for the ways such processes are experienced. Before residents can realize that a shift in their social network has occurred, they first encounter new smells and sounds, as construction gets underway nearby. Those may or may not evoke memories of moments long-since passed, or create hopes or anxieties about their futures, all in the same moment. Before they are forced to move to a new neighborhood by rising rents, they often take up new patterns of movement within their current areas, as formerly common routes are fenced off or become innavigable or uncomfortable. Before they can evaluate whether economic opportunities will increase or decrease with a particular urban

project, urban residents' days become tinged with tingles of anxiety, hope, or despair, or with tiny shocks of wonder, disbelief, or loss at the little shifts in landscape, population, and, consequently, feeling that occur around them. Thus, sensory experiences are always already political, and cannot be cleanly separated from the processes by which the local material world is physically produced and imposes itself in people's everyday lives. By attuning to the politics of our own categories, and starting from the experience of bodies-in-mobile-ecologies, anthropologists can better avoid reinscribing and validating the political practices we wish to argue against (Mascia-Lees and Himpele n.d.).



## **Chapter Two: Marseille (Euro)Mediterranée: History, Future, and Beauty in the Process of Renewal**

Projet Euroméditerranée is an independent administrative unit, founded in 1995, and now responsible for the redevelopment of about 1,200 acres in the historically poor, northern section of downtown Marseille, contiguous to the commercial port. The Projet operates via a strategy of renovating public works and infrastructure while simultaneously making land available to commercial developers, but maintaining some control over what those developers do with it. Its goals are rehabilitating or renewing infrastructure and architectural patrimony, changing housing and business opportunities, and cleaning up both the landscape and the city's image, although this last goal tends to be discursively deemphasized because it engenders frequent strong reactions on the part of Marseille's current residents and activist communities.<sup>9</sup>

Smaller projects in individual neighborhoods are more firmly in the public sector, and operate differently, yet share the same essential goals. Despite their differences in sizes and types, the renewal initiatives at work in Marseille are redefining the city's

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<sup>9</sup> Both immigrant communities and the French left are sensitive to problems inherent in metaphors of cleanliness (Silverstein & Tetrault 2005). Loose language by politicians which includes such rhetoric often has serious consequences, such as when then interior minister, and later President, Sarkozy suggested the Parisian suburbs needed to be "cleaned out with a *karcher* (fire hose)" in 2005, which fanned the flames of immigrant demonstrations taking place throughout the nation—although not in Marseille. Nonetheless, discussion about Marseille's cleanliness does circulate during the renewal project, in public discourse and in private conversations. The city is well known for being literally unclean—with excessive litter problems, poor organization of sanitation systems, and sanitation strikes that are considered not infrequent enough. Renewal efforts have included the reinstitution of a police unit charged with litter citations, and extensive signage about keeping the city clean had begun to appear in highly-frequented areas as of my departure from the city in 2009, although residents were highly skeptical they would be met with much success, and it was commonly believed that the Marseille police had devoted only three people to this task.

present and its possible futures. They lay claims to where the city should go and how it will get there—important discursive moves—but they are also fundamentally altering urban aesthetics and residents’ sensory experiences of the urban landscape. They also depend on a particular narrative of the city’s history, which explains and diagnoses Marseille as having its specific problems largely because of its Mediterranean immersion and identity. Ironically, as I will demonstrate later, planners simultaneously view Marseille’s Mediterranean immersion as a condition of possibility for its revitalization.

In November of 2008, I was sitting for the first time in *Projet Euroméditerranée*’s sleek, mostly-glass office space in Les Docks, a building at the center of the neighborhood where the project’s first wave of renewal efforts has been based, and one I discuss extensively in Chapter 4. I had been trying to get access to Euroméd since I first arrived in Marseille four months prior, and had finally done so when I met one of its chief planners, Jerome, at a discussion of architectural history held by the Departmental Library. Although it took a couple of weeks, Jerome eventually agreed to give me time for an interview and a chance to see the *Projet*’s facilities. While we sat in his small, glass-walled, private office, lower-level urban designers and architects worked at a communal table through the glass behind me, holding a lively discussion as they collaborated on some small aspect of design, gathered around a set of images I had briefly spied on my way in as Jerome called out to them to inquire how things were going.

Now seated across from me at his large, sleek desk made of glass and dark wood, Jerome was impeccably dressed, his tie perfectly matched to his deep maroon sweater vest and fancy Italian shoes. The other planners and architects I had met had told me that

Euroméditerranée had a corporate air that was uncharacteristic for this city. Jerome fit that part, tilting his head and smiling as he focused in on me with laser-blue eyes. Jerome had just explained his background to me—his upbringing in a smaller town in Provence, how he had parlayed his schooling and training in Marseille into a professional résumé that traveled through the city’s various planning agencies, his whole career focusing on Marseille’s improvement and redesign. Although he downplayed his role and looked young for it, Jerome was one of the brains behind *Projet Euroméditerranée*, and he was spirited about the project’s fierce independence, something he emphasized that he had not experienced in the other agencies where he had worked, which he described as more bogged down in local city politics. For Jerome, this independence was what made Euroméditerranée an attractive personal opportunity, since he saw it as more likely to yield actual, transformative successes. This city, he explained, still operated in a system of patronage that was growing increasingly outdated, and efforts to change the landscape—to, as Jerome saw it, do real good for the city—always had to get beyond that system.

By already talking up Euroméditerranée, Jerome was getting ahead of me and the interview, something that happened frequently when I worked with busy, knowledgeable professionals used to speaking to outsiders. His answers felt smooth and prepared. I looked down at my sketchy prepared list of questions to find one that would rein him back in, slow things down. Following up with basic questions first, as I liked to do in all of my interviews but especially those with planning professionals, I asked Jerome to describe the city. At first, he asked for clarification, not sure quite what I was getting at. I rephrased the question, asking him to “just, tell me, in general, really simply, whatever it

is I need to know about Marseille to understand your work and your perspective.” He smiled awkwardly before asking me, “Is what you want really just my *description* of the city, my opinions?” I nodded and sat back, displaying a practiced attitude of neutral inquisition while I waited for his response. Jerome thought for a moment, as if he had never before been asked quite this question, before beginning:

Well, Marseille is open to the Sea, but closed to the internal territory. I think that this is the city’s initial posture, and continues in the ‘mentalité Marseillais’ This has meant that Marseille, historically, has always been ‘opposed to.’ Opposed to... well, opposed to really everything... But it’s a magnificent site, geographically extremely favored and particular. And, uhhh... it’s also a very ‘populaire’<sup>10</sup> city. Historically, ‘populaire.’ Which is... ‘populaire’ well, because of the fact of its history, but also from the course of its recent economic development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the industries, et cetera, its harbor activity....But, see, it’s important that... the city has a particularity, which is that, how to say, the councilors, eh, feh, the bourgeois...the bourgeois and intellectual class, in any case, the “economic directors,” of all stripes, have never had any investment in Marseille.... This... well, this has an immediate translation into the political organization, the organization of services, the strong presence of unions, a very ‘populaire’ culture which relies entirely on football... So Marseille is a ‘populaire’ city, but *only* a ‘populaire’ city. There isn’t any... there isn’t any... how to put it...there isn’t any diversity, like that we can find elsewhere, in other big cities, in other big economic capitals, French and European. And that, I think, is the problem. Voila.

Jerome was the only person I ever heard describe Marseille’s problems as being based in a lack of diversity. The city’s reputation is quite bad, and most scholars believe that this is precisely because its population is ethnically diverse in a way that people in France find threatening (Temime 1999, Dell’Umbria 2012, Crane 2011). In most accounts, at least 50 percent of the city is made up of immigrants, and it may be much higher when you count those who are children and grandchildren of immigrants. French statistics,

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<sup>10</sup> “Populaire” in this context cannot be easily translated into English. It in some way resembles “working class” or “blue collar,” but contains less of an emphasis on labor and, sometimes, more of an emphasis on broad-based poverty.

especially on race, are extremely problematic (Chapman & Frader 2004). Jerome, though, was not conceptualizing diversity in these ethnic terms at all. He was turning it upside down to highlight it as an economic category. This meant he saw Marseille's history as a port city, which experienced immigration and then a resulting bourgeois "flight" in the 1970s and 1980s, as what has placed the city in its continuous state of economic need.

For planners and historians alike (Temime 1999; Bonillo 1992; Smail 2000; Roncayolo 1996), Marseille was established through long-time maritime trade, beginning with its founding as a Greek outpost, through its heyday as a colonial port, and continuing into its current role as a hub of immigration, minor port activity, and a significant drug trade. However, many in the planning community tend to situate this history within a diagnosis of social and economic hindrances and constraints, rather than emphasizing the opportunities it made possible, such as cultural diversity; exchange; and a different, less segregated immigration climate than exists in other parts of France, what is generally talked about as "l'exception Marseillais."

Jerome, however, emphasizes the port history as creating economic crisis and a variety of problems, which in their entirety defined the need for the intervention of *Projet Euroméditerranée* through which Jerome makes his living. In this definition, the port is equated with poverty, which equates with working-class identity, which in turn equates with an obstinate sense of opposition. All of these, for Jerome, are problems which need to be, and can be, solved with creative management. Jerome sees this as defining the city's culture—at least up until the most recent interventions to renew the urban environment began. What Jerome sees as Marseille's culture is thus an obstacle that needs to be overcome, a view that mirrors the attitude documented in much of the

international development literature (Crewe & Harrison 2005). Importantly, though, Jerome firmly sees his work as hopeful, as a mission of “doing good.” However I might want to demonize Marseille’s planners, something that was easy to do in my head and something that lots of the other people with whom I worked in Marseille did as a matter of routine, planners continually delighted me with their optimism and their hope. This was true at every level of the planning process and apparatus. However deluded and confused their plans might seem at the outset of a conversation, Marseille’s planners universally believed they were doing good work, necessary, and—in France especially, its important to remember—progressive work.

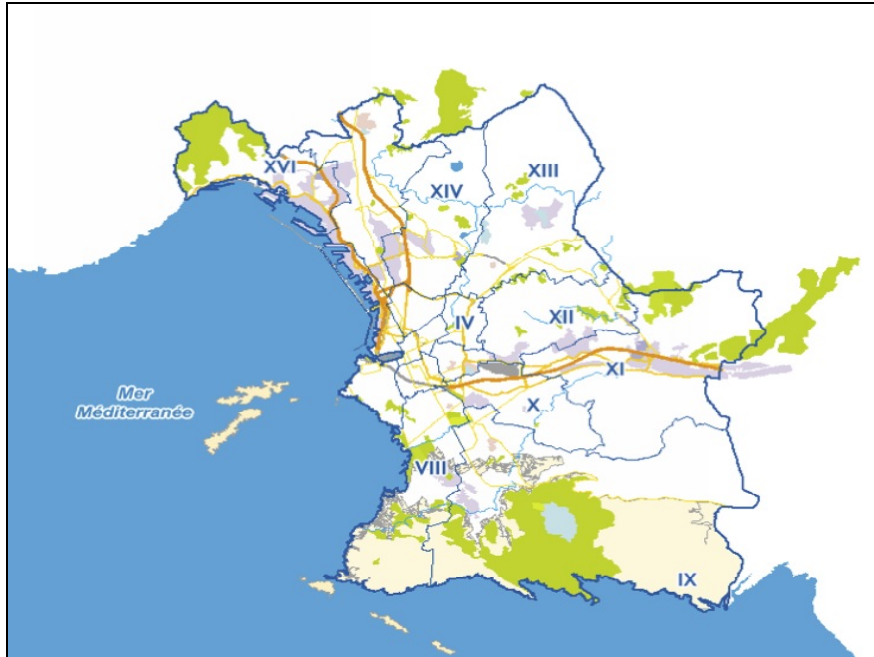
This dissertation is an ethnography that, like most, has many characters and moving parts. The city of Marseille, in the glorious variety of its material existence, is perhaps the most important of these. Like any of the ethnography’s human characters, I conceptualize the city as shifting, mobile, variously imagined, and vibrantly active. However the city is conceptualized, though, it is impossible to understand Marseille without knowledge of at least two related and crucial elements that define its geography and history. These are, first, Marseille’s geographic and historical position on the Mediterranean, and second, the city’s long and storied history as a port town, dating back to its founding by the Greeks.

This chapter addresses these two elements, while seeking to also explore the diverse ways they are deployed in the city’s current projects to redesign the urban environment, especially those that fall under the auspices of *Projet Euroméditerranée*. Here, I also work to outline the ways that, in various articulations of this history, sensory experience is most often considered politically irrelevant, at a minimum, and actively

anti-political in the most extreme cases. In performing this historical work, this chapter highlights the scholarly intervention made in the rest of the dissertation: namely, the argument and demonstration that sensory experiences are fundamental to the politics, collectivities, and activities of political engagement that materially move Marseille.

***The Basics: Mediterraneanism in Geography and Discourse***

Geographically, Marseille is longer than it is wide, and is organized along a crescent-shaped, 35-mile coastline that ensures that, in any of the city's sixteen administrative *arrondissements*, and its hundreds of specific neighborhoods, the Mediterranean Sea is never particularly far away (See Figures 2 & 3). Marseille is France's second-largest city, although its exact numbers vary with the state's demographic strategies and the year. Despite the city's size and situation within the relatively wealthy nation of France, which provides strong social services in global comparison, Marseille is an economically depressed, post-colonial port town with high unemployment, high rates of immigration, a notoriously corrupt political structure (see, e.g., Samuel 2012), and a foothold in the drug trade and in organized crime. Historically, the city's population and economy—in both its legitimate and informal iterations—have depended on the Sea—on shipping and receiving, the smuggling of contraband, and a briefly held manufacturing sector based on proximity to the port. In addition to being Marseille's geographic border at south and west, the Mediterranean is enfolded into the city's landscape and history, reflected in its diversity of faces, and standing as a backbone to the economics of the long-standing port and more recent tourism sectors.

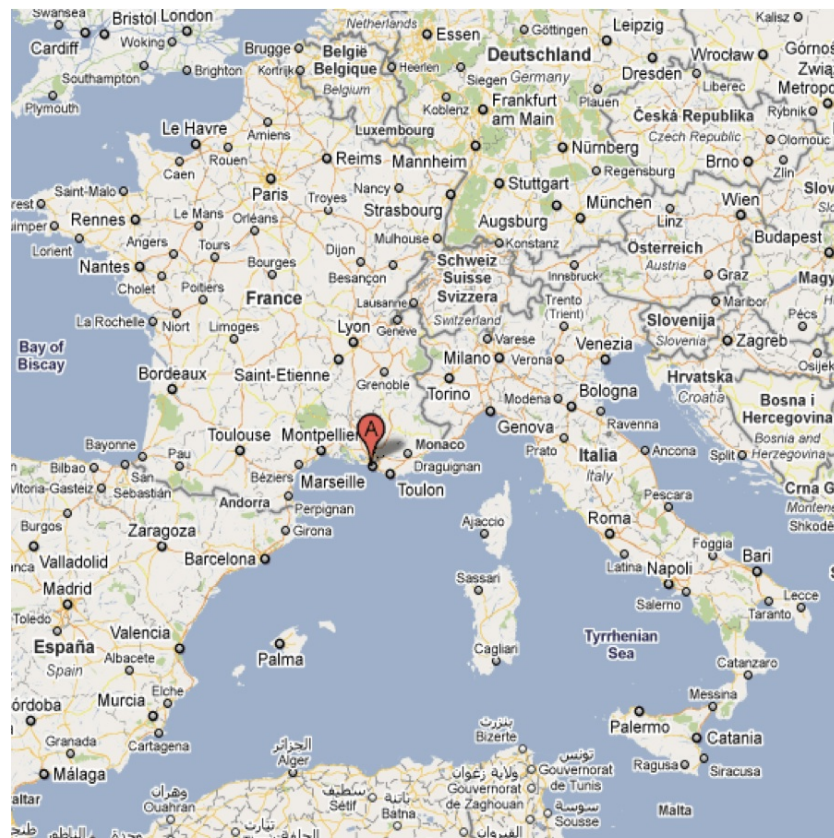


**Figure 2: Map of the city, the coast, and the 16 *arrondissements*. (Accessed electronically at <http://www.marseille.fr>, September 4, 2009). © Mairie de Marseille. Used with Permission.**

Two major, contradictory, transnational discourses frequently circulate about the Mediterranean as a Sea and a region. One of them is more common in scholarly social science writing, while the other is more commonly identified with the region in popular discourse—although, as I will show, both discourses are present in both academic and popular literatures on the city. In what I will refer to as a “Clash of Civilizations” discourse, following Huntington (1992, 1997), scholars, popular literature, and media have worked to demonstrate the Mediterranean’s position as a key site of conflict, conquest, pathology, chaos, and uneven development (Smith 1984), particularly in a supposedly inevitable conflict between European nation-states and Islam. In another strand of literature, which I refer to as “Mediterranean Romance,” the region is depicted through a dreamy trope of pre-modernism: as a land of sun-drenched landscapes, impossible shades of blue in the Sea and the sky, of greens in olive groves and vineyards,



and, more recently, as a place of a natural, healthful, active lifestyle, filled with traditional local markets hocking fresh plum tomatoes, herbs, and artisanal oils produced on family farms. Here, the Mediterranean is a sensory and sensual cornucopia. Both of these Mediterranean discourses come together in Marseille—coexisting, and sometimes clashing, in people’s recent and historical individual experiences and in the broader ongoing projects to envision and implement a different economic and architectural future.



**Figure 3: Map of Marseille’s position within France and Europe. (Accessed electronically from [maps.google.com](https://maps.google.com) September 4, 2009.) ©Google Maps. Used according to Permission Guidelines.**

This chapter argues that both of these discourses fall short in describing the actual role of the senses in Marseille’s political life, for multiple reasons. First, both discourses suffer from a surprising lack of specificity, often depicting the entire Mediterranean

region as an empty non-place devoid of sociality, rather than a specific, historicized locale—something that can relevantly and problematically be mirrored in some versions of phenomenological approaches, as Howes has argued (2010), which renders this chapter on Marseille’s cultural and historical background particularly necessary. Central to both of these discourses is a form of “post-colonial amnesia” (Hargreaves 2005; Hannoum n.d.; Prost 1999): a difficulty on the part of European nations to find a way to maintain a national identity while coming to terms with their colonial pasts, the uneven development they facilitated, and the incorporation of post-colonial “immigrant” subjects into the body politic as national citizens (Mamdani 1996; Crapanzano 2011). Second, as I elaborate in the next chapter, both discourses are based on a deep-seated narrative about modernity and what it encompasses that specifically negates the importance of the body and the senses in political organization in a modern, secular nation-state (Weber 1991, Gauchet 1999). Political philosophers and postcolonial scholars have usefully critiqued this particular narrative of modernity (e.g. Bennett 2001, 2010; Connolly 1999, 2002), as I discuss in Chapter 3. Ultimately, I aim to demonstrate that this narrative is inadequate in describing fundamental elements of political action in Marseille, which depend on a contemporary, lived sensory Mediterranean—the forming of collectivities across difference, the work of NGOs to critique the nation-state’s uneven treatment of French citizens, and the transcendence of the nation-state in both small and large-scale political organizing.

To get at all of this, Marseille must first itself be “emplaced” by focusing on the complex interrelationships between people, their bodies, and the material environment of the city in which they live. In doing this, I draw on and contribute to a burgeoning body

of literature across the disciplines that has shown that people's identity, belonging, and attachments to place often grow out of minute, sensory, bodily encounters with the ordinary, everyday material and social landscapes that surround them (Merleau-Ponty 2002, Geurts 2003, Terrio 2000). So too do modes of governance and political participation. As scholars such as Alain Corbin (1988, 1998), Constance Classen (1993, 1998), David Howes (1991, 2003, 2005), and Charles Hirschkind (2006) have shown, even minute sensory details are central to large systems of power, meaning, culture, and governance.

Discourses about region, including those about the Mediterranean, are contingently produced, which scholars have long recognized (Asad et al. 1997; Herzfeld 1997, 2005a, 2005b). Yet, they also have lived, sensory, embodied counterparts that both utilize and challenge their discursive constructions. Indeed, as I will show, counter-politics and counter-logics—including those that operate within the confines of so-called “Modern Western Democracy”—are often embedded within sensory experiences and their interpretation.

The “Clash of Civilizations” and “Mediterranean Romance” discourses are, in essence, different, but closely related and co-dominant. While versions of both of them are used in local political processes and everyday dialogue in Marseille, in ways that are often important and sometimes problematic, the roles played by the Sea and the regional identity it lends the city in everyday life challenges the starkness of their opposition, and reveals the complexities of residents' engagements with, experiences of, and responses to Marseille's local environments. These discourses also lend insight into how Marseille residents accumulate personal histories and attachments as they engage with their

surrounding material environments. They consciously and unconsciously use these histories and attachments in creating and navigating their social and political worlds.

In Marseille, the Mediterranean is central as a lived, sensory category whose analysis lends insight into the city's dramatically shifting contemporary urban landscape and the ways people experience it. By examining together the political implications of Marseille's urban Mediterranean sensorium, on the one hand, and larger frameworks of Mediterranean chaos and corruption as well as romance, on the other, I dissect the imaginary roles played by a generic "Mediterranean" and put in their place specific descriptions of what the Mediterranean does as a category of feeling in one very specific and, the Marseillais believe, exceptional city.

In Marseille, the Mediterranean is utilized discursively to identify historical problematics, while simultaneously forming the conditions of possibility, and providing a name, for a widely shared feeling of emplaced attachment to the city itself and its geography. Politically, residents, community organizers, and even state political actors point to this feeling as tempering interethnic conflict, circumventing unrest, and allowing for the formations of a Marseillais collectivity. Marseille's sounds, smells, temperatures, tastes, light and temperaments provide a grammar through which the city's social and political life are organized and take place. Their aggregate synaesthetic (Howes 1996) description as "Mediterranean" simultaneously draws on and challenges both of the hegemonic discourses of Mediterranean identity I outline here.

### ***Marseille and the Clash of Civilizations***

In the *Clash of Civilizations* (1997), Samuel Huntington outlines a theory claiming that, in a world after the Cold War, culture and religious affiliation, rather than

ideology or economics, will be the world's major source of conflict. Huntington divides the world into different regions and cultural affiliations, which he predicts will dictate who will be united and who opposed in the world's future conflicts. Here, the Mediterranean region is one border of several significant religious-cultural zones, lying between the Muslim world, the West, Israel, and a portion of Christian Orthodoxy. The arguments Huntington presents have been widely critiqued, especially for their orientalism (see, for example, Said 1978, Wang 1997), but what is salient for my purposes here is Huntington's clear identification of the Mediterranean as a "hot spot," where the coming together of regional cultures is a critical point of conflict. While Huntington focuses on post Cold War politics, his view is a mere echo of long-standing, widespread European conceptualizations of the Mediterranean as a site of conquest, contagion and risk, expressed in both discourse and colonial history (Said 1978).

For example, scholarly works in history and international relations have presented the Sea as "dangerous" (Slocombe 1937) and "corrupting" (Horden and Purcell 2000), while discourses rendering the immigration the Mediterranean generates as a "threat" not only go back centuries (King 2001; Romeo 1998) but remain deeply entrenched. They are quite evident in the following assessments of Marseille, expressing similar ideas while spanning 200 years:

1) "I think Marseille is incurable forever without a massive deportation of all its residents, and a transfusion of men of the North"--Louis-Marie Fréron in 1794 (cited in Le Dantec 2007).

2) "Popular Marseille, it isn't Maghrebin Marseille, it isn't Comorien Marseille. The city center has been invaded by a foreign population, and the Marseillais people have left. Me, I'm renovating. I'm working against the slum landlords and I'm bringing back the residents who pay taxes"—Jean-Claude Gaudin, Marseille's mayor, in 2001 (cited in Le Dantec 2007).

Gaudin's quote in particular suggests the ways that Marseille's urban redevelopment is intricately tied to politics about the city's "others."

Marseille's status as a port is also central to these constructions. As other scholars have shown, ports are often thought of as locations of insecurity, whether personal, due to crime, "loose" morals, drug trafficking, and the availability of sex-for-hire to foreign sailors—or in terms of nation-building, due to ports' longstanding dependence on relationships transcending the nation-state (Brown 2005; Bondi 1998; Driessen 2005; Hoyle 2000; Markel 1999; Mayer 1999). As a port, Marseille's specific "Mediterraneanness" has, recently and historically, been thought to generate and embody dangerous transborder cultural attachments, which are most visibly recognized and feared in immigrant bodies (see also Silverstein 2005). Yet as the historian Jean-Louis Fabiani has pointed out, Marseille's status as a potential threat is recognizable in its landscape—the Fort Saint-Nicolas (1680) and the Fort Saint-Nicolas (1660), which were both commissioned by Louis XIV and which both face inward towards the city, not outwards towards the Sea (2006). In present-day Marseille, these politics play an enormous role in the everyday life of a large number of Marseillais: as mentioned above, anywhere from one quarter to more than one half of its residents come from recent (self or parent) immigrant origin, and even those who become or are born French citizens are referred to as foreigners, immigrants, "Beurs,"<sup>11</sup> Maghrebins, North Africans, or Black Africans (Hannoum n.d.; Hargreaves 1991, 1995, 2005; Hargreaves & McKinney 1997).

Marseille has thus long posed a problematic challenge to the notion of national or "European" culture or identity (Temime 1999), a notion that is itself a falsehood: France,

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<sup>11</sup> *Beur* is a verlan term taken from the word "Arabes" backwards.

and Europe more broadly, have deep immigrant origins and have depended economically and culturally on transnational connections for centuries (see Noiriel 1996; Sassen 1999). The building of the French nation-state also depended on a violent colonial legacy (Said 1978, Fanon 1965, Memmi 1965), which is the origin of much of France's immigration. Yet colonialism is something the national political, cultural, and economic discourses prefer to actively forget, by, for example, determining what access will be made available to archival documents, refusing legislation acknowledging and memorializing the colonial past, and building monuments in ways that downplay the violence of the colonial encounter (Hannoum n.d.).

With the rise of the European Union, the situation for those considered "other" may only worsen: as Étienne Balibar argues, at a time when Europe is moving towards greater political and economic integration within the continent, the openness to minorities and minority rights may actually decrease (2004), rendering transnational connections that extend beyond Europe ever more threatening to the nation-state. This is one reason among many why the European Union deserves greater anthropological attention (Kastoryano 2003; Cesari and McLoughlin 2005; Borneman and Fowler 1997; McDonald 2005).

Nationally in France, questions about the integration of trans-Mediterranean migrants remain high on political agendas and common in politicians' discourses. Issues of language (McDonald 1989; Tetrault 2000) and veiling (Bowen 2007, Scott 2007, Asad 2006) are only two of the better-known examples, but questions about modernity, European livelihood, identity, and security are also implicated. Marine Le Pen, the current leader of the far-right political party the Front National, was quite popular in the

most recent French presidential elections, coming in third with 17.9 percent of the vote, the most ever by a Front National candidate. One of her proposals was to repatriate all immigrants, including those who had arrived by legal means. This kind of extreme policy has not decreased since a decade ago, when the idea of stricter immigration measures became a foundational platform for Marine's father, former Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, who received 17 percent of the vote for President in 2002, and thereby became one of the two candidates involved in the French Presidential run-off ballot. In these times and circumstances control of the Mediterranean region contains large stakes: to quote former President Sarkozy, from a campaign speech delivered in Toulon in February 2007, "The Mediterranean is a key to our influence in the world. It's also a key for Islam that is torn between modernity and fundamentalism" (Boukhars 2008). In this classic "Clash of Civilizations" framework, Islam is blamed for everything from abuse of women, to terrorism, to the malaise of immigrant youth, with implicit binary oppositions constructed between North and South, West and East, Christianity and Islam, and, especially between "modern" and "unmodern" or "primitive" (Said 1978).

Problematically, a great deal of recent anthropology focused on immigrants to Europe seems to unwittingly reinforce such oppositions (Silverstein 2005b). Within this literature, which has developed exponentially over the last twenty years, it is not uncommon to read discussions of immigrant anomie (Sayad 2004), immigrant "integration" difficulties (Sackman et al. 2003), and the various problems immigrants pose to nationalist projects and discourses (Bowen 2007). Although these works certainly illuminate the processes by which constructions of difference occur, and shed light on the ways in which Europe, and the individual countries within it, are made up of diverse—



not monolithic—populations, they nonetheless risk reinscribing the notion that there exists a fundamental divide between (poor, Muslim, brown) sending contexts and (rich, Christian, white) receiving ones. These works have both pointed to and, in some cases, glossed over the multiplicity of ways in which a person or community might be “French,” “European,” or “modern” (Gregg 1998; Keaton 2006), and the centuries of interconnectedness between Europe at large, France specifically, and other parts of the world. For example, North American scholarly works on French immigrants, though extremely useful for their illumination of the politics of race often neglected in French academic work (Hannoum n.d.; Hennrick and Frader 2005; Keaton 2006; Silverstein 2005a), tend to separate out the groups of their studies according to pre-determined categories of difference, presuming even prior to analysis that issues like self- or parent-national origin or religion will be the most salient categories of difference in the lives of Europe’s minorities.

As Silverstein shows, one result of this is that immigrants can come to stand in a “new savage slot” in this literature, which racializes them at the expense of developing more grounded theoretical apparatuses that account for their own most salient experiences (Silverstein 2005a). In this literature, too, immigrants, and in particular religious or racial minority immigrants, are seen to challenge European and national identity, while at the same time facing struggles seen to stem from their cultural differences from those who surround them—cultural differences which scholars often represent as transcending generations. This problematically deploys essentialisms scholars are generally attempting to work against (Scott 1999). Such works also frequently contrast “natives” with “immigrants”—a term which in France can encompass

many generations—arguing that concrete differences along racial, ethnic, or religious lines are the primary issue in both the lives of Europe’s minorities and in governmental strategies to manage minority populations. The Mediterranean is seen as one crucial geographic marker for such differences, a literal (and littoral) border-zone traversed by many of the immigrants Europe deems most problematic.

Because in Marseille today many recent immigrants live in slum housing downtown, rather than on the city’s outskirts as in other major French cities, this “Clash of Civilizations” framework is replicated in much of the discourse about the city’s renewal, which seeks to remake the poorest parts of the central city, as we saw above with the quote from Gaudin. This discourse also appears frequently in the city’s appeals for funds to support and bolster that renewal effort. However, if we were to listen only to these discourses, we would miss the ways in which Marseille has a political and sensory culture that depends precisely on its diversity, and on the frequent interaction of individuals across lines of religion and ethnicity—including in their responses to urban planning projects.

Counter-discourses of the Mediterranean circulate within everyday life and within planning projects themselves. These play an important role in how renewal projects are developed, thought about, presented, and responded to, often in opposition to what Hannoum (n.d.) refers to as “official” French memory. In particular, many Marseillais hold faith in an idea that a common Mediterranean heritage circulates throughout the city, encompassing, for example, shared historical connections and experiences of poverty, colonialism and decolonization; similar food practices and moral commitments to family; and shared bodily experiences of climate and a relationship with the Sea. As Omar, a

resident of the diverse downtown neighborhood of Noailles, told me “In Marseille, we’re not all Algerians, we’re not all Muslim, we’re not all French, we’re not all white, but most of us are Mediterranean and all of us are Marseillais.” But even this idea of connection can stem partly from stereotypes about a Mediterranean moral climate that reifies gender difference and relies on frameworks of women’s honor and shame to maintain social capital (Bourdieu 1998)—a discourse which should not be viewed as universally progressive, and indeed was propagated by early anthropology.<sup>12</sup> However,

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<sup>12</sup>In the broadness of its brushstrokes, this Mediterranean differs surprisingly little from the one constructed in early American anthropology. In the 1940’s and before, the Mediterranean served as a geographic and temporal starting point for American anthropology of Europe. Within work on Europe, the Mediterranean region became a particularly important early object in social anthropology, especially that written in English, situated at Europe’s edges and within European colonial regimes (Pitt-Rivers 1963). As an exotic or exteriorized space, the region was thought to be connectable with traditional (and colonial) anthropological projects in North Africa, and to fit well within existing early anthropological frameworks (including both methods and theoretical approaches). It tied in well with Biblical and Christian history interests in a Mediterranean cradle of civilization. Whatever the reasons, Mediterranean anthropology soon became a domain for the trying on of anthropological methods and theories within a European context, albeit an exteriorized one. Topics initially included those that had been of interest in non-European contexts and focused on the similarities within a given region without questioning the ways in which regional frameworks were constructed in the first place. Honor and shame were especially seen as guiding principals in the understanding of Mediterranean social structure, and thus received disproportionate amount of attention (Peristiany 1966). Within these arguments, Mediterranean society was seen not just as guided by ideologies of honor and shame, but as reducible to these traits. These explanations were also often explicitly gendered and based on the idea that women were responsible for guarding men’s honor, and were in-turn responsible for the shaming of their families when they did not behave as expected. This general approach mirrored other anthropological frameworks that reduced cultural frameworks to specific traits—similar to those found in the personality of individual people (Benedict 1934). These frameworks have been much-critiqued within more recent anthropology. With the breakdown of colonial regimes in the 1960’s, anthropological objects tended to change, and such critique became possible. For an important critique that addresses these factors

the common Marseillais belief in a shared Mediterranean heritage allows for social connections and political organization to occur between people of different racial, ethnic, class, national or religious heritage (see also Erickson 2011: 125). Because this belief plays a key role in the sense of being Marseillais and what that means, it also enters, in both small and large ways, into discussions about Marseille's future in the planning projects taking place there. This lends to a politics of the future that is hopeful, rather than entirely pessimistic. As I will show, Marseille's diversity makes possible particular shared sensory experiences that enable social and political opportunities for critique of the nation-state's denial of history and exclusion of certain segments of its population.

### *Marseille and Mediterranean Romance*

If the "Clash of Civilizations" framework depicts the Mediterranean as a conflict-ridden location and a source of danger, what I am calling the discourse of "Mediterranean Romance" paints a picture of the region as a golden landscape of rocky coasts, beaches, wines and vineyards, olive groves, fresh produce, fresh fish, and simplicity. This is the Mediterranean of Club Med, rather than that of the *Corrupting Sea* (Horden and Purcell 2000). Books and other media productions on travel, home design, health, and cooking market this popular, consumable Mediterranean lifestyle (e.g. Whitesides 2006; Fitzgerald 2002; Jenkins 2009.) In English, travel writing is its most central genre.

Although travel writing on Mediterranean Italy may be more recently popular with works such as *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Mayes 2007), romanticizing discourses have long abounded for Southern France, too. One widely-read example is Peter Mayle's series about Provence, the region of France in which Marseille is situated, although the

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in the Mediterranean context in particular, see the work of Michael Herzfeld (1997; 2005a, 2005b).

city itself has until recently been shunned in tourist literature and seen as starkly different from the surrounding area—not unlike, for example, Naples and the Southern Italian countryside (Cole 2007).<sup>13</sup> (See Figures 4 & 5). An illustrious example of the discourse of a Mediterranean that occludes Marseille is found in *A Year in Provence*:

The Lubéron Mountains rise up immediately behind the house to a high point of nearly 3,500 feet and run in deep folds for about forty miles from west to east. Cedars and pines and scrub oak keep them perpetually green and provide cover for boar, rabbits, and game birds. Wild flowers, thyme, lavender and mushrooms grow between the rocks and under the trees, and from the summit on a clear day the view is of the Basses-Alpes on one side and the Mediterranean on the other. For most of the year, it is possible to walk for eight or nine hours without seeing a car or a human being. [Mayle 1991:5]

This depiction and its broader genre emphasize vast landscape and wildlife. Despite a separation of only about an hour by car between this site and Marseille, this view seems long from the city's urban landscape and far away from the complexities of late capitalist social and consumer life.

This romantic picture of the Mediterranean region is doubly problematic: on the one hand, although Marseille is absent from it, the city's redevelopment depends on some of this very imagery producing a conflict between the city as it is commonly viewed and as it is increasingly presented, as I will demonstrate below; on the other, this travel-written, pastoral Mediterranean is based on hyper-consumption and is therefore largely inaccessible to the poorest of Marseille's residents, who urban renewal is supposed to target. Indeed, consumption can be seen as the heart of such escapist Mediterranean

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<sup>13</sup> Efforts are being made to rebuild the connection between the city and the rest of the region, such as in *Marseille Provence 2013*, and the city has recently been named second on a list of the top 46 destinations for 2013 by an article in the New York Times (Cohane 2013), one example among many of the city's growing popularity.

dreams: as Folks states in a critique of Francis Mayes' *Under the Tuscan Sun* (1997) and its recent ilk, "Mayes's persona is on a sort of raiding expedition—the countryside is the site of forays in search of gourmet foods, wines, crafts, and decorative items to buttress her sense of personal gratification" (Folks 2004). Folks implies that this consumption is always already nefarious, based on an underlying sense of dissatisfaction and alienation with late capitalism that the consumption itself can only further. In his analysis, "Mayes' dream of Italy, like those of so many *Roman Holiday* admirers, evokes a contemporary myth of privilege, of 'all the places MasterCard will take you,' as the advertisement has it. It is about finding a place to live so far away that we don't have to face the monster of daily life" (Folks 2004:103). In Folks' Marxian-informed view, the capitalist consumption described in these travel works alienates the human spirit, and is fundamentally unsatisfying, only furthering the sense of disaffection that motivates it and creating further detachment from the embodied experience of local environments.

Yet, the two discourses have very important differences as well. One of these is from an afternoon siesta, olive oil and garlic on the tongue and in the air, or a sense of connection with the past of human history represented by the empires of Greece and Rome. In its rootlessness and lack of definition, the discourse of Mediterranean Romance is able to portray the region as a simple escape from the daily grind of fast food and long workdays, presumably because the phenomena of late capitalist "development" has yet to



**Figure 4: Provence/Luberon Landscape. Photograph taken by author.**



**Figure 5: View of Northern Marseille Skyline. Includes the Porte Autonome and L'Estaque. Photograph taken by author.**

penetrate this unspoiled countryside. As Folks argues (2004), this particular engagement

with the senses is often taken up at the expense of political critique, furthering the very inequalities that the modern subject presumably finds dissatisfying in late capitalist society. Rather than demonstrating the ways sensory experience is embedded within political culture, Folks sees the senses here as numbing and disorienting. Rather than emphasizing connection, this numbing serves as an obstacle to any political action against the broad capitalist system of oppression (see also Jameson 1992).

Problematically, however, this idea of the aesthetic is based on a notion of progress which assumes an “authentic,” politicized sensory experience to be impossible in the modern capitalist world. To quote Marx,

Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it – when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., – in short, when it is used by us...In the place of all physical and mental senses there has therefore come the sheer estrangement of all these senses, the sense of having. The human being had to be reduced to this absolute poverty in order that he might yield his inner wealth to the outer world. [Marx 1844, accessed electronically at marxist.org February 6, 2010]

Marx, like other Enlightenment writers, assumed that there was no real place for the senses within the politics of a modern, secular, capitalist society. Even in his vision of what communism would look like, what would come to be valued was humans for humans’ sake, as masters over nature and matter; his conceptualizations of ethical value left less room for a progressive, senses-based politics.<sup>14</sup>

As I will show below, the Romantic Mediterranean has been deployed in Marseille by various urban projects, political figures, the Chamber of Commerce, and tourism offices in efforts to attract tourists and businesses to the city and to “develop” the

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<sup>14</sup> For an alternate strain of Marxist interpretation, see Mascia-Lees analysis of William Morris’s reinterpretation of Marxist theories of the aesthetic (2011).



city to enable it to thrive within the demands of a late capitalist global economy.

Paradoxically, however, the projects that use romantic rhetoric and emphasize building the tourism sector of the economy, as we will see, are based on a history and diagnosis of the city that utilizes the Mediterranean “Clash of Civilizations” framework. Thus, rather than seeing these two discourses as necessarily conflicting, I focus on the various ways they come together in the urban projects at work in Marseille.

For example, these discourses share a fundamental conceptualization that enables them to come together, but limits their utility for understandings of everyday life. In both, the Mediterranean as a region is represented as pre- or non-modern, whether nostalgically and positively in the romantic image, or dangerously and threateningly, in the “Clash of Civilizations” discourse. Problematically absent in both of these is a contemporary grounded Mediterranean, embodied and constituted by lived experience, intimate historicity, and the actual, politically aware, and often hopeful exchanges between humans and their material worlds.

This Mediterranean not only shapes everyday life in Marseille, but also forms the contemporary workings of Marseille’s political culture, in the process challenging the very enlightenment and Marxian notions of modern political evolution embedded within the “Romantic” and “Clash” discursive depictions. When one focuses on the grounded Mediterranean, one is able to see the ways in which embodied, sensory experience, or “aesthetic embodiment” (Mascia-Lees 2011), though downplayed after Descartes and Kant and often presumed to be absent or irrelevant in “reasonable” political action in a modern nation-state, can instead be seen as forming the very basis of political possibility. As I have shown, it is especially important in politics of critique, such as those that

challenge post-colonial amnesia, national discourses of sameness and difference, and urban dependencies on the nation as leader of economic development and reference point for communal identity. Furthermore, as Gilroy (2004) argues in his challenge to scholars to study conviviality as well as difference, analyzing the way these sensory experiences play out can be seen as laying the groundwork for a hopeful rather than fearful scholarly politics, one attuned to the ways in which people create political opportunity rather than, or even while, being constrained to an ever greater degree by the politics of neoliberalism.

***“Euroméditerranée: A new breath for Marseille”<sup>15</sup>***

As I demonstrated above, discursively, the Mediterranean is central to Marseille, its history, its culture, its problems, and its potentials. This is clearly evident in the discourse of urban planners for whom the Sea, Marseille’s dependence on it, and the inability of the city to escape its complex and contingent trade patterns in a post-colonial era are implicated completely in what they see as the city’s decline since the end of colonialism in the 1960s. This is part of what Jerome was emphasizing in the interview I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. And indeed, when asked about the city, “Mediterranean” was among the most commonly used words of the planners I spoke with at all levels and organizations, and recounting the port and (less overtly) the colonial history of Marseille is an important part of how many planners situate their visions of their current work. The Mediterranean as an actor that generated economic crisis forms a fundamental part in planners’ constructions of the city’s “grand narrative” (Lyotard 1984), a part that must be remade if a different future is to be achieved.

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<sup>15</sup> From “Euroméditerranée 2008-2012”

Marseille's reconstruction began in full force in 1995, and the plans are that it will continue through at least 2020, although, as Sheila Crane (2011) points out in her excellent history of Marseille's architecture, the city has been under renewal essentially since at least the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it played a fundamental role as a transit hub in the French colonial empire. In Marseille's current projects, municipal and national governments have begun cooperating with the European Union to transform the city's unsavory image, which is closely related to the *Clash of Civilizations* discourse, by altering the built environment, providing "attractive" opportunities for corporate and transnational investment, something that is emphasized clearly on Projet Euroméditerranée's website. Projet Euroméditerranée was born out of a marriage between city needs and the Barcelona Process, the EU-driven political efforts to change trade and political relationships between the European Mediterranean and the non-EU Mediterranean rim (Attina 2004; Vasconcelos and Joffé 2000 offer full analyses; Emerson and Noutcheva 2005 recount the EU's more recent transition to "Neighborhood Policy").

For other high-level administrators at Euroméditerranée, the Mediterranean figures even more explicitly and more complexly in the definition of the city and how to intervene in its landscape and shape its trajectory than it did for Jerome. In the case of Georges, for example, a soft-spoken administrator who spends much of his time focused on community outreach, the city, the Sea and the interchanges it has enabled are indistinguishable. When I interviewed him, he said:

The Mediterranean defines Marseille. The history between Marseille and the Maghreb is an ancient history. Both an ancient history, and a renewed history. We wish that the links between Marseille and the Maghreb can be reinforced, but above all else, we wish for those links to be more qualitative, and less

quantitative...Now, and in the last thirty or forty years, Marseille has been *the* port of entry from the Maghreb into Europe. But that has worked only in one direction, and it hasn't been forcefully constructed in terms of exchange, of knowledge, of cultural or economic exchange. It's not satisfying. When we hear today young Algerians, for example, saying that it's their wish to leave [their country], it's evident that there's economic development to be done, exchanges that need to be made, to avoid all of that...And that history, that congruence of patterns, has been very important in the constitution of Marseille as a city, in the manner that the center of Marseille in particular has been constructed. For example, the neighborhoods of Belsunce, Noailles, et cetera, that are very economically infringed, are based in large part on this one-way exchange. They are now poor, degraded, and dependent on an underground economy. And that's, for thirty years, what we've experienced here, in the center of the city. You can't understand a sociology of Marseille without having that in your mind and spirit.

This viewpoint, expressed not only by planners but also by politicians and residents, maps quite well onto the framework of a corrupting, or polluting, or clashing Mediterranean. But at the same time, it acknowledges, although subtly, the central role of the colonial encounter in shaping Marseille's history. The "one-way exchange" Georges discusses travels out of the Maghreb and into Marseille—and refers to the post-colonial period.

Subtly, Georges implicates France's role as "abandoning" its responsibilities in the former colonies. Admittedly, Georges' diagnosis carries a problematic air of paternalism and embeds within it a problematic notion of progress—the idea is that it is France's responsibility, somehow, to ameliorate conditions in the post-colonies, an extension of the "white man's burden" ideology that played an important role in projects of colonization from the start (Kipling 1899). However, lodged within this paternalism is at least a sense of responsibility for the colonial past, which is often glossed over in the discourses of contemporary politicians, bureaucrats, and immigration scholars (Hannoum n.d.). Furthermore, in this case, the problematic Mediterranean justifies and outlines a

very local, aesthetic intervention in Marseille's landscape, in which Georges is fundamentally embedded.

For Georges, the city's shared Mediterranean sensibility is both its saving grace from an ill defined "could-have-been" and a moment of opportunity. The opportunity is for a new form of planning project within France, which is how those at Euroméditerranée view their work—but also for a particular path to renewal which Georges sees as embedded in the local culture and landscape already. Marseille's Mediterraneanness, for Georges, is implicated in exchanges with the Maghreb that have impeded the local economy and created degradation—in both the colonial and post-colonial periods—but this is a problem that can be repaired. In fact, for Georges, the basis of the path to reparation is the city's trans-Mediterranean sensory culture, something he absolutely does not want to lose with the renewal process. He emphasized this in expressing concern over a Marseille that could end up too much like other French cities like Paris and Lyon—with a sizeable minority population that is physically marginalized and civically misunderstood (Grillo 1985, Silverstein 2005, Keaton 2005, Bowen 2007). This is a fate Georges sees as inevitably yielding unrest, segregated "communalism" (self-segregation in ethnic communities) and problems of integration, which he diagnoses in those other locales. Indeed, Georges identifies Marseille as, "a paradise compared to what it could have been" and, when I asked him to explain, pointed to the local populations' shared sense of trans-Mediterranean connection as inherent in the reasons why this is so:

In Marseille, for sure, there is a lot of poverty, a lot of shared history of refugeeism and fleeing political violence and scraping by with what was available. And, of course, the negative aspects of that, too: an emphasis on crime, family control, a lingering system of patronage. But in Marseille, there is

something marvelous in that most people, a great many people, identify themselves and each other as sharing in a heritage, a Mediterranean heritage that exists in their skin and their roots whatever their color or original origin or religion. They value it, and can find commonality in one another even despite difference. There's less exclusion here. Everyone can walk along the *Vieux Port* on a Sunday and see the boats and feel the wind from the Sea and take a coffee nearby. Everyone. *That's* why Marseille is a paradise compared to what it could have been, to what it could be if we don't maintain those senses of connection as the city moves forward.

As Georges points out, despite, or potentially through its poverty, Marseille has managed to maintain some balance and sense of urban community within its trans-Mediterranean origins. While these have problematically created poverty, they have also allowed less exclusion—access to the sensory features of “the boats” and “the wind” and “the coffee” at the Vieux Port. For Georges, ignoring those origins or downplaying them, a strategy he believes was employed in some previous French responses to concerns over immigration and the economy, carries enormous risks to what he sees as the city's delicate balance. Marseille thus has already charted, for Georges, a new sentimental, political, and discursive path for France, and Euroméditerranée's job is to implement that path to its full potential.

When one looks to Projet Euroméditerranée and other local renewal projects' larger plans, rather than planners' individual expressions of hesitation or concern, the city's dependence on the Mediterranean becomes important in yet another light—the transnational methods by which transformation can be achieved. If remade, the city's opening on the Mediterranean provides a pathway towards an accession within Europe. Euroméd's characteristically upbeat marketing materials hail this potentiality, as in the following excerpt from a 2008 brochure

A new dynamic for Euromediterranean Space: More than ever, Marseille

conforms to its Euromediterranean vocation. The meeting of investments in the Mediterranean's Southern coast and the perspective of a Mediterranean Union reinforce the interests of private enterprises and international organizations in Marseille. In building its development around an ambition—to become an operational base for exchanges between Europe and the Mediterranean—Marseille affirms its international vocation: reinforce its attractiveness and take its place among the grand metropolises that count in Europe. [Euroméditerranée 2008-2012: 3]

That the local planners and politicians turn to a transnational role for the city as a “metropolis that counts in Europe,” rather than emphasizing its place within the French nation, is undoubtedly important, and has influenced both the language and the financing of the expansive and expensive projects taking place there—financed partially from France, partially from the European Union, as well as through municipal, departmental, and private channels.

Furthermore, as this quote shows, although much of the language used to promote Marseille's urban redevelopment focuses on economics—with words like “vocation,” “investment,” and “enterprise”—the idea of beauty or “attractiveness” also frequently arises in surprising juxtaposition to this language. The title of one recent Marseille Chamber of Commerce publication discussing the importance of small business in the region stating, “PME<sup>16</sup> is Beautiful,” provides another example (CCI 2010), as does a quote from the Projet Euroméditerranée website's discussion of its architectural and urban planning goals,

The project is based on reinforcing the framework of public and green spaces. The major axes, the city's points of entry and the Seafront, are thus being recomposed with a goal of ensuring continuity and urban quality. This occasions work reconfiguring roadway infrastructure and the development of new public transport. Also, urban attractions are consolidated or created around large projects

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<sup>16</sup> *Petite et Moyenne Entreprise*, or Small and Medium Business. English in the original.

which intensify metropolitan attractiveness and urban liveliness, like the Docks Joliettes, J4 at the Sea, the Station Saint-Charles, and [the converted factory that serves as an arts center] the Belle de Mai ... Finally, an urban fabric and diverse programming contribute to the insertion of the project within its historical environment and create an attractive residential framework, renewing the pleasure of living downtown and notably valorizing the exceptional trumps of the site. [<http://www.euromediterranee.fr/quartiers/presentation/le-projet-urbain.html>, Accessed electronically February 12, 2010]

The notions of urban quality, pleasure, beauty, and vibrancy are largely aesthetic and sensory, rather than strictly economic categories, and their continual appearance in promotional literature demonstrate that, in addition to economic, functional and infrastructural changes, Marseille's urban projects aim towards cultivating a particular sensory quality in the city—one they identify as already present because of the city's trans-Mediterranean history and as potentially useful for the future because of its reach beyond the national frame. Much like in the documents produced by such projects, planners' and architects' spoken discourse continually focuses on increasing these qualities of beauty and comparatively easy diversity. Notably, Marseille's exceptional aesthetic potential and status are often seen to rest on its Mediterranean geography, identity, and "culture." Jerome, for example, referred to it as "an exceptional site for development, geographically, with sweeping views from the Sea to the surrounding mountains, and a sweeping mix of populations."

### ***Neoliberal Politics, Transgressive Transnationalism, or Progressive Beauty?***

Admittedly, one way to interpret projects like Euroméditerranée is by seeing them as neoliberalism at work on the landscape, and important losses in social housing have occurred alongside redevelopment projects, supporting this view. Euroméditerranée does



aim towards increasing privatization and encouraging private-sector solutions to problems of economics and education the French state might no longer be willing or able to finance as vigorously as in the past (see Harvey 2005). Indeed, many in Marseille's robust left wing are highly skeptical of the project, including the organizers and members of a large number of associations in Marseille who value the French welfare state and see any scaling back thereof as, as one association member told me, "amoral, a precursor to chaos, and the end of anything valuable in France." This is usually how such projects are interpreted in contemporary anthropology as well, and I have had to resist my initial impulse to too-quickly read Jerome's statements about Marseille as an "oppositional" city, discussed at the beginning of the chapter, as standing in for the views of Euroméditerranée and the renewal efforts as a whole, and as making the most possible sense within a framework of neoliberalism and the cutting of people's access to portions of the landscape and to certain social services. And, in the cultural and subject-making realms of neoliberalism, as explored by a number of anthropologists (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff 2001, 2003; Hannerz 2007; Illouz 2007; Foucault 2000; Lemke 2001), the projects in Marseille do have a neoliberal component in the ways that they reimagine the productive economic city and citizen. However, that said, at least three aspects of Marseille's situation make me hesitate to give neoliberalism too much explanatory power for the characteristics and experiences of the ongoing urban renewal projects in Marseille.

First, neoliberalisation in Europe is better used to categorize a specific time period rather than one coherent set of policies (see Kus 2006, Prasad 2005). In the aftermath of World War II, France saw its major challenges as coming from lack of industrial activity,

and focused on promoting industrial policy changes to increase that sort of production (Kus 2006). While doing this, some privatization came about, but the French state remained quite large, retaining greater ownership of enterprises than the UK, the US, or Germany, keeping its tax base and percentage of public sector employment higher than in the UK, the US, or Germany, and leaving its welfare state largely intact, spending more of its GDP on social programs than any of those other three nations. In the economic crisis of the 1970's, which Marseille experienced especially harshly because of changes in commercial port dynamics (Levinson 2006), the UK diagnosed Keynesian economics as the problem and began to attack the systems connected to it (Kus 2006). France, however, diagnosed the problem as too much state regulation over industry, and the welfare state was not connected to those practices (Kus 2006). After getting through that crisis, France has for the most part continued to support its robust welfare state, and any recent attempts to cut it back in the name of austerity, pushed by the European Union but also by the (relatively speaking) fiscally conservative presidency of Sarkozy, have been met with great resistance. This was part of the reason why the current President François Hollande, a longtime member of the *Partie Socialiste*, was elected over giving Sarkozy a second term, although even Hollande has recently proposed some unpopular pension reforms.

A second reason for being cautious about a neoliberal interpretation of Marseille's renewal is based on the facts of what is happening with renewal on the ground. While *Projet Euroméditerranée* might be pushing greater public-private partnership, it is funded by public entities, as are the other organizations involved in changing the city's landscape. Furthermore, many of the renewal projects' largest and most visible

investments have been in the public sector, in projects like the Alcazar library, the St. Charles train station, the Cité de la Méditerranée, the pedestrianisation of the Vieux Port, the building and equipping of MuCEM (discussed below), the new tram line, and the redesign and rehabilitation of a great deal of social housing, which can, in some cases, be privately owned but is, in all cases, strictly regulated by the state. The overall number of available social housing units inside the city of Marseille has been going down, but even that depends on timing and on whom you ask, and a lot of the efforts to redesign older social housing units reduce the total number of available units but are seen to increase their quality, and are completed as part of nationally-funded programs.

Interestingly, during the financial crisis of 2008-2009, even *Projet Euroméditerranée* was finding a lot of its buyers in the public sector, and planners continually told me at the time that they worried more about creating neighborhoods that were too dense with social housing rather than not meeting the community's social housing needs. Their plan has always been that, within *Euroméditerranée*'s territory, the housing they build and rehabilitate will be one-third private housing, one-third social housing, and one-third intermediary/subsidized housing. This is well above the French requirement that 20 percent of housing in a given area be social housing. Based on what I witnessed at local planning offices, even private rehabilitations of housing units were occurring primarily because the state intervened to demand change by declaring a particular housing unit or building unfit, sometimes at the request of tenants.

This by no means indicates that there are no abuses going on within the housing market, nor does it show that all of the projects unfolding in Marseille always serve those most in need. Marseille has had a long social housing waitlist for a very long time, and

rents in the private housing market are rising partly as a result of all of the structural change in the city. There are many landlords who abuse those who are waiting for social housing by charging rates much higher than those in comparable units in the neighborhood. Laws are favorable to tenants and many landlords do not have an interest in bringing in new tenants who have housing subsidies from the government because they worry about them ultimately not paying their rents. Racism can also play a factor in rates charged even in housing that is not subsidized. I had an Algerian-descended interlocutor, Nabil, who, when looking for apartments with his French-descended girlfriend, made separate phone calls inquiring about listed apartments using both his name and hers. According to him, the monthly rates landlords quoted them varied by as much as 200 €. Often, when he called about a place, the landlord would report that it was unavailable, but if she called five minutes later the same landlord would want to set up a viewing. Furthermore, gentrification occurs in many areas where the reinvestment in downtown Marseille renders central neighborhoods more attractive than they had been before the rehabilitation projects started, and apartments that used to house large families are rented to small numbers of students, artists, and individual professionals who want closer access to downtown sites (Atkinson 2000, 2005, Boulay 2012 for a specific Marseille-based analysis). The public transportation system in Marseille is also not as robust as that of other French cities, and traffic problems are a perpetual headache, so anyone interested in not owning and driving a car usually looks for housing downtown. Importantly, this includes some of the people on social housing wait-lists, who may turn down a number of apartments in Marseille's more distant neighborhoods as they wait for something central to become available.

The third major reason neoliberalism alone is not an adequate framework for explaining Marseille's projects rests in the fact that much of Marseille's redevelopment emphasizes investment in the cultural sector, which is often heavily state-supported in France and in Europe more broadly. The transnational strategy and aesthetic base of Marseille's urban projects—and the trans-Mediterranean roots they claim and to which they aspire—are most easily visible in efforts to bolster the city's artistic activity and “cultural” appeal as part of its redevelopment strategy (See Ingram 2009). In September 2008, the city and the region of Provence were together named a European Capital of Culture for 2013<sup>17</sup>—a designation that brings in extensive EU and national funding for arts and educational events throughout the region, both leading up to and over the course of the year 2013. In all, 90 million Euros are to be spent on the designation over five years, with 70 percent coming from the region chosen, 15 percent coming from the national government, and 15 percent coming from the European Union. The project expects to make 600 million Euros in additional tourism money through its holding of the title. The designation is designed to promote recognition, tourism, and artistic and cultural events for both visitors and the local population. In competing for this designation, the city's dossier heralded the aesthetic, political, and cultural potential of trans-Mediterranean exchange. Even the epigraph of its bid proposal put forth this idea, quoting from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1907:215-216):

Even today, we can still find a clear-eyed understanding in France and a consideration with regard to those rare and rarely satisfied men who are too great to be fulfilled by any form of patriotism and who, as Northerners, know how to

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<sup>17</sup> “Culture” as a concept and a resource was importantly recognized in the Treaty of European Union in 1992. For an extensive discussion of how this led to the EU prescribing culture with certain instrumentalities, and using those to push EU integration and local redevelopment, see Barnett 2001.

love the South and in the South, love the North – those natural Mediterraneans, those good Europeans. [Quoted in Marseille Provence 2013 Dossier, 3]

The idea of “natural Mediterraneans” making “good Europeans” might seem an odd way to appeal for funding for multi-billion Euro European Union investment, especially in light of the recent literature on immigration policy, race, and politics within Europe, the limited success of the EU for the Mediterranean, and the overt anti-Southernism with which the EU has approached its financial crisis. It is important to keep in mind that many countries, including France, demonstrate certain biases against their own Southern territories (see Cole 1997), and the EU has recently sounded not unlike an angry parent in its chiding of its Southern members of Greece, Spain, and Italy for their perceived fiscal irresponsibility. The EU often forgets that those countries had fewer resources to begin with at the EU’s inception, and so more than fiscal irresponsibility contributes to the economic problems they have. Yet in 2008, when the European Capital of Culture 2013 picks were made, it was a very different moment, and the Euro was suffering but not in crisis. In any case, not only did Marseille put forward the idea of promoting trans-Mediterranean exchange with cultural events, but it also worked. Marseille was selected for the designation from a host of other French cities that advanced to the final phase of the competition, including Bordeaux, part of a more classically culturally rich region.

Marseille-Provence’s bid to be “Capital of Culture” relied largely on the idea of developing “Ateliers de l’Euroméditerranée”—Euromediterranean Workshops—which worked to define and specify their proposal. The concept promotes the establishment of arenas of cross-cultural, transnational, and trans-Mediterranean artistic, intellectual, economic and educational exchange and production, seen as having the potential to spark new forms of creativity, contribute to long-term urban redevelopment in Marseille, and

facilitate discussion through and across difference, something Marseille claimed in its bid materials to be especially well-equipped to host. To think of these activities as “workshops” denotes a connotation of craftsmanship, and what is being crafted is the urban space, material art, and an aesthetically and politically appealing sense of Euro-Mediterranean connection and conviviality. Contributing to the renewal of the city is one of Marseille-Provence 2013’s major identified goals, and the rest of the dossier continues by pointing out the aesthetic and cultural potentials of cross-border exchange:

Contributing to the Renewal of the city: The “Ateliers de l’Euroméditerranée” will be open to the city. They will deal with such issues as the redevelopment of public spaces and the place of art in these spaces. They will associate artists, architects and planners. They will look at nomadism, the circulation of works of art and the cultural irrigation of the area. They will organize public meetings. Residents will participate in cultural projects designed to develop amateur activities, especially in schools. Contemporary creation – and especially young creation – fosters openness and social links. Artistic activities in the South as in the North are today increasingly linked to local areas and issues, and combine artistic, educational and social dimensions. In this new relationship with people and audiences, young creators can structure and animate vital spaces of freedom. [MP 2013 Dossier, pp. 18]

As this quote demonstrates, the projects of Marseille-Provence 2013 are closely tied to that of *Projet Euroméditerranée*. They draw on the same ideas, promoting Marseille as a place apt to foster trans-Mediterranean connections. The trans-Mediterranean emphasis is also certainly not new in cultural promotion circles, even in the post-colonial era. As early as 1984, the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region helped create the Mediterranean Youth Orchestra (OJM), which emphasizes connecting young musicians from throughout the Mediterranean region and providing them with orchestral opportunities, and is funded with the help of the French Ministry of Culture. That project, however, was more intimately connected with the nearby university town of Aix-en-Provence than with

Marseille, which in 1984 still had an entirely unsavory reputation and was seen as completely unmanageable, the poster-child for post-colonial problems within the former metropole and the “Clash of Civilizations” framework.

The Euro-Mediterranée workshop idea also echoed a lot of the rhetoric put forward around the same time about the development of the Union for the Mediterranean, a part of the European Union’s “neighborhood policy” and a 2007 Sarkozy campaign promise that was designed to emphasize communication and cooperation between all of the EU member states and 16 partner countries around the Mediterranean basin. In terms of actual results, however, this organization’s activities have been quite modest, and largely hindered by conflicts between Israel and Palestine, Cyprus and Turkey, and Algeria and Morocco over the Western Sahara. These conflicts left the organization largely ineffective even before the chaos of the so-called “Arab Spring,” from which it reeled. The Union’s rhetoric, however, offers especially strong support for socio-cultural partnerships between all of the member states, although this emphasis may be made partly because the organization has so much trouble making progress on any of its other objectives. It generally seems almost constantly on the verge of total collapse (see Bicchi 2011).

The Marseille-Provence 2013 European Capital of Culture project has existed in strong partnership with Projet Euroméditerranée since its beginning, and, in its initial proposal, made explicit claims about its potential contribution to the revitalization of Marseille’s urban landscape. As of last year, 80 percent of the events planned for Marseille in the 2013 Capital of Culture calendar were set to take place on Projet Euroméditerranée territory ([euromediterranee.fr](http://euromediterranee.fr), Accessed electronically February 12,



2012). In turn, this has led to even further emphasis in recent promotional materials about Euroméd that the project is capitalizing on the aesthetic potentials of the city.

From the beginning of the renewal process, all of its agencies have also emphasized certain building constructions engendered by renewal as particular successes in architectural aesthetics, such as “Les Docks” which I discuss in Chapter 4, the Konnect building, currently under construction and slated to be finished in 2014, and the CGM skyscraper, the first skyscraper ever built in Marseille, which was designed by the Iraqi-born architect Zaha Hadid, famous as the first woman to win the notable Pritzker Prize. Marseille’s renewal projects have shown some impetus to promote architects like Hadid who are from the Mediterranean region. Marseille is also home to France’s National School of Architecture and is the site of Corbusier’s first project, L’Unité de l’Habitation. In addition to being one of the founders of modernist architecture and planning (1986), Corbusier also had very strong interests in Mediterranean architecture, and cultivated those interests during his time in Marseille and in the North African colonies (Celik 1992). Given the city’s architectural heritage, those in Marseille’s architectural circles are thus extremely positive about the city finally putting some emphasis on developing its own architectural landscape.

Especially lauded and long-awaited in Marseille’s renewal has been the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilization (MuCEM), which, when it opens later this year, will hold the collections of the former National Museum of Arts and Tradition as well as specialized rotating exhibits exploring history and culture from around the Mediterranean region. The final complex will connect exhibition buildings with the Fort Saint-Jean via extravagant passageways. The “J4” building—so named for the former

port pier number of the location—features a design surrounded by elaborate concrete latticework, and will lead out into the Cité de la Méditerranée, a pedestrian esplanade along the water. MuCEM’s architect is the very accomplished Rudy Ricciotti, a winner of numerous prizes who also has Mediterranean roots. Ricciotti was born in Algeria in 1952, and his family lived there until he was three when they migrated to Southern France.

Though he has designed throughout France and across the globe, much of his architectural practice has been based in the south of France. The MuCEM construction is financed by the national, regional, departmental and municipal governments, and is considered a major, landmark architectural project, even having been featured in *The New York Times* (Goodman 2012). In interviews, Ricciotti emphasizes that the design honors Marseille’s history by not overshadowing the Fort Saint-Jean in height, expanding horizontally instead (See Figures 6 through 10). *The New York Times* described Ricciotti and his work on the building as follows:

The architect refers to the hundreds of panels with eight different types of concrete lattice that enshroud the building as “sun breakers” — designed to shield the southern and western facades from the strong Mediterranean light. Reminiscent of an Arabian moucharaby screen, they were designed in free-form fishnet patterns and will have a blue-gray iridescent sheen at night, ‘just like the skin of sardines,’ Ricciotti says.

With a collection that documents the history of cultures across the Mediterranean and Europe, through everything from ethnographic drawings to costumes to jewelry, the MuCEM will be the biggest national French museum outside Paris. And the way the building is situated, facing outward toward the Sea and not inward toward France, is central to the institution’s mission. It stands with ‘its feet in the water,’ Ricciotti says, gesturing to the 17-ton posts that plunge into the basins of Sea water. ‘There will be life here. First algae, then barnacles, then mussels, then little crabs — the kind I used to eat raw as a kid in the Camargue — climbing up the legs of Culture. C’est pas beau, ça?’ [Goodman 2012]



**Figure 6. Exterior View of the MuCEM Under Construction. Taken from across the Vieux Port. Marseille's skyline and the CGM tower in the background. ©Lisa Ricciotti. Used with Permission.**

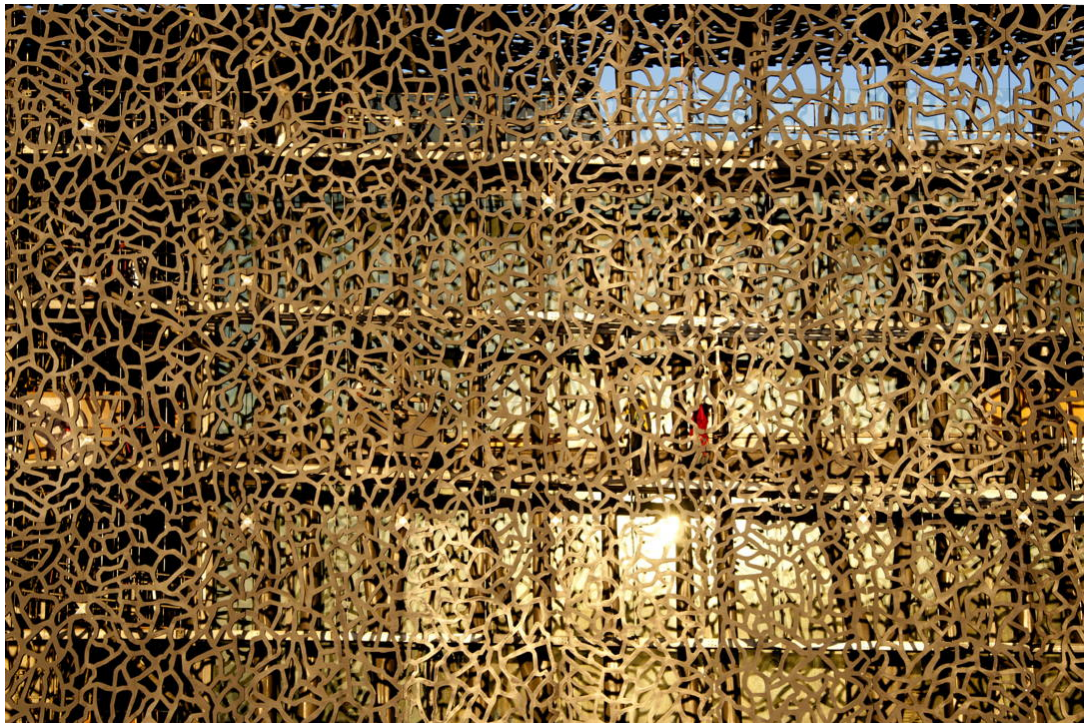


**Figure 7. Exterior view of the MuCEM's J4 Building. Porte Autonome barrier in the background. ©Lisa Ricciotti. Used with Permission.**





**Figure 8. View from Inside an Unfinished Exhibition Space at MuCEM J4 Site.**  
©Lisa Ricciotti. Used with Permission.



**Figure 9. MuCEM's Concrete Latticework Shimmers in the Sun.** ©Lisa Ricciotti  
Used with Permission.



**Figure 10. MuCEM's Exterior Ramp, with Details of Latticework Visible.**

**©Lisa Ricciotti. Used with Permission.**

As the interview with Ricciotti and these photographs demonstrate, the importance of this building's harmony with the Marseille landscape and history is, for many, part of what makes it so beautiful and potentially transformative.

Admittedly, the aesthetic emphasis of Marseille's projects does not render neoliberalism totally irrelevant for their interpretation. One way to interpret Marseille-Provence 2013 is as a palliative of neoliberalism's potential negative effects on the city, perpetrated through renewal processes. This project could be seen as suspiciously co-opting locally salient experiences of difference and strategies for building collectivities and political organization and channeling them into an arena of "only art," only to render larger, more fundamental projects like Euroméditerranée harder to resist (see Ingram 2009). This interpretation, however, seems to me not to take seriously the political potentials of art, beauty, and transformation in the material landscape.

In my interviews with local artists, many were initially very suspicious of the

renewal projects, of the Marseille-Provence 2013 project, and of the financing all such efforts are bringing into the city. However, in communications since I left Marseille, many of those same artists have told me of their ultimate decisions to participate in the events on the calendar, and were comforted by the efforts Marseille-Provence 2013 has made to include as much of the local artistic community as possible in planning meetings and in the ultimate projects chosen. That said, the process is by no means democratic, and some interpretations of the aims of Marseille-Provence 2013 have been favored more than others. For example, one artist, an Algerian immigrant, told me that he felt the organization running the calendar was not interested in art that posed real political critiques to its concept, and that this rendered some artistic projects, like the overtly post-colonial, undesirable.

Thus neoliberalism may certainly tell part of the story of Marseille's recent changes. Yet, I believe the aesthetic and sensory dimensions of the project are integral to what Marseille is at this moment experiencing, to where the city is going in the future, and to the sorts of experiences planners and architects have in their work and hope their work engenders in other people. For neoliberalism to explain the entire story of Marseille's politics of renewal, one has to either believe that the embodied, aesthetic elements of Marseille's everyday political life and its urban renewal projects are not salient, or that they can be both salient and unimportant. My research suggests that they are, rather, salient and extremely important. Sensory experiences in Marseille are neither pure and uncorrupted nor meaningless and apolitical. They are, instead, generative—of some of Marseille's collectivities, of aspects of the city's broader political culture and spirit, and of potential models for grappling with the question of how people relate to

their broader material environments. If a counter-politics to neoliberalism's potential to divide populations is to be found, the aesthetic experience and emphasis of Marseille's renewal process may also be generative of such a narrative and set of practices (Gilroy 2004).

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has worked to outline a number of salient discursive and historical approaches used in understanding Marseille's interrelationship with the Mediterranean, as well as the particular slants of these approaches deployed to think through and represent this interrelationship within current renewal projects. In particular, I have highlighted an opposition between discourses that pose the Mediterranean as a corrupting site of the "Clash of Civilizations," and those that present it as a sensor ally-based, but politically empty conceptualization of "Mediterranean Romance." I have shown that the opposition between these frameworks is productive in the city's renewal efforts: interpretations that resemble the former discourse are frequently deployed in planners' attempts to diagnose Marseille's particular set of challenges or problems, with the city's Mediterranean geography, dependence on the port economy, and high rates of immigration blamed for poverty, chaos, crime, and the city's negative reputation. At the same time, in envisioning the city's future, planners and planning projects often evoke the image of "Mediterranean Romance"—highlighting features like the proximity to the Sea, the strength of the sun, and, especially, the productive Tran cultural mixings which characterize the city. Importantly, while at the general level these distinct discourses are marred by a lack of specificity. In planners' deployments of them, however, and especially in their highlighting of the Mediterranean's potentially positive features, they are rendered

concrete—in plans to highlight and make use of the conceptualizations, such as those for the Euromediterranean Workshops proposed in the bid for the European Capital of Culture 2013 designation, and those emphasized by the architect Ricciotti in explaining his design for the new MuCEM building.

In this chapter I have also explored why frameworks of neoliberalism, while certainly important, are insufficient to understand Marseille's renewal projects, given the projects' heavy government funding, their strong public sector components, and the important ways in which they are deploying ideas of beauty and attractiveness in their attempts to reconfigure the city's aesthetics. Ultimately, I hope to have shown that renewal projects in Marseille, while they may have mixed effects, for example in the simultaneous improvements and problems they create within the housing market, are generally organized along hopeful lines. By revealing the local characteristics of renewal, I also highlighted that renewal projects transnational cannot be understood in identical ways.

Importantly, unlike the image of the Mediterranean in much social science writing that treats it as an object or site of conflict influenced exclusively by macro-level political processes such as decolonization, uneven economy, and immigration (Smith 2001, Sayad 1991, Horden & Purcell 2000), for many of the city's residents both the Sea and its crossing are lived-with objects and personal historical facts, just as much as they are discursive constructs. As I will demonstrate, the Sea, the region and the history they represent in local material life all play important roles in residents' senses of belonging, captured in their sensory experiences of the city and its landscape, and in local political processes of negotiation, material construction, and the formation of communities. This



last process is one that I will explore in more depth in the next chapter, as I examine how conceptualizations of a transmediterranean Marseillais identity are important to the formation of progressively oriented political collectivities in the city.

The Mediterranean as Sea and region is thought, written, and talked about, by press, planners, residents, and community organizers; but it is also viscerally felt—bathed in, smelled, tasted, felt as wind on people’s faces and tinglings in their spines and hearts in moments of longing, desire, comfort, nostalgia, hope, and fear. Ignoring these sensory experiences not only misses an important part of Marseille’s particular social landscape and meaning to its residents, it also obscures understanding their broader places within the French nation, transnational communities, and global post-colonial political processes. Crucially, the important role of the senses and the material world in Marseille’s social and political organization also contradicts problematic and long-lived narratives about what constitutes a modern political subject. In the chapters that follow, I address some of these issues head on, beginning with the sensory and material basis for collectivity-formation in Marseille.

### **Chapter Three: Sensing Politics: Embodying Collectivities in Marseille**

“Marseille makes its own symphony...” Elliane said. On the sunny August afternoon when she uttered these words, she was reflecting on the city and her experiences in it as we sat on my apartment’s sunny, high-walled wooden back terrace. This space opened out onto the block’s other terraces and eight stories of my neighbors’ kitchen windows. The sensory backdrop for our conversation emanated through these windows, from the intimacy of my neighbors’ home lives: rai music and classical; television sets blaring cartoons and multiple languages of news; dishes clanging in the preparation of fragrant garlic and cumin-scented evening meals; scolding and praise of children as they recounted their days; a rhythmic whirring and clipping of laundry being hung from windows and blowing in the breeze; the impossibly loud snoring of an upstairs neighbor as he took an afternoon nap. Punctuating this intimate cacophony were the public sounds of urban downtown: the clang of tram bells, sirens, and the constant shrieks of the brazen gulls.

Though Elliane’s initial nod to sound was metaphorical—“Marseille makes its own symphony”—in this chapter, I explore how, in Marseille, the minute details of embodied, sensory experience—whether smell, sound, or taste—are central building blocks to the city’s larger political life. Drawing on two ethnographic examples of the sensory basis for the building of collectivities, I argue that these sensory experiences are, indeed, constitutive of the political, specifically showing how shared sensory experiences and affective responses build out into the broader work of politics. To do so, I will

demonstrate the ways in which everyday collectivities—the shifting groups within which we regularly operate, obtain resources, feel belonging, and make and live lives—not only reflect but also fundamentally depend on shared sensory experiences and affective frameworks for interpreting them. In so doing, I converse with and build on the fields of sensory anthropology, interdisciplinary theories of affect, and studies of material culture.

### ***Introduction***

Sensory anthropology has offered suggestions for an ethnographic approach that places the liveliness of sensory worlds at the center of anthropological inquiry (see Classen 1997, Howes 2005, Ingold 2000, Pink 2009). Its fundamental argument is that people everywhere experience the world foremost through sensing bodies, and therefore more attention should be paid to this process of sensation, its cultural rootedness, and the differences in sensory universes cross-culturally (Classen 1997, Howes 2010). Here, I extend Classen's (1997) argument that the senses are invested with varying cross-cultural social value, specifically proposing that these valuations—which are often performed inexplicitly—are a fundamentally political act that can transcend traditional notions of citizenship within an Aristotelian *polis* (Manning 2006).

As I argued in Chapter 1, to understand this, however, requires moving past seeing the sensing subject as a stable entity or as autonomous, individually bounded, and privileged as the possessor of agency, rather than being in constant motion and re-creation (Ingold 2000, Pink 2009, 2010). In fact, much sensory scholarship proposes the sensorium as something that exists within individual subjects, rather than within the social world (Chau 2008). Tim Ingold (2000) draws heavily from phenomenology (especially that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2002)), to argue that privileging knowledge-

seeking about cultural difference risks losing sight of the importance of the perceptive moment, the immediacy of perception, and the constant re-making of both subjectivity and the sensed environment (see Pink 2009:12). At the same time, as Howes has pointed out (2010, 2011), a pure philosophical phenomenology carries its own risks, particularly of rendering sensory experience ahistorical or acultural, or privileging the Western sensory systems that undergird many anthropologists' own cultural valuations of the senses and placing sight and sound above the "lower" senses of touch, taste, and smell, underprivileged in Western models of sensory experience. In light of the important points made by these arguments, I advocated in Chapter 1 for a use of phenomenological methods that is historically and culturally-attuned while paying significant attention to the constantly in-the-making experiences of our research subjects by avoiding conceptions of either subjectivity or the world as stable.

This emphasis on the mobility and instability of perception and subjectivity has also proven foundational in scholarship theorizing affect (Massumi 2002), which, like work on the senses, focuses on the immediacy of bodily experience and argues that time and space cannot be taken as pre-given, but should instead be seen as produced by sensing bodies in motion (Manning 2006, Stewart 2007, Clough 2007). Affect, in these scholars' work, tends to be thought about as a form of intense, pre-cognitive, social feeling that overtakes the body-in-motion. Affect highlights sensation as potentiality and possibilities for becoming, rather than seeing sensation as a closed, directed system (Seigworth & Gregg 2010), and describes a particular aesthetic orientation that places permeable bodies' interactions with the world as prior to mental cognition or agentive action (Clough 2007).

These related sets of theory, all of which point to the importance of sensation, are politically important because they destabilize the notion of individual subjectivity, on which most traditional Western notions of the citizen depend (Manning 2006; see also Brennan 2004:2). Manning's theorizations move theories of affect explicitly to a critique of the nation-state system. To wit:

Sensing bodies in movement resist codings of state security by complicating the strict boundaries between inside and outside... If you cannot have a state without security, you cannot have a sensing body in movement and a state. Not without control mechanisms to hold a body in (its) place." (Manning 2006:xxi)

This mobile body is constantly facing outward towards other human and non-human objects in the world instead of being centered towards a state as in traditional notions of citizenship. It is exactly this mode of attention to the outside that makes Marseille, a port city defined by immigration and a post-colonial history, a particularly interesting place to consider how the senses reconfigure citizenship and political collectivities.

Following Foucault and recent work in the study of material culture (Foucault 1990, 2000; Tilley 2006; Warnier 2001, 2007), any notion of subjectivity must include some room for it being remade in constant interaction with the ideational and material world that surrounds the subject. In Marseille, this is a Mediterranean world. As we have seen, the Mediterranean is important in Marseille both as the material Sea, and as the politically entangled region of which the city is a part, existing in a complicated post-colonial relationship with the French nation and the transnational European and Mediterranean Unions. For my interlocutors, the connection with the Mediterranean is experienced foremost through the body, in people's sensory, affective responses, and in the embodied accumulation of personal and collective histories of living near, crossing

over, and being surrounded by and immersed in the Sea (see Geurts 2003). This Mediterranean orientation is transgressive—it undermines French notions of national character that rest on an intra-national *fraternité*.

While much scholarly work has addressed the question of the Mediterranean's political role in international relations and conflicts (e.g. Del Sarto 2006; Driessen 2005), in this chapter, I aim to show that, at least in Marseille, the Mediterranean is more than an inert object people utilize, traverse, conquer, or control. The city-wide conceptualizations of the Mediterranean, and more particularly of a transmediterranean identification, enable unexpected relationships across differences of origin, neighborhood, and language at a time and place where such differences are thought to be especially tension-laden.

This notion of difference in France as a fraught subject is forwarded by an extant scholarly literature on postcolonial immigration that emphasizes immigrants' racialized segregation, spatial and political marginality, and uprootedness (Temime et al 1991; Silverstein 2005; Keaton 2006). Despite work on post-colonialism that has demonstrated the important intimacies and embodiments of nation-building as it relates to the colonial encounter (Stoler 2000), the literature on France's immigrant bodies largely presents them as always-already abject, as a challenge to the nation-state's identity by their existence within the polity and by their questioning of "official" narratives of French history, which have actively sought to neglect the post-colonial legacy and favor a continued notion of a unified French community. In these scholars' work, the single most salient feature of the relationship between France and its "immigrant" communities is thus the ultimate status of "immigrants" as "others" and their marginality in both national discourse and key national spaces, which scholars demonstrate dovetails with complex,

below-the-surface national notions of race and Frenchness (Chapman & Frader 2004), as well as active efforts on the part of the French nation to forget large pieces, and ignore the implications, of France's colonial past (Hannoum n.d.).

Take, for example, former President Sarkozy's February 2011 response to an EU policy promoting multiculturalism, in which he stated that multiculturalism has failed:

Of course we must all respect differences, but we do not want... a society where communities coexist side by side. If you come to France, you accept to melt into a single community, which is the national community, and if you do not want to accept that, you cannot be welcome in France.

([http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20110210/wl\\_afp/francepoliticsimmigrationsociety\\_20110210231042](http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20110210/wl_afp/francepoliticsimmigrationsociety_20110210231042), Accessed February 28, 2011).

In contradistinction to this vision, in Marseille, the Mediterranean enables a sensation of belonging to the city across differences in race and originary national narratives. This characterizes Marseille and the specific “harmonies” of social life the city allows and discourages. Its sensation serves as a key building block for political sentiment, action, and strategy, playing a role on every level of political organization—from the intimate building of neighborhood alliances and networks; to living everyday with the implications of France's colonial legacy; to the work of NGO organizing; to, as I demonstrated in the last chapter, city- and region-level politics and the broader, transnational projects to remake the city's environment and image.

### ***A Scent of Connection: The Senses in Interpersonal Politics***

In this section, I will draw on an example of how Elliane came to feel herself to be part of the collectivity of her neighborhood to demonstrate that the study of the senses can attend to a crucial part of how humans interact with one another and the material environment in groups, which can in turn be understood as a fundamental precondition

for political action (Conover 1988). Elliane's account shows the ways that sensory experience can lead directly to the formation of affective alliances and their integration into notions of subjectivity. Importantly, these frameworks highlight Elliane's neighborhood identity ahead of notions of her belongingness to the French nation-state, at least if it is conceptualized as any sort of unified cultural entity.

A continued lived experience of intimacy within the diversity stemming out of the colonial and postcolonial encounter seems out of place on French soil, somehow unexpected. Yet, in this chapter, I argue that such relationships, and a larger practice of bodily sensing of connections amidst an openly post-colonial discursive framework for their interpretation are fundamental to social and political life in Marseille. My work here echoes Gilroy's (2004) suggestion that scholars turn more attention to notions of conviviality as well as difference—how people of different origins come to live together *as well as* form barriers between one another. It promotes a view of the senses as one site at which such conviviality can begin.

As she was surrounded by the sounds of my Marseille neighborhood, Elliane mused about the complicated nature of her presence in her own. Elliane's neighborhood is not far from the Sea, a collection of tiny, connected, white cement houses that line narrow staircases and walkways, originally inhabited by Romani populations, but now by a mix of their descendents, immigrants from the Maghreb, and other people of modest means. Next to a port-container repair center, Elliane's neighborhood vibrates with the gongs the repairs produce. She described it:

For me, what characterizes my neighborhood changes by the season; the children laughing and yelling, and the clack of their bare feet in the summer; the calls of the different birds that come and go; the changing light at different points of the



day; the conversations that happen across terraces through open windows when it's warm; the cats that move in and out of houses; the feeling of trying to stay hushed when I talk on the phone and don't want to bother anyone or air my business, because anything you say loud enough is fair game. In winter, it's the cold of the drafts and clack of the shutters, closed tight but blowing when the mistral is really strong. [interview, July 7, 2009]

In Elliane's description of her everyday emplacement within her neighborhood, the climate of the Mediterranean characterizes the light, temperature, and breezes that dictate the interconnected everyday practices of Elliane and her neighbors. Elliane works from home producing radio documentaries by contract. This means that her entire day—work and home life alike—is lived in consonance with not only the changing seasons, but also the intimate rhythms of her neighbors' lives, which she experiences sensorally. These happenings directly enable her experiences as part of the collectivity of her neighborhood. As Elliane puts it:

“I have a favorite neighborhood scene... One that really typifies the place for me. A scene, oh.” Elliane drew her breath in, delighted, “this is something I adore. See, there's this old limestone laundry out in front of my door—the landlord tried to take it out a few years ago to put in a terrace—it's a spot where you can see the Sea a bit—but the whole neighborhood all got together and threw a fit.” Elliane laughed, excited. “You see, my neighbor Aïcha, she still does a lot of her laundry by hand, the old fashioned way. So you can hear her rub the clothes against the board, lather on the Savon de Marseille, you can smell it as she runs the water, rinses, starts again, in a rhythm. While she washes, she often sings.” Elliane paused, readying herself. “It's in Arabic, so I can't do the words, but it sounds like... noo noo noo noo noo noo noo...”

As Elliane's description demonstrates, she sees the intimate domesticity of her

neighbor's laundry practices as a "neighborhood scene" that "characterizes" that sphere, rather than as a "private" scene that can be distinguished from "public" neighborhood life (see Bourdieu 1979 for a particularly well-known Mediterranean characterization of the division of public and private space). Moreover, she points to the preservation of the laundry site as a moment of collective, neighborhood organizing. Her feeling of being part of that neighborhood—belonging to the place—is inconstant, mobile temporally and spatially, but it is facilitated by her sensory experiences—her Enchantment with the sound of Aïcha's songs and the rhythm of Aïcha's family's clothes against the washboard, the smell of Savon de Marseille, the "clacking" bare feet of running children, all of which build up into both her daily life and her sense of neighborhood belonging.

Importantly, Aïcha as an individual person is experienced synaesthetically for Elliane—as we all are for each other—as the *bises* of lips on her cheeks in their greeting each day, as a collection of the rhythms, sounds, smells and feelings she produces and evokes. So too is their neighborhood an evocative material world, engendering sensory response and facilitating collective action. Rather than reinscribing their separation and autonomy, the vignette of their relationship shows that Elliane and Aïcha participate sensually and affectively in a shared social world populated with human and non-human actors (Chau 2008, Latour 2005). This is what enabled them to connect, which then facilitated Elliane's entry into the broader social life of her neighborhood, despite the two women's differences in race, economic class, national origin, and age—features often highlighted in analyses of social "positions" and networks (Bourdieu 1977). Elliane went on to describe:

Aïcha said the songs are for her mother... She says she sings about exile, about

being lost far from home and unable to return... That's an important sound near me. I hear it often while I work at home. I take off my headphones just to listen.

Importantly, Aïcha and Elliane's roots are from the same small city in Algeria, where Aïcha's family still lives, and Elliane's family left as *Pieds-noirs* at the end of colonialism in the 1960s, before she was born. Sometimes Elliane recognizes the smells of Aïcha's cooking as being like those of her grandmother's when she was a child. Despite the two women's close affinity, Elliane's and Aïcha's families come from opposite sides of a colonial opposition that has defined the major conflicts of Marseille's history and social life for much of the last century—over colonial rule, immigration, poverty, colonial and post-colonial economy and civic life (Temime 1995), and the identity of Marseille itself. They share that opposition intimately, their families having lived in close proximity, but on opposite sides of colonial rule for generations.

The transcending of differences between Aïcha and Elliane was importantly facilitated largely by Aïcha, who, despite her status as a “minority” in the French nation (though perhaps not in Marseille), carried respect and privilege within her neighborhood: as a long-time resident, married woman, and homeowner, while Elliane was none of those things. Aïcha thus helped Elliane overcome being seen as privileged and different, as a gentrifier in a location where many fear their children will not be able to continue to afford to live, though Elliane herself comes from a working class family without means. That their connection was born first out of shared affective responses to a sensory encounter, a shared identification with the smell of something home-like—Aïcha's evening meal and Elliane's childhood memories—surely deserves attention.

As Elliane describes , the fragrance of a mixture of cooking spices signaled for

both Aïcha and herself the intimate familiarity of a remembered but distant home. Once they discovered they shared it, Aïcha and Elliane also realized they shared a close geographical connection *over the mobilities of time and distance*—beginning with family roots in the past at one location, and ending up together, through totally different trajectories and in very different circumstances, across the Sea at another. Elliane’s positive affective response to a smell facilitated Aïcha’s acceptance of her into her circle, helped to transcend the differences between them in the contemporary moment, and challenged, if incompletely, Elliane’s status as an outsider. This transcendence was crucial—facilitating Elliane’s eventual participation in her neighborhood, in for example, their work to preserve the laundry facility in front of her door, her participation with a group of neighborhood residents in the erecting of a dramatic holiday light show, and also in an ability she gained to be quietly party to information about the underground economic practices that enable her neighbors’ survival, knowledge that facilitates her ability to protect herself and her neighbors from the state’s attempts at regulation. Of course, her entry and acceptance were not total and are not constant.

Still, sometimes they refer to the “Parisians,” all of the outsiders coming in, and I’m a part of that, even though, as I sometimes want to say, loud, “Excuse me, I’m not *Parisian*. Listen to my accent, I come from thirty kilometers down the road. You can practically see the little town where I grew up on a clear day.” But for the Marseillais, especially those without money, everything from outside is Parisian, especially if it comes with a white face and blonde hair.

White skin, blue eyes, a French-sounding name—aspects of identity that can signal privilege within the French nation—can impose limits on neighborhood sociality and interaction in Marseille. But as Elliane shows, “outside” is both a socially constructed and a flexible category—in her neighborhood sometimes she is an outsider

and other times she is not, based on her own and her neighbors' interpretations about her origins and commitments in a given moment and location. Rather than any fundamental, fixed, inalienable or hegemonic truth about Elliane's identity, Elliane is emplaced for herself and her neighbors through small, daily, sensory interactions. In Marseille, important oppositions between inside and outside are constructed not only between white and brown and black, "native" and "immigrant," man and woman, rich and poor, but between Marseille and Paris, South and North, Mediterranean and French. Ideas about who shares and does not share a "Mediterranean sensibility"—a collection of mannerisms, experiences, histories, reactions, tastes, temperaments, etc.—are one central, often-deployed piece of these fluid oppositions.

For Elliane, Marseille, cannot be dissected from its Mediterranean heritage and characteristics, which she experiences everyday with her body. In Elliane's experience, the ambiguity of Marseille's Mediterraneanness is in the complex interrelationships it allows between her and her neighbors, who can deploy the Mediterranean categorization of experiences to share heritage, goals, and good will with unlikely allies, or they can use a stereotype of Mediterranean "hotheadedness" as an excuse for yelling at one another. Yet, despite this ambiguity, for Elliane the Mediterranean defines a particular experience of localized Enchantment with her neighborhood, one that comes out of her sensory engagements with a seasonal, material, diversely populated world around her, and produces delightfully unlikely connections. These neighborhood-level experiences are especially important in the urban context of Marseille, where the most often-uttered description I heard of its social organization is the adage that "Marseille is not really one city, so much as a collection of more than 100 different little villages, each with their own

characteristics and commitments.” Although certainly there are exceptions to these rules, in Marseille, many of these villages are not segregated along ethnic or religious lines.

Importantly, though, as Elliane’s experiences show, these neighborhood “villages” are not simply “local” contexts that can be disaggregated from either “global” processes like trade, migration politics, and the transnational transmission of cultural products (Haugerud 2003), or from the broader city of Marseille. A collective urban identity as Marseillais is a frequently used referent. But that Marseillais identity is placed within the Mediterranean as a transnational entity, rather than within the nation of France. The Mediterranean serves as a regional locution for everyday, personal, and historical experiences that begin on the level of the body. As a category, it thus figures heavily in people’s actions, connections, and affective interpretations. Conceptualizations of the city, its place in the nation, the Mediterranean, and the globe more broadly are defined in relation to these bodily experiences.

### *Couscous-Organizing*

In Marseille, sensory experiences also play a fundamental role in people’s political organization at the level of NGOs and community organizations. There, community associations are prevalent, meriting a hefty annual directory of several hundred pages.<sup>18</sup> In my time in Marseille, there were a great many associations, and they

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<sup>18</sup> Associations in Marseille are in fact so ubiquitous, and their political structure and competition for resources so complex, that I considered it methodologically crucial not to affiliate with any one association until I was already well-connected in Marseille more broadly, lest my work become overly embroiled in the stakes of their inter-politics. So, although most of the Marseillais I knew regularly participated in at least one of these associations, very few of my contacts came through association life. Despite the ubiquity

provided a vast array of services and social options; most Marseillais I knew interacted with at least one of these associations in some way or another. Organizations ranged from “social centers” in each neighborhood that provide child care, social activities, and neighborhood festivals, to *petanque* and soccer clubs, to environmental organizations, youth organizations, neighborhood fan clubs for the Olympique Marseille soccer team (which, readers may recall from Chapter 2, one planner identified as the only thing that holds the city together), ethnic organizations, and political organizations focused on issues ranging from the promotion of green spaces, to the preservation of historic buildings, to the facilitation of immigrants’ entry into society. In short, the organizational structure in Marseille is sweeping and broad-ranging; many associations are at least partially funded by the state.

One of the organizations I worked with was focused on housing rights. Here, I refer to it by the pseudonym *Vous Logez*, or “house yourself.” The organization was run largely by middle class volunteers, most of whom were Français de Souche<sup>19</sup>, at a minimum, and usually of specifically Marseille or Provençal origin, though they made decisions through consensus with their broader membership, which was made up mainly of first-generation immigrants trying to navigate their lives and relationships to the French state as they accumulated years on Marseille’s extensive social housing waitlists—which sometimes take as many as 11 or 12 years to allocate a family with housing. In addition to monthly membership-wide meetings held at a local union office

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of associations, I feel a pseudonym necessary here to protect the identities of my research interlocutors.

<sup>19</sup> This phrase translates literally as “French-of-stock,” and is generally used to signify anyone who is ethnically and natively French.

on Saturday mornings, the organization functions by providing a variety of individual and collective services and participating in a broad range of events. On the individual level, volunteers and long-time members help newer members fill out paperwork required to gain access to housing, learn about their housing rights, carry out legal actions against the state to ensure their housing needs are met, fight illegal evictions, and navigate the process of signing leases or demanding accommodations that meet desires and needs. As a collective, the organization functioned through a variety of special events to liaise with Marseille's numerous social housing organizations (HLMs—for history and relevant accounts of discrimination see Blanc 1984, 1993; Simon 1998; White 1993), participating in city-wide protest marches and actions, engaging in acts of civil disobedience, and holding regular meetings—the Saturday monthly ones for the whole membership, and one each Monday afternoon for drop-in sessions at which new members were welcomed and their paperwork processed.

In February 2009, while I was still new to participant-observation with the organization, the group went through a great deal of turmoil. Charles, one of the most committed volunteers, who had been involved in the organization for eight years, and had initially invited me to observe their meetings and actions, left due to a disagreement with a group-wide decision to enforce a ban on the wearing of headscarves by association members while they participated in the business of the organization, something Charles found paternalistic and racist. Though his departure did not cause mass exodus, it did create a significant rupture in the group.

The weekly drop-in meetings for new members were held in a downtown neighborhood restaurant on Mondays, when it was closed. In the often dark, wooden and



brick space of the taverna, members spent those afternoons sitting around at tables, chatting, playing with each others' small children, and waiting to welcome, register, and process new members. Although the atmosphere was often convivial, even prior to Charles' departure the group had been prone to some fracture due to linguistic limitations. Not all of the members spoke French, so the organization relied on key translators to relay messages back and forth, meaning that people who spoke mutually intelligible languages tended to cluster together (Algerians with Moroccans, Comoriens with Swahili-speakers, and those speaking different dialects of Fulani). However, in the weeks after Charles left, the association seemed on the verge of collapse. Members frequently argued with one another about the headscarf question,<sup>20</sup> but also about other daily workings of the organization, and whether there was a need and a will to carry out more direct action to achieve their goal of greater access to renovated social housing, especially in desirable downtown neighborhoods.

On a particularly slow, cold, rainy Monday at the end of the month, thirteen of us were gathered around the dimly lit restaurant. At this and other recent meetings, the organization had mostly settled into troubled silence. They had not planned or participated in an action or public event since Charles had left; there was too much acrimony to organize anything effectively. So, the only tasks carried out were routine and monotonous: volunteers checking in with those present about any progress in their evictions or housing requests and the scripted registration of infrequent new members by

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<sup>20</sup> The question of the politics of the headscarf ban in various settings and guises in France has already received exhaustive scholarly attention (Scott 2007; Bowen 2007; Keaton 2005; Asad 2006), and I feel no need to replicate these analyses here.

whomever was around and able to understand them. But on this Monday, from across the room, one of the members invited me to lunch, sparking an especially illustrative moment of conviviality.

“Nell” one of the members, Miriam, a thirty-something mother of two, of Algerian origin, asked me from a table across the room “will you come over to my place for lunch on Friday? Do you eat Couscous?”

“Mmm...I wish we had couscous with apricots and chicken now,” said Issa, a man from the Comor Islands.

“You eat Couscous, Issa? But you’re Comorien.” Miriam called.

Marie-Thérèse and Claire, two of the organizations’ native-Marseillais, Français de Souche matriarchal figures, erupted in giggles. So did Issa, who then started translating the conversation to his friends. The laughter sparked from body to body across the room.

“What?” Miriam asked, confused at being the butt of the joke.

“This is Marseille.” Claire said. “Everyone eats couscous, Miriam. Comorien, American, French, Moroccan, Senegalese, Congolese. Who doesn’t eat couscous? You think it’s only the Algerians?”

Gradually, everyone in the group, from their different, largely ethnically and linguistically divided tables, started sharing their favorite takes on couscous recipes or memories about the best couscous they had ever had. People responded to each other’s stories with delighted laughter, smacking lips, and “ooh la la’s” at descriptions of particularly good recipes and memories. The atmosphere of anxious silence in the room shifted to an easy warmth. I could feel the changed sentiment tingle in my spine, and hear

it in voices that turned from guarded to intimate. In those ten minutes, people shared more about their backgrounds, their childhoods, the neighborhoods where they were residing while they waited for housing, and their families than I ever heard before at an association meeting, or ever heard again in that setting. For those who couldn't speak French well, their neighbors translated, and the conversation moved at a quick, excited pace. Then Hossein, a long-time member, came in, late.

"Ooh la la what is this?" Hossein asked when he entered, grinning. "Is it Friday? I thought it was Monday. Did someone cook? Why are we all chattering about couscous?" Hossein was referring to couscous as the traditional Maghrebi Friday lunch meal.

"You and your Fridays." Claire said, looking upwards as she blew air out of her lips and turned her palm upward. "This is Marseille." Claire, a professional comedian in her late fifties who had grown up in Marseille, said this in an exaggerated Marseille accent, drawing out the name of the city. She drew a circle in front of her with her left hand as she spoke, encompassing the group, the room, and the outside neighborhood and city in a gesture I understood as inclusive. "It's a *Mediterranean* city with a free spirit and a long history of cultural exchange. We can all talk about couscous whenever we want. We all eat couscous." The whole group, together, erupted in laughter, again, before the subject changed.

Though brief, this moment was significant in the everyday history of the Association for several reasons. For one, in it, the ruptures caused by the previous headscarf conflict were partially repaired. By this, I do not mean to suggest that the politics of the decision to ban headscarves within the confines of the group were rendered irrelevant or unproblematic. Even after the couscous conversation, I saw one member

leave the association over that issue, and several other potential members who chose not to join when told they would be expected to remove their headscarves. However, in the moment when the couscous discussion occurred, after a significant period of tension, acrimony, and a level of silence uncharacteristic for Marseille in general and this association in particular, the whole group once again began talking to each other. At the next full-membership meeting, two weeks later, the organization was even back to planning successful collective actions, which enabled them to eventually get additional housing allocated to their members every month.

Furthermore, the couscous conversation kept coming up again and again in later interactions between group members. For example, when I asked one woman why she continued to attend the Association's meetings when she already had a social housing apartment with which she was satisfied, and had issues with the overall organization of the group, she replied,

In the end, they're good people there. And so many different people. We don't always agree on everything, but there's something delightful and so Marseillais in the sharing, the joking, the laughing. It's like that day with the couscous, do you remember? [interview, April 14, 2009]

Then, about a month later, at the end of another Monday drop-in meeting, I overheard the end of an exchange between Marie-Claude and Miriam, who was in unusually quiet spirits that day. Based on what Miriam recounted later, she and Marie-Claude had been discussing and processing the fact that Miriam was having troubling dreams of her father, who had died in the post-colonial conflict in Algeria. Miriam had heard there was minor trouble again in her hometown on the Algerian coast. Marie-Claude had empathized, and reminded Miriam that she was safe now, that her children

would not know the horrors of that violence. Towards the end of the conversation, I heard Marie-Claude say, with her hand on Miriam's shoulder, "Of all the things the French took up—and with all the horrors of colonialism, and the aftermath and all of the violence that I think we—we all—certainly understand—at least all the exchange helped to make Marseille *our* Marseille..." Her blue eyes sparkled in an almost-wink, as she smiled softly and comforted the other woman, before continuing. "And then remember there's couscous. Couscous at least is magnificent—and in Marseille. Its availability here in Marseille is magnificent. Something we all can appreciate."

In the lexicon of this group, couscous—the remembered material, sensory experience of enjoying it and the embodied moment of shared sentiment and affect those memories engendered—came to stand in for two things. First, the diverse group's shared identity as Marseillais despite differences in ethnic origin, language, gender, and, given the context of the group's acrimony, religion. Second, couscous came to stand in for an embodied processing and collective consciousness of the rootedness of Marseille's population in its colonial past, and the colonial legacy as leading to members' shared fate as a part of Marseille's Mediterranean community. This open memory is seemingly in contradistinction to the more typical French national approach to colonialism—silence—especially about Algeria and the Algerian War (Hannoum n.d.; McCormack 2007; Prost 1999). Sharing in an identity as Mediterranean residents of Marseille also enabled the group to function more effectively in their political organizing.

Though I would never wish to represent the couscous moment or the solidarity or conviviality it encompassed as either constant or especially as transgressive of all difference in Marseille, it does provide an example of how an extraordinarily diverse

group of people could not only interact, but also work through serious differences in opinion and ideals to organize collectively together by drawing on shared sensory experiences. Importantly, this organization was directed towards the French state, but based on the idea that the group's collective identity as Marseillais could transcend it and provide a resource in challenging it. The sentiment of the laughter and fond food memories as they vibrated through the room, and the further characterization by Claire of couscous and this moment as reflective of a shared Mediterranean, Marseillais identity in which the whole city could take part, are admittedly microscopic moments. However, they represent the fundamental connection between three levels often separated in scholarly analysis: embodied experiences (of connection and warmth); collective discursive categories (of Marseillais and Mediterranean identity); and political organization (as people turned their shared experience and categorization into political action). How then to understand this interweaving?

### *The Enchanted Everyday: Incorporating Difference*

Many theories of the modern state and many of its most salient scholarly critics assume the world to be disenchanted and devalue embodied experience (Weber 1958; Gauchet 1999). As I have shown, however, sensory experience can underlay the formation of collectivities necessary to carry out political life, much of which is lived at levels other than that of the nation-state. To continue to articulate state-based narratives of disenchanted modernization as the necessary precondition for the building of key political alliances starkly fails to account for people's lived political reality. The idea of Enchantment—especially as a particular, sensory mode of attention that allows for experiences of wonder and aesthetic connection—can enable critique of an uneven

economy and politics (McEwan 2008), or perhaps even cultivate hope and ethical generosity.

In short, to quote Jane Bennett,

Enchantment is a feeling of being connected in an affirmative way to existence; it is to be under the momentary impression that the natural and cultural worlds offer gifts and, in so doing, reminds us that it is good to be alive. This sense of fullness—what the Epicureans talked about in terms of ataraxy (contentment with existence)—encourages the finite human animal, in turn, to give away some of its own time and effort on behalf of other creatures. A sensibility attuned to moments of Enchantment is no guarantee that this will happen, but it does make it more possible. [2001:156]

Enchantment in Marseille often arises from the coming together of differing, interconnected personal histories that transcend the realm of the nation-state and traverse the Mediterranean Sea. It enables unpredictable discussions across these historical differences that run counter to the narratives of what one would normally expect in post-colonial France, and that are not always possible in other settings, including French urban settings more segregated by ethnic origin than is Marseille.

For Elliane, the sound of Aïcha's laundry practices and the smells of her using the spices Elliane remembers from childhood afternoons in her grandmother's kitchen are signs of such an Enchantment. Personal history, for many Marseillais, relates intimately to post-colonialism, to embodied experiences of the Sea and its crossing. Marseille's Enchantments, small, heightened moments within everyday life, often come out of sensory experiences of the Sea—and being embedded in a community full of other people who share it, its crossing, and the cross-cultural contact it has enabled as an important part of their histories. They relate to Marseille's status as a port city, which renders encounters with so-called "others" and their material worlds a central aspect of

everyday life. These Enchantments are often closely related to the ability of such sensory experience to trigger surprising nostalgic memories—of beach barbecues with your father as a teenager, of the meals your grandmother lovingly prepared on Sunday afternoons when you were small.

I am arguing here that Enchantment, as Bennett conceptualizes it, can help us think through the experience of pleasurable sharing in the Marseille case. This sharing involves an *incorporation*, a word fundamentally rooted in the body, of various kinds of racial and ethnic differences into the city-wide Marseillais identity, which then forms a potential basis for collective organizing efforts, small, large, official and unofficial. It also enables a sense of belonging to the city as part of the transnational region of the Mediterranean, allowing for complex senses of shared identity even for recent immigrants.

For example, on a warm July evening, Selena—a first generation Algerian immigrant who had lived in Marseille for 15 years—sat with me on towels spread over a pebble beach in L’Estaque, northwest of Marseille, our hair still dripping down our necks from a long swim. Selena sighed, lying back on the rocks, finally relaxing after her day of work. For more than a week, she had planned and prepared for the barbecue we had just finished on the beach, the garlic still lingering across our tongues. Now, she turned to me, content, her dark eyes flashing in the dimming sun. “What do you think,” she asked, “of our little Algerian barbecue?” Selena poses questions like this when she thinks I am being too quiet. Knowing the cue, I thanked her again for inviting me, and for not allowing her cousin to kill us all on the drive over, when we packed seven people into the seatless back of a tiny yellow van. She laughed, and I praised the food. “Alhamdulillah.” Selena said.



“One needs this sometimes.”

I raised my eyebrows, wordlessly encouraging her on. Selena looked over the rocks at the Sea and sighed. “One needs to get out of downtown. Spend time in the sun and the water with friends, the family. To barbecue, picnic or walk by the water. To swim and be next to the Sea.” Selena was using the *one* construction, the impersonal 3<sup>rd</sup> person—one does—lending her statements a certain vagueness. “Why?” I probed. Selena sighed again, and laid her head back on her arms. “It makes me less homesick, Nell...to bathe in the Sea.” She paused. “It’s the same Sea... The same Sea as in Algeria... And you’re lucky. It’s the same merguez, too. We’ll eat it together when we go to Algeria next summer, insha’allah.”<sup>21</sup>

In this moment of Enchantment, rather than serving as mere sensory backdrop for the politics of people, the Sea can be seen as facilitating Selena’s ability to act within the city, to belong to it despite her complicated, torn history on the Mediterranean’s two coasts, and despite her tense relationship to the French nation-state as resident, without citizenship. In this case, the material Sea acts on Selena, healing hurts that stem from the post-colonial wounds she has suffered in her distancing and re-creation of a sense of “home.”

### ***Conclusion***

Although post-colonial immigrants in France are often represented in media and scholarship alike as a consummate other, problematically but fundamentally excluded

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<sup>21</sup> The impracticality of an actual summer trip to Algeria with Selena, and the important questions this conversation raised for me about our relationship as she prepared for my departure deserve attention elsewhere, but since these are not central to the argument of this chapter, I set them aside here.

from participation in the French nation-state, in Marseille it is possible to be Mediterranean, Muslim, reflectively post-colonial and a political subject who belongs. Indeed, from intimate neighborhood alliances to association organizing and advocating for resources from the state, a sense of Mediterranean Enchantment embedded in sensory experience is emphasized. This sense of Enchantment has enormous political possibilities. In Marseille, it enables open discussion and processing of the post-colonial legacy, opens up the question of belonging beyond the nation-state and its critique, and decenters the roles of human agency and subjectivity in political culture.

To find these formations and recognize their importance, however, scholars must not only pay attention to the experience of sensation but also see its potential for political possibility, potentially demonstrating optimistic, progressive and new forms of politics. Aesthetic embodiment can be a useful concept in this framework (Mascia-Lees 2011). Much like Mascia-Lees demonstrates in her work, I believe Marseille's political culture and the sensory experiences of urban life there can show that: "there are realms of contemporary life in which the human sensorium is enlivened, rather than deadened" (2011:6).

In Marseille, one of the realms in which the human sensorium is enlivened is in sensory experiences that yield political potential and connection across differences in ethnic origin, what I have here referred to as Mediterranean Enchantments. Encompassed within this concept is a transculturally-produced spirit of openness, which creates the potentials for appreciation and valuation of natural, cultural, and built environmental beauty, which yield progressive political organizing in Marseille. Marseille's historical, trans-Mediterranean context and situation are central in the formulation of its

Mediterranean Enchantments. These often begin on the level of corporeal bodies and their engagement with the material world, then form the building blocks for all kinds of collectivities salient in Marseille's everyday politics, whether at the neighborhood and association-level, or municipally or transnationally organized. Potential for creating moments that could yield this kind of Enchantment are also central in the artistic and architectural projects to remake the sensory experience of downtown Marseille, although these projects share the potential to make the central city less democratically accessible, and should be treated carefully (see Fennell 2011; Masco 2008).

What unites works on the senses, affect, and material culture, as I have used them in this chapter, is their potential for theorizing an embodied, intersubjective and interobjective mode of attention. While intersubjectivity alone is not enough to yield progressive politics, it nonetheless allows for them more easily than do notions of the individually-bounded citizen-subject. Sensation, as it bubbles up, grounds humans within an always-shared, always-moving material world, bridging the internal and external environment and altering cognition (Massumi 2002, Brennan 2003). Placing this mode of attention at the center of anthropological methods by focusing on the material sensorium and the sharing it produces enables us to also study the way the sensory environment changes recognition of the "others" with whom sensory phenomena are shared. This requires attention to the sociality of the senses and the potentials such sociality allows.

## Chapter Four

### Modeling the Future: Miniatures, Digital Prospectives, and the Ideological Uncanny



**Figure 11. Les Docks Before Renovation.** ©Joliette Batiments SAS. (Accessed electronically at <http://lesdocks-marseille.fr/en/les-docks/un-monument/1991-la-pierre-angulaire-deuromediterranee/> on January 12, 2013)

#### *Setting Up the Object's Charge*

“Les Docks” is the most treasured of Marseille’s recent architectural rehabilitations. Formerly, the building housed port administration and customs warehouses (See Figure 11, for a pre-renovation image). In the 1990s, the building was remade, taking on a new role as the supposed heart for the up and coming business district of Marseille’s future, the still in flux neighborhood of *Projet Euroméditerranée*. Les Docks is a six-story brick and stone structure of connected warehouses, and its majority owner is one fund in the real assets management division of the international financial organization J.P Morgan, most famous for the role it played as a U.S. federal government-aided buyer of banking organizations that went under in the financial crisis

of 2008-2009. Redesign and rebuilding, which was supervised by the architectural firm 5+1AA, was an exercise in historic preservation through gutting and redesign. In its new iteration, small, mall-like hallways are lined with neat, all-glass storefronts. These house banking and mortgage institutions, government public relations offices, a hair salon, an upscale sandwich seller, a wine shop, a tiny campus of the Euroméditerranée School of Management, and, since sometime after I left Marseille, a Starbucks.

Veering off from these main halls, dark, stone tunnel areas nostalgically recall a former era. Upstairs, there are office spaces of widely varying kinds: those of Euroméditerranée; lawyers; banks and mortgage companies; satellite branches of transnational corporations; the Marseille consulate of Sweden. The different floors of the elevator lobbies feature tile mosaics like one might see in ancient Greek architecture or that of contemporary North Africa, solidifying the idea of the building as a Mediterranean one. In the areas between the warehouses, the upper-floor office spaces look out on a series of cavernous atria that combine the original stone with new, water-based design elements, illuminated through glass ceilings by the reliable Mediterranean sun (see Figure 12). Instead of floors, the most striking atria have ponds that one crosses on broad, wooden docks. Fountains emit the soothing, constant, and faint sound of trickling water.

This architecture, people told me, evokes a Marseille feeling. On the outside, the building has maintained its original structure, including large doors that used to accommodate carriages but remain as decoration (Figure 13). Even those who otherwise detest the city's "renewal," making remarks about the renewed areas' utter lack of fit with Marseille's traditional landscape, continually point to this building's beauty: For most

Marseillais concerned with or interested in the renewal process, this is an example of how to do things right.



**Figure 12. Interior View of Les Docks Atrium. Photo taken by confidential interlocutor and used with permission.**

Inside one of the glass storefronts, Euroméditerranée has an exhibition space where the public can receive information. This is a standard, white cube gallery space designed to highlight the display of visual objects (Drobnick 2005). There, Euroméd welcomes members of the public, who walk in from within *Les Docks* and from exterior glass doors leading to the street; inside, they can view photographs of construction in progress and what preceded it, and watch a series of highly-polished marketing videos extolling the virtues of the project's achievements and plans. But these are not the exhibit's main attraction: rather, the reason people go there, and the main reason Euroméd

staff send them, is that this is the home of the project's chief architectural model (see Figures 14 and 15).

The model is approximately eight feet wide by twenty feet long, and sits at waist height on large wooden legs. Entirely encased in glass, it was, at the time of my research, divided length-wise into halves, each representing a piece of land given to Euroméd's control at different times (first in 1995; then the other parcel, commonly known as “Acte 2,” in 2007).



**Figure 13. Exterior of Les Docks. Photo taken by confidential interlocutor and used with permission.**

As of mid-2009, the half representing the 1995 land was an intricate, finely detailed, full-colored, three-dimensional figuration of what the neighborhood surrounding the port will look like when the renovations are "finished" (I put this in quotes because everyone I spoke to at Euroméditerranée sees the project as one that will have no definitive end, at



least not during their careers). This future-oriented vision is presented in tiny, detailed reconstructions: windowed buildings; a miniature version of the newly-opened tram line; enormous cruise ships in the port scaled down to the size of toys; diminutive cars on tiny, winding tree-lined streets; even miniscule street lamps. At the time of my research, the model's less intricate half contained a flat, aerial photograph, with a simple red outline around the new 2007 Euroméd territories (see Figure 14). Neither half included any miniaturized people.



**Figure 14. Euroméditerranée Display Model. Photograph taken by author.**

Within the glass exhibit-space, within Euroméd's discursive framings of their aims, within the building of Les Docks and within the social context of Marseille's remaking, this model exerts a force. So, I argue, do architectural models more generally.



Like a fetish-object in its historical sense (Pietz 1985),<sup>22</sup> or a place in its phenomenological one (Casey 1996), a model *gathers*. It cathects (LaPlanche & Pontalis 1974). When experienced, it provokes a response. But what kind of gathering is this? What kind of force does the model exert? Moreover, what might this tell us about what it is to experience the material world, and how this can be interrogated in ethnographic inquiry?



**Figure 15. 3-D, Constructed Portion of Euroméd Model.** Downloaded from the website of the firm that produced it, decry grange (<http://www.ducaroy-grange.com/references/maquette-architecture>), Accessed Electronically October 10, 2012). © Ducaroy Grange. Used with Permission.

The architectural model is a material object of a particular kind, replicating, in miniature three-dimensionality, one, controlled vision of a future that, for subjects, is rendered increasingly uncertain in an age of neoliberal politics. At the time of my research in Marseille in 2008-2009, this uncertainty was especially potent. The global financial crisis had left many of the projects connected to Euroméditerranée stalled, such

<sup>22</sup> “The fetish is precisely *not* a material signifier referring beyond itself, but acts as a material space gathering an otherwise unconnected multiplicity into the unity of its enduring singularity” (Pietz 1985:15).

as the bright alabaster and buttery-yellow architectural facades along the Rue de la République that had been thoroughly cleaned from their years of grime and decay, but, however beautiful, masked only empty, unfinished, uninhabitable interiors. As readers may recall from Chapter 1, for some people, spaces of construction can provoke dramatic reactions, such as when Samira responded to the neighborhood of those facades strongly and sensorally, as she paused and turned, overwhelmed, on her feet in the walking tour. It bears repeating a small part of that ethnographic excerpt here to demonstrate another important point in understanding the materiality of renewal and how it is experienced.

[Samira and I] found ourselves alone on the block, dwarfed by the bright, newly-cleaned architectural facades, and their close relatives, scaffolding and netting. On the newly-wide, empty sidewalk, Samira paused in place for a long moment, before turning her gaze upwards and making a full turn on her feet. She drew in a deep breath [and then discussed the former liveliness of that neighborhood before remarking,] "this now... *this... this emptiness* is what it's like all the way along this street. Except it gets even emptier..."

In Chapter 1, I argued that Samira's response was one that highlighted that sensory responses to urban change demonstrate a violence done by the renewal process, most discernible in moments of overwhelmedness. I argued that sensory engagements with Marseille, which take place in constellations of material, human, and non-human bodies, are crucial in disrupting senses of belonging and creating political attitudes. I advocated for understanding moments of overpowering sensory response using an approach centered methodologically and conceptually on the mobility of people, time, and the material world, an approach I referred to as exploring "urban ecologies of motion." This mobility-centered approach understands sensory encounters between objects and the material world as challenging our usual conceptualizations of time as

progressive, the ethnographic moment as separable from the flux of everyday life, and the subject as bounded and coherent. Partly, it does this by noting the way sensory exchanges embed experiences that are simultaneously bodily, affective, and intellectual, and temporal approaches that are usually separated out, like memories, social and physical histories, and anticipations of the future. Fundamentally, I argued for taking extremely seriously the power that objects and material environments exert over people's lives in allowing, disallowing and altering certain sensory experiences or impressions, and began to demonstrate the ways this might shift conceptualizations of the political.

However, it is important that Samira's reaction was one brought about partly by her sensory experience of comparative smallness, of being dwarfed by the size of her surroundings and the immensity and intensity of their emptiness. She felt this severely because of its distinction from the memories and history she carries of the place in her body, and the space's signaling, in the present, the potentiality of a large and empty future. Part of buildings' and construction sites' abilities to evoke response is based on their relative size when compared with the human body. Although in man-made form, the experience of architectural vastness is not that different than the sense one might get when alone on a mountain top looking out over untouched land, a sense of one's potential insignificance in the broader world, an aesthetic experience like Kant's (2004) conceptualization of the Sublime. Yet, it is important to remember that it is only in architecture's final iterations that it communicates with the privilege of the large-scale, the sensorally endless.

Importantly, before architectural projects become buildings made of brick, concrete, plaster and stone, they become construction sites. Before they become

construction sites, they exist, simultaneously, as another prior element of the landscape, and as blueprints for the future building. And architectural projects exist materially well before they are firmed up into physical blueprints, as models made of wood, paper, or clay, as computer-generated, prospective images, as hotly debated or collaborated upon ideas, as mental images, vague plans, and desires.

Model-making is an important part of most architectural curricula and required in at least some urban planning programs, especially those emphasizing urban design. It is the subject of a wide, varied literature: textbooks that focus on the how-to's of model-making from varying perspectives (i Miuro 2010; Sutherland 1999; Werner 2011), works that argue for the continual importance of models even in an era of digital design (e.g. Congdon 2010), and works in phenomenological architecture that express concern about the field moving away from its embodied, manual past of mind-body connections, emphasized in sketching, drawing, and hands-on material crafting of ideas and plans, and deemphasized in CAD (Computer Assisted Design) environments (Pallaasmaa 2006; Holl et al 2006).

Architectural models, then, along with computer-generated prospective images and initial sketches and ideas, make up a major currency of contemporary architecture and urban design. This chapter thus backs away from the large-scale to try to get at the finer grains of influence that small and individual material objects exert when encountered by humans, thus exploring architectural materiality of a very different kind. In this chapter, I will attempt to examine architectural models and computer-generated prospective images as a genre of material object within Marseille's renewal context that provokes particular kinds of sensory experience, and with them, particular experiences of

temporality. Before moving to this intervention, however, it is important to understand the ways that contemporary anthropology typically approaches materiality, both generally and in terms of urban material environments in particular.

### ***Taking Material Objects Seriously in Urban Anthropology***

In Chapter 1, I began to touch on the anthropological literatures concerned with people's relations with material objects.<sup>23</sup> Here, following the critiques of this literature made by both Victor Buchli (2002) and Bjørnar Olsen (2003), I wish to call attention to a distinction in anthropology between the study of "material culture" on the one hand, and of material objects as such, on the other. As both Buchli and Olsen demonstrate, although studies of so-called material culture have proliferated in sociocultural anthropology in the last quarter century, these ironically tend to downplay the important tangibility of the objects with which they engage. By this, I mean that the current literature tends to emphasize objects' importance more for what they say about human social life (Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986), rather than taking seriously the ways their material features—their form, substance, weight, odor, or pull, for example—might matter in the ways humans interact with them.

For example, a burgeoning literature in the anthropology of consumption, with Daniel Miller at its forefront (Miller 1987, 1995, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010), has devoted significant attention to examining the diversity of ways humans use objects. This field has attended to human practices as diverse as, for example, clothing habits throughout the

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<sup>23</sup> I note here, however, that these literatures are robust and wide-ranging, to say nothing of interventions in archaeology, history, literary and cultural studies. I cannot fully summarize all of these within the confines of this chapter.

world (Keuchler and Miller 2005), shopping (Miller 1998), communication (Horst and Miller 2006), and immigrants' processes of creating a sense of home in so-called "receiving contexts" or maintaining relationships in "sending" ones (Salih 2002; Al-Ali and Koser 2002). In such works, scholars have argued that the importance of people's use of objects from the material world, whether cell phones, clothes, or home decorations, lies in the ways such objects help them craft and display identities, form and maintain social networks, gain various sorts of capital (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1977), and build sentimental ties with one another. This is important work that has fundamentally enriched our understandings of some of the ways that humans relate to the material world.

This body of work highlights the diversity of social roles objects can play, and in doing so connects back to and builds upon a variety of foundational work in anthropology; the field has always taken seriously objects' social roles, their meanings, and the importance of their exchange, dating back to early studies of reciprocity, gifts (Mauss 1950), and the Kula ring (Malinowski 1922). However, despite the major advances such works contribute to these anthropological discussions, consumption studies tend to rely on potentially troubling conceptualizations of subjectivity, agency, and value. As both Olsen (2003) and Ingold (2000) show, a problematic feature of anthropological studies of material culture and consumption is the degree to which they uphold and reinscribe the subjective/objective divide and a unidirectional, anthropocentric theory of agency. Like Rapunzel spinning straw into gold, humans take the materials from the environment around them and make things, meaning, selves, and value out of them. These objects can then be read backwards for their processes of production and consumption, and, through that reading, social analysts reveal the depths

of broader social relationships, relationships that are covered over as objects acquire meaning and value in the first place (Marx 1867).

Miller responds to this critique by arguing that anthropologists should acknowledge that the relationship between subjects and objects should be understood as dialectical, rather than reified; humans construct objects, and objects help subjects construct themselves. Furthermore, for Miller, even if the division between subjects and objects may be more heuristic than a fully accurate description of the way the world works, the people on the ground with whom ethnographers concern themselves nonetheless experience things like subjectivities, materiality as objects, and Marxian social relations, and think in terms of them (Miller 2005). Therefore, he argues that anthropologists should still be able to talk with these terms as a way of reflecting an empathetic engagement with a “colloquial”—or vernacular—world, even if *we*—as privileged observers—know that depiction to be an oversimplification of how things *really* work. For Miller, from an etic perspective, we may know that the subject and object are co-constructed, but from an emic one, the categories still hold.

This response however, is not fully evidenced, and in much of the work in consumption studies the subject/object distinction is depicted as an accurate reflection of the reality of situations described, rather than as a deliberate simplification. Miller thus reinscribes a too-drastic distinction between the thoughts and debates in philosophers’ heads and works, and those in anthropological interlocutors’ lives and self-conceptualizations, assuming that simplification of the former is necessary if one wishes to adequately and accurately represent the latter. However, I have not seen adequate empirical evidence that the subject/object distinction at issue here does, in fact, emanate

from our interlocutors' lives, and not scholars' particular ways of philosophizing about the world. Whether the subject/object distinction rings true to interlocutors' experiences or not is a question that must be asked empirically, and across cultures, rather than assumed *a priori*. A phenomenological investigation of how people experience subjectivity and materiality is one way to perform this empirical work.

Furthermore, questioning the opposition between subject and object is not merely a linguistic, semantic, or philosophical concern. It is also often a deeply political one. The distinction between subject and object is a binary opposition in which one component is active and the other passive, enabling a particular politics of action upon the world, and, as I have discussed in other chapters, potentially hindering progressive approaches to the environment and its conservation (Lemaire 1997:6; Nash 2005). As Mascia-Lees and Himpele (n.d.) point out in a critique of another commonly used opposition in contemporary anthropology—that of the local and the global—when scholars' metaphors rely on such binary oppositions to represent the world, they may reinforce other, similar problematic oppositions, like that between man and woman, mind and body, colonizer and colonized, and, indeed, anthropologist and anthropological subject—the very divide on which Miller's response to critiques of his use of object and subject rests.

Some of the examinations of materiality within urban anthropology suffer from similar problems, partly, I believe, in their attempts to rethink early urban studies that articulated a form of material determinism by arguing that people from the countryside automatically experienced rupture and *anomie* as soon as they migrated to the city (see Park 1915 for one example). Many interpretations of urban space throughout the social sciences take semiotic or symbolic approaches to understanding the social world.



Through an emphasis on reading symbols (signs) and meanings (signifieds) (Saussure 1922) within the urban environment, such approaches have been especially influential in urban anthropology, and especially in studies that focus on exploring various projects to remake urban space. Whether in the form of anthropologists' interpreting public space, what it symbolizes and the contingencies it holds for the various populations who use it (Low 1992, 1996, 2000, 2006), descriptions of the processes by which states invest meaning and resources into public spaces in their own or colonial territories (Rabinow 1989; Holston 1989), or critical analyses of the discourses that surround urban space and its re-creation (Caldeira 2000, Gandolfo 2009), frameworks of symbolism, interpretation, language, and meaning have dominated much of the most frequently read and cited urban anthropology. As a result, we have learned some very important things about how people think about public spaces, the historical contexts that configure them, and how and why people come to value particular spaces over others.

Work on "urban renewal," which refers to various projects to remake or revitalize urban landscapes and their economics, demographics, and aesthetics, is frequently based in symbolically-derived analyses (Smith 1996, 2002; Sieber 1987, 1991; Potuoğlu-Cook 2008; Mains 2007; Williams 2001; DeCuyper 2005; Sawalha 1998). Initial work on these themes pointed out ties between the administrative management of populations, the display of state power, and the practical management of urban territories, whether by colonial regimes (Rabinow 1989; Rotenberg 2001) or fledgling and troubled states (Scott 1998; Holston 1989). In the last twenty years, as the discipline has turned increased attention to the worldwide consequences of globalization and neoliberal economic policies (Harvey 2005; Inda and Rosaldo 2008), and more and more of the global

population moves into urban environments, the connections of urban planning practices and neoliberal economics have also received increased disciplinary attention (Caldeira 2000; Gandolfo 2009; Low 2000, 2003; Sassen 2001; Smith 2002; Babb 1999). As the anthropological literature shows, urban projects, whether state organized and publicly-financed, or arising out of so-called "market mechanisms," are prime sites for investigating something that anthropologists—following the work of Henri LeFebvre—call "the social production of space" (1991).

Urban renewal is a process deeply embedded in shifting political, economic, and racial ideologies, which can lead residents to question their belonging in a city or a nation (Simone & Fauzan 2012; Ramos-Zayas 2011; Lambert-Pennington 2012; Silverstein 2005a). Urban projects are closely associated with gentrification: the pushing out of low-income residents by higher-income ones as property values rise (Smith 2002; Cahill 2007; Boyd 2005; Caulfield 1992). Such projects have been shown to decrease poor people's abilities to afford, feel comfortable in, or even maintain access to central urban districts (Low 2000; Caldeira 2000), and less privileged populations are not only often physically displaced, but openly marked as undesirable or threatening by political authorities and wealthier city-dwellers (Miles 2003, 2004).

These studies of urban change provide a crucial and politically important context within and against which the urban efforts I examine in Marseille must be understood. However, the most commonly-used ways in which anthropologists have examined shifts in the urban environment in the past have limitations—as does any approach—in terms of the kinds of questions they are able to answer, and in terms of the constraints of their theoretical approaches. When discussing the remaking of space, for example, some of the

most frequent approaches have been to connect such projects with large-scale economic ones by analyzing people's symbolic attachments to public space (Smith 1996, 2002; Low 2000; Aase 1994), or to analyze the various ways space is discursively constructed (Caldeira 2000; Gandolfo 2009; Modan 2008). As a result of these methods, anthropological examinations into the creation and renewal of public spaces have tended to look backward in time upon renewal events and processes that have already occurred. For example, Setha Low's (2000) analysis of the redesign of a public plaza in San José, Costa Rica sheds light on how the plaza's historical meanings became crystallized and reconfigured with processes of urban redesign. Teresa Caldeira (2000) looked back upon Brazilian infrastructural projects and demonstrated a shift to gated community living, and importantly noted the politics of those projects, which resulted in greater class-based social segregation and marked poorer populations as increasingly undesirable. In a lovely ethnography of Lima, the city where she grew up, Daniela Gandolfo (2009) similarly traced how urban redesign and the meanings of urban space had ebbed and flowed during the authoritarian regime of Fujimori's in Peru (Gandolfo 2009). These ethnographers separate off past moments of urban change as ones that can be traced historically, carrying out a kind of anthropology that sees its role, following Foucault's archaeological method, as providing a valuable "history of the present" (Foucault 1972; Roth 1981). Because it emphasizes historical roots above ongoing experiences, it is necessarily backward-looking. For this reason, relying on it can make it difficult to access how local populations may have experienced these projects of urban change in their everyday trajectories.

Although this work recognizes that both space and place are social, it also tends to

assume a separation between space as it is produced and place as it is lived, felt, or experienced (Low 2006). It therefore creates a distinction that can be useful in calling attention to one aspect of social space as opposed to another, but is also artificial, between the process of urban design and redesign, on the one hand, and the feelings, sensory engagements, attachments, and use patterns of local populations, on the other. Two moments can be identified in much of this literature: first, planners and architects produce physical spaces and alterations to them, a social process embedded in large-scale ideology, market forces, and global politics; second, people create meaning (place) out of the physical spaces always already present in their lives (Erickson 2003; Isoke 2011; Stoller 1996; Gregory 1999), a local and individually-contingent process. Those distinctions become more problematic when our notions of temporality are opened up by more mobile and fluid conceptualizations of materiality, subjectivity, and political collectivity such as those I present here and elsewhere in this dissertation.

Within the distinction between high and low-level productions of space, furthermore, are embedded other kinds of distinctions: between state, global, or large-scale actors and regular people; between persistent political and more contingent social ideologies; between production of space by planners, experiences of place by ethnographic subjects, and interpretations of these by ethnographers; and between people, on the one hand, and their environments, on the other. A quote from Setha Low, discussing two public plazas in San José, Costa Rica, illustrates what I mean:

There is a hiatus between what is experienced and socially constructed by the users [of a place], on the one hand, and the circumstances that socially produced the space and its current physical form and design, on the other. Furthermore, the designs and material conditions of these two worlds are subject to symbolic interpretation and manipulation by the users in such a way that they themselves

become cultural representations to the users. Thus the contestation of the design, furnishings, use, and atmosphere of a plaza becomes a visible public forum for the expression of cultural conflict, social change, and attempts at class-based, gender segregated, and age-specific social control. [Low 1999:133-134]

In this interpretation, space is first socially produced, then it is socially reproduced in experience, discourse, use and representation. Although Low suggests that the plazas she examines are sites of contestation at the moments of production, use, and symbolic interpretation, she nonetheless separates these processes. In moments when space is experienced, its production is about reception and use of spaces, while the production of a space's physical form is separated off and prior to this experience (Casey 1998:3). Such partitioning of “space” into distinct moments makes it extremely difficult to analyze the embodied behavior I witnessed as people interacted with the architectural models present in Marseille, when people were faced with the experience of a material object that represents ongoing, shifting social urban projects.

Theorizations of material architectural objects are sparse, although urban planning models are sometimes present in ethnographic accounts (Gray 2011). One theorization of the architectural model is contained in Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991), which has been broadly influential in urban anthropology. Lefebvre posits a tripartite model of space, which he sees as always socially constructed: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. Perceived space refers to spatial practices, what people actually do in and across space and the ways they navigate it. Conceived space refers to representations of spaces, and Lefebvre identifies these as the milieu of urban planners, architects, and social engineers, who draw conceptual maps of what space should or does look like. Lefebvre argues that these “tend toward a system of verbal (and therefore

intellectually worked out) signs" (1991:38). Lastly, representational space refers to the results of creating symbolic value out of the:

dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal systems and signs. [1991:39]

LeFebvre develops his tripartite approach in an effort to move beyond the dangers of binary oppositions. Yet, his popularity within anthropology might be generative of the ubiquitous uses of some of the important but problematic frameworks that I have laid out in this section, especially the distinction between space and place (Low 2006). Although LeFebvre claims his project as one of breaking down typical binaries, his triad nonetheless partitions the world, and imposes separations that depend on the binaries he is attempting to undo, especially those between subject and object, between experience and representation, and between mind and body.

Within his triad, architectural images and models would fall into the category of "conceived space." In this view, architectural models, as the output of urban planners and architects, would be seen to stand in mentally for the other categories of space; they symbolize them, but are separable from them. Lefebvre therefore sees a rupture between the way space is represented and the way it is experienced, and places the embodied human subject always in the experiential realm. But if you acknowledge that architectural models are simultaneously conceptual representational, and material, LeFebvre's framework makes it difficult to access how my interlocutors might experience them. The realm of experience and the realm of conceptualization are instead seen as somehow

distinct. Yet, based on my ethnographic experiences in Marseille, these so-called “representational,” or “symbolic” objects cannot be so easily distinguished from the realm of their experience.

As I emphasized in Chapter 1, phenomenology has taught us that subjects are beings-in-the-world, rather than distinct entities that act unidirectionally on preexisting materialities and social structures. It can therefore be a useful counterpoint to views that divide experience from creation or meaning (Stoller 1997, Geurts 2002:15; Desjarlais 1992; Jackson 1996, 1998; Csordas 1994, 2002). Yet, as I have already pointed out, if it is used too literally, phenomenological theorizations of experience can create significant problems for an anthropology that wants to take culture and history into account (Howes 2010, 2011).

Another important problem with phenomenology is found in its conceptualizations of interiority, which can be unsatisfying. Merleau-Ponty, for example, articulated a few different views on interiority over the course of his career, first stating, in a criticism of Saint Augustine, that: “Truth does not ‘inhabit’ only the ‘inner man’, or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself.” (Merleau-Ponty 2002:xi). Later in his career, however, Merleau-Ponty had a bit more to say on this interior, which he articulates as “knowledge of self.” In *The Visible and the Invisible* he makes the acquisition of language a key feature to the creation of this limited interiority (1969:169), noting that, in the words of Coole,

It is in language that the interiority associated with reflexivity acquires altogether greater powers of symbolic variation, communication and freedom. It allows singularities to turn back upon themselves more eloquently; to articulate and problematize the values and commitments that originated in experiences from which they now acquire more critical distance. [2005:132-133]

On the one hand, this re-emphasis of language and symbolism reinscribes the divide between subject and object that Merleau-Ponty's model of experience is attempting to undo. By making interiority about language, Merleau-Ponty deemphasizes the material world that one is "being-in" (Olsen 2003), eliding the immediacy and materiality of experience that his theory is supposed to highlight. Thus, in some of phenomenology's conceptualizations of interiority, subject/object divides can problematically sneak back in. Yet, doing away with interiority entirely is not a good option either.

Underemphasizing the importance of people's interiority risks completely missing interlocutors' experiences of a self and a cultural and historical past, however unbounded, impermanent, unconscious or not fully conceptual that experience may be.

Based on my conversations with my interlocutors in Marseille, it would be nonsense to entirely do away with the self as an analytical tool and a realm of experience. Here, I advocate instead for rethinking personhood in order to emphasize its status as one among many moving parts of a landscape that is simultaneously material, ecological, cultural, and historical. Anthropology, I argue, is still working to find ways to theorize the self as an unbounded and receptive part of the world that is simultaneously an important vehicle for the acquisition of experience and history (Biehl 2005; Seligman 2010), a realm of the unconscious (Johnson 1998), a potentially useful mobilization for political critique (Ortner 2006), or capable of moving beyond anthropocentrism (Fischer & Hajer 1999). The self is also necessary as one realm on which ideas imprint—although they certainly imprint on other material forms as well—participating in the creation of



social histories that play an important role in the engaged, sensory encounters of humans with material worlds.

Architectural models, the material environment they are thought to represent, and many other objects are, like the construction of place out of space, most often interpreted in anthropology through frameworks of language, semiotics, and social production—they are thought to embody and communicate the social world. Using theoretical tools that impart them with authority and special interpretive means, anthropologists “read” objects, buildings, space, and dialogue for their deeper symbolic meanings. This is an oversimplified and potentially problematic approach to semiotics, which is not simply about interpreting what objects mean (Keane 2005). Furthermore, semiotic approaches in general are only appropriate for answering some kinds of questions and may foreclose ideas of what counts as appropriate anthropological evidence. The *Euroméditerranée* architectural model inevitably represents state and individual agendas, symbolizes ideologies, and engenders communication between people. Yet, the possibilities for its analysis need not be limited to these realms.

The semiotic, linguistic, and interpretive frameworks commonly utilized in urban anthropology, as described above, build out of attempts to analyze how people communicate with and through language, and then are reformulated in attempts to understand, for example, practice, action, and the body (Bourdieu 1977), objects people create and use (Marx 1867), or the complex interrelationships between power, knowledge, subjectivity and action (Foucault 1990; Foucault 2000). Much social theory prevalent in anthropology today is part of, or in dialogue with, French post-structuralist approaches, which themselves were developed in dialogue with structural linguistics

(Saussure et al. 1922).

This has two major problems, one of which is the sneaky, linguistically derived notions of subject and object that can sneak into anthropological work and inscribe problematic boundaries. I acknowledge that it is virtually impossible in any ethnographic, or indeed human, enterprise to move completely beyond the realm of language and meaning, given that it frames a great deal of what humans do, including scholarly research practices and writing. However, this chapter attempts to join in an ongoing scholarly conversation about some of the drawbacks and limitations of attending to everyday practice semiotically. As David Howes says as part of an argument for taking people's sensory experiences more seriously in anthropology, "it is possible to avoid...the expansion of language into a structural model that dictates all cultural and personal experience and expression." (2005:4).

The second problem, as Alexandros Lagopoulos has argued, is that "the ontological foundation of such literature is the idealist rejection of the possibility of knowing reality and, as a consequence, the enclosure of the subject within the signifying universe, which in turn results in the exaltation of the signifying processes as the only social processes" (Lagopoulos 1993). Since reality becomes inaccessible to the subject within these theories, the available "reality" to be studied in the social scientific enterprise likewise becomes reduced to social constructions, signs and meanings, that which can be visualized and represented, especially by those with a scientific authority to do so.

In terms of anthropological scholarship, in the 1980s this emphasis on approaches developed out of linguistic and post-structuralist theory converged in the discipline with

an intensive moment of critique that called into question the validity of our representational practices (Clifford et al. 1986; Marcus and Cushman 1982), and the power dynamics of our evidence-gathering ones (Asad 1973; Fabian 1983; Said 1978). These important disciplinary debates raised the profiles of fundamental philosophical and ethical questions about fieldwork, writing, categories of evidence, and the power dynamics inherent in analysis, which were already prevalently discussed within the overtly politically-oriented enterprises of feminist theory and feminist anthropology (Mascia-Lees et al. 1989).

As Borneman and Hammoudi (2009) have pointed out, however, the aftermath of these critiques has resulted in a turn towards rethinking representation by questioning the validity of the fieldwork encounter itself. Unfortunately, the approaches used often view ethnographic knowledge production with suspicion because of its assumed power dynamics, rather than taking the opportunity to closely analyze the consequences of these politics, or attempting to do more thorough, more open, academically riskier work that moves towards making newer claims. For these two authors, the results of the era of critique are that:

By any standard, contemporary anthropological work is uneven and, despite the multiplicity of approaches and sites studied, makes repetitive theoretical claims. Things are constructed; things are plural; things are unstable; things have histories; most things are in-between... Along these lines, the insistence that all translations are partial, all truths relational and perspectival—sound ideas and assumptions with which we agree—often becomes an excuse for offering superficial translations that prefer surface over depth. [2009:5]

Critiques that denigrate the knowledge produced experientially in fieldwork encounters base this on a suspicion of the way authority is constructed out of the intimate exchange

of fieldwork encounters. Yet, in its stead they turn to “textual” approaches, which emphasize archival work and extensively quoting recorded interviews as texts as ways to perform cultural critique. Rather than challenging anthropological authority, this shifts it, and may enable ethnographers to avoid engagement with the real ethical dilemmas of fieldwork. The end result has often been to reinscribe a new authority in anthropological writing practices, one drawing on historical, linguistic, and interpretive knowledge, instead of confronting head on the vagaries, contingencies, and ethical minefields of producing ‘knowledge’ from intersubjective social and material relationships. Some anthropologists have attempted to do the latter, however, and meaningfully pushed the discipline forward in their attempts (Jackson 1998; Stoller 1997; Geurts 2002; Wright 2012; Crapanzano 2010; Faubion 2011; Duranti 2010; Keane 2011).

Earlier, I also highlighted the problems in urban anthropology with separating subjects and objects in the world using LeFebvre’s models of perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. Although these separations facilitate certain kinds of analysis of objects, people, and the social world, I argue that their empirical soundness has not been adequately demonstrated and that they do not, at least not always, mirror the experiences of our ethnographic interlocutors. As one example of where such frameworks fall short, I have shown that the Euroméditerranée architectural model is an object that is experienced through the sensing body, an experience that is not easily separable from whatever symbolism or meanings it may hold, whatever urban ideologies it represents, and whatever ways it embodies social relationships. Rather, I argue that these, too, are *experienced*, through the body, when people encounter the object of the model or other objects in the material world. Most of the commonly utilized frameworks in urban

anthropology I described above do not account for this.

Focusing on the Euroméd model helps us think through an open, relational self that acquires history and meaning as the material and ideological world acts upon it. I use this in-depth discussion of Marseillais experiences of architectural models and prospective images as my ethnographic case. Then, to understand the way these material artifacts of architecture interpellate a self that remains fluid and unbounded, I propose a concept of an *ideological uncanny* to describe the experience of moments when the shifting material world imposes itself on people's bodies, laying bare the ideologies of urban projects, and provoking an affective sense of disruption. I argue that this concept supports exploring the experiential relationships between bodies, places, material objects, and ideology, while avoiding artificially separating conceptual (intellectually-based), representational (symbolically-based), and experiential (phenomenologically-based) realms. In doing so, I argue for the importance of acknowledging, and attempting to engage with, unconscious and sensory experiences that are not readily visible, if anthropology wants to more fully understand people's shifting relationships with the material world and to operationalize our philosophical and theoretical knowledge about the unbounded subject. To access how ideology is experienced without assuming an autonomous, knowing and exclusively-agentive subject, on the one hand, or ignoring the self as a dimension of experience on the other, I present a theorization that tries to recognize the invisible, intangible, fleeting, and unconscious dimensions of lived experience.

In order to articulate such a vision, I want to take us back to Marseille, to Les Docks and to the Euroméditerranée architectural model, so that I can provide an example

of what it means to analyze the experience of an object, rather than its use, circulation, exchange, symbolism, or social construction. In doing so, I aim to highlight what is missed in approaches that do not take the complexity and interdimensionality of the relationships between so-called “subjects” and so-called “objects” into adequate account.

### *Experiencing Euroméd in Miniature*

The Euroméd model, encased in glass, is a tiny construction of a world that does not yet, and may never, exist. It plays different roles for different people, and it would be foolhardy to assume that everyone experiences it in precisely the same way. In highlighting the *experience* of this particular architectural model, I do not wish to eclipse the fact that the model has different uses, roles, and values for different social actors. This, however, seems a bit obvious, and I do hope to demonstrate that the model does not *only* have uses, roles, or values for people; it also seems able to do something to the people who look at it, to provoke and evoke something in them.

For those who work within Euroméd, this model is very importantly used as a communicative and public relations tool. In my various interactions with Projet staff, starting from the response to the very first question I asked any of them, everyone I encountered told me I simply had to see the model to understand their efforts. In public relations presentations, academic symposia, town hall meetings, and private interviews over the course of my thirteen months in Marseille, the model kept surfacing everywhere. Indeed, on the repeated occasions where I interacted more intimately with various members of the Euroméd directorate and staff, a very early question in our exchanges was whether I had seen the model, and they frequently encouraged me back for another look. “Go downstairs and look at the model again,” they would respond to my questions,

sometimes with a sigh, “then, you’ll understand the material projects.”

So, I looked, obediently and regularly, although it never seemed to make me “understand” anything, whether basic or profound. Rather, the model continually left me puzzled and uneasy. Upon seeing it for the third time, I wrote in my fieldnotes,

I finally got back over to the Euroméd exhibition today, when I was walking with M and N, and we looked at that model... All of us agreed, it’s a very difficult thing to read, and not just because there aren’t any people. It’s just a difficult thing to look at and interpret. I tried to move around and get my bearings on what it was supposed to show, but I couldn’t. It seems to want to map onto the city—a feature that is made more obvious by the 3-D portion’s juxtaposition with the aerial photograph, which makes it feel like a partially three-dimensional satellite image from google maps. It doesn’t actually achieve that mapping. I looked and looked, but I couldn’t map it onto anything. I know this model. I have spent time with it. I have even, last time, had an hour where the exhibition staff explained it to me. I knew what street was supposed to be which, but even knowing it, I couldn’t really orient myself within it... While we were looking, M and N were patient, and I took my time to again try to get oriented to what I was supposed to look at. I kept moving around, but could never get the viewing angle right, not at eye level, not from above, not from further back... It just looked bizarre, as M kept repeating, while we were there and after. The whole space of that exhibition seems bizarre. Afterwards, M and N and I talked about the model over coffee. N kept repeating, “it’s funny, but that’s somehow not at all Marseille.” She was right, even the parts that are supposed to show ‘completed projects’ don’t really look like Marseille... M called it surreal, but couldn’t explain what he meant. “It’s surreal, it’s bizarre, that’s all” he said when I pushed... There’s something about it. The thing is, somehow, creepy.

And every time I looked, my experience was the same. Whatever the model was supposed to do or say, I couldn’t make sense of it, despite how hard I worked to reorient my vision or reposition my body in relationship to it.

Then, a couple of months later, at a Euroméd Open House, I had occasion to see a group of thirty interested Projet outsiders all experience the model together, after we had been driven around the neighborhood on a bus tour narrated by a senior member of the

Projet staff on an extremely hot Saturday afternoon in June.

The tour led us on a pre-ordained route through the under-construction sector of land granted to Euroméditerranée control in 1995, as our guide talked about the changes underway and planned there. This was one of about fifteen similar, hourly, voluntary, free group tours that weekend, and this was not the first time Euroméditerranée has hosted such events. Our female guide was a communications professional, who, on the hottest day of the year, wore a perfectly pressed dress, perfect make-up, and seemed somehow incapable of sweating.<sup>24</sup> Between narrating the project's history, our guide kept reiterating that it would be easier to understand the project—to “see” the answers to our questions—when we were in front of the model.

As we drove around, in between our guide's casual but charged descriptions of what the organized tour was showing us, various members of the tour group posed a series of questions that stumped her verbal prowess. One man in his late forties, who had grown up in the neighborhood as the son of a port worker, and now lived in another nearby city, asked how the new residents of this neighborhood would access the Sea, remarking that this ability had greatly decreased since his childhood. “Well,” our guide said, “it's a bit easier to get a sense of that when we're in front of the model.” Another question came from a suntanned brunette in her mid-thirties, with a Parisian accent, who said she was a new resident of the neighborhood. She asked what would happen to the area immediately surrounding Marseille's cathedral, which lies within the sector, and which has had notorious problems with ground instability. “Can you ask me again when

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<sup>24</sup> The entire Euroméd team is well known for portraying an impossibly impeccable public image; As another municipal urban planner once described the Euroméd team, “They're a bit *men in black*. It's just another part of the marketing.”



we're near the model?" our guide replied. "It will be better for demonstrating." When a grey-haired, weathered, woman in her late sixties who lived in another downtown neighborhood asked about how cars and buses would access the planned, enlarged hospital, our guide once again invoked the model. This time, I heard the questioner turn to the friend who had accompanied her and say, "this had better be some model."

Indeed, the model was such a communicative focus for our guide that, once we had disembarked and entered the exhibition space, she apologized profusely for having to show us an explanatory video about the project before we could approach it, saying that she had to allow time for the group in front of us to finish their own discussions. When we all finally gathered around the model, however, I was surprised when, upon looking at it, many of the diverse people in this tour group followed nearly the same, embodied script I had when I first looked: they bent down, working to get their eye level closer to the miniature, three-dimensional landscape. Then, they drew back quickly, and paused. Then, reorienting themselves to look at the model again, they either backed up to get a sense of the whole, or bent back down in re-approach.

Architectural models are ubiquitous in Marseille, an almost requisite presence in all public meetings about the renewal efforts underway there. I saw this same scene repeated many times, in many different settings where an architectural model was present, by people with varying degrees of familiarity with the former or current configurations of space the given model was supposed to articulate in miniaturized future tense. Model responses seem characterized by this small movement, akin to a dance: bend down to approach the object, draw back quickly, back up again to get a further-away look, re-approach.

At this event, everyone eventually seemed to settle in and listen to our guide as she tried to talk us through the model, just as she had talked us through the real-sized, preliminary, in-process version of the landscape it represented. Even after settling in and listening, though, our guide's narration through the object was met with some open skepticism, along with predictable side comments expressing anxiety about what material and cultural changes to the neighborhood the project would bring about, asking sometimes rhetorical questions like “How much are the rents in this neighborhood going to go up?” and “If this is such a good idea, why does this neighborhood feel so empty on the weekends?” This was, after all, France, where resistance to governmental proposals is raucous, engrained, and historically precedented, and Marseille, where most public gatherings of any kind, and especially those addressing municipal politics, are proudly and particularly vitriolic.<sup>25</sup>

Rather than analyzing the terms of these debates, I was more interested in the initial embodied response to the model that I witnessed and experienced myself. There was something about this object that, according to our guide and other Projet staff, was supposed to enable a form of communication which verbal discussion alone could not. Yet the bodily movement responding to the model was repeated, among a group with diverse opinions, and, for the most part, more familiarity than I had with the places it was meant to represent. This made me wonder: What was happening in the moment when people's bodies recoiled? What pulls did the object exert on the people looking at it that

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<sup>25</sup> At one large public meeting to discuss ongoing projects, I saw a group of senior citizens storm the stage, take over the microphone and refuse to give it back until one among them was heard. As public debates go, the one in front of the model was not particularly contentious.

might lead to that response in that moment? Furthermore, how might people's experiences of this model relate to the ways they sense the shifting city more broadly and understand the impacts of these shifts on their lives?

Admittedly, it is extremely difficult, perhaps even presumptuous, to attempt to analyze another person's embodied movements, to impose an analytical framework on another person's experiences, especially when those experiences may not even be conscious and have not been verbalized. Yet, not all experiences, or knowledges, are conscious, and, in many instances, experiences never become outwardly verbalized. If anthropology wishes to understand more fully the experiential worlds of our ethnographic interlocutors, we have to be willing to reflect on such moments, to grapple with them, and even to risk interpreting them incorrectly. In doing so, I argue that we are able to confront head on, rather than mask, the difficult ethical, transferential, and representational questions which remain central to the ethnographic enterprise, a process of knowledge production that depends upon intersubjective engagement.

Thus, although the Euroméditerranée organization may present its architectural model as an important tool for communicating its plans and ideas, communication is not all that the model is or does. Among other possible roles it plays, as I have pointed out, is that it repeatedly provoked in me a feeling of uneasiness when I saw it. As I watched others look at it, many for the first time, it made them approach, back up, and then reapproach. This is the moment of movement that I wish to understand and interpret. Given the potential presumptuousness of this endeavor, to do so requires me to take seriously embodied movements and responses to models while simultaneously thinking through their broader genre and its overall role in Marseille's redesign. It also requires

me to explore and contrast, through close recounting of experience, the differences in ways people interact with material objects more broadly and these kinds of objects particularly. In the next two sections, I flesh out the ethnographic detail of such material encounters by presenting two additional cases of people encountering prospective architectural objects in Marseille. It will also allow me to extend my analysis beyond the particularities of the Euroméd case, notable for the project's size and large-scale marketing apparatus, to understand the ways such objects might work similarly or differently in different circuits of renewal as I present cases that are differently mediated by architecture/planner involvement. This will allow me to attend more closely to the experiences of such encounters, and the ways they enter Marseillais lives, in my ultimate theorization of this kind of material object.

***Models of Communication: Modeling Architecture at the Neighborhood Meeting***

In early July 2009, I sat in on a contentious meeting of a local CIQ, or Committee for the Neighborhood Interests, a type of organization in France designed to provide a space for communication between residents and their elected officials, and opportunities to discuss issues of broad social concern within a given district. Such committees are divided by the sectors they serve, and staffed with local resident volunteers who function as liaisons between residents and the mayor and local government agencies, including on issues concerning physical alterations of local landscape. On this July evening, the upstairs room we were seated in sweltered as local residents packed in to listen to the latest renovation plans for an empty lot on a nearby block, a piece of land known as Chanterelle located across the street from the building where I lived. This meeting was a follow-up on one six months prior, in which local residents had made clear their

disgruntlement over mayoral plans to use the land for public housing, and then called for a follow-through on an orally passed-down prior promise, made to the leader of the convent school and orphanage that had initially owned the land and then bequested it to the city, that it would only be developed for schools or sports facilities to serve the neighborhood's children.

As we waited to get started, people used the pamphlets they had been handed giving basic information about the CIQ organization as makeshift fans, and questioned after the health of neighbors they had not recently seen and their families, doling out *bises*. Slowly, the talk began to change to the issues at hand, and people pointed out the panelists at the front to the people around them, speculating as to who had what particular role in the presentation to take place that evening. As the panelists doled out their *bises* and handshakes to each other, signaling that the meeting would soon begin, the middle-aged woman beside me tapped the neighbor seated in front of her on the shoulder, and exclaimed, "My God. They already have a model built!" As she said this, she tossed her deep dyed red hair in the direction of a draped table in the corner, and lowered her black and white striped glasses to reveal her very raised eyebrows to the younger woman. "But how can that be?" Her neighbor looked bewildered as she hurriedly whispered: "We haven't even had a chance to resolve the comments from the last meeting. Well, they'll just have to listen to what we think about this." The first woman harrumphed in agreement, as one of the local CIQ officers called the meeting to order.

The meeting, the gentleman explained, was to allow an opportunity for Marseille's local urban planning office to present the plans made for the Chanterelle lot, which was currently largely devoid of activity, partly a wild, unkempt green space that

many people (including me and my husband) used as a dog park, and other people, generally groups of teenagers, used as a location to hang out, drink, and smoke hashish.<sup>26</sup> Another portion of the lot was an extremely basic parking facility.

Marseille's urban planning office, which was in charge of this project, is an agency charged with routine urban planning tasks like protecting architectural patrimony, dealing with social housing organizations to ensure the appropriate upkeep of their facilities, planning for new social housing units, keeping buildings up to code, trying to come up with renovation plans for area ZACs (high-priority areas of planning, or *Zones d'Aménagement Concerté*), and managing and working with other agencies involved in the city's and the region's built environmental design and upkeep. The Agency is importantly not an independent unit, unlike *Projet Euroméditerranée*. It is, rather, directly under the control of the mayor and has to work in close consultation with the city's various elected officials. This is why the meeting happened through the CIQ, and not as a public meeting opened to the entire city, and it is also what gives these meetings a certain amount of accountability that many *Euroméd* presentations do not have. Ultimately, while *Euroméd*'s projects are generally presented to the communities in which they will take place, they do not especially need to be approved by them, although getting that buy-in obviously facilitates projects even when not required. If people are unhappy with the local planning office, however, they can vote their elected officials out of office.

The planning agency's representative was dressed professionally, in a suit and tie and fashionable, black-rimmed glasses, although he did take off his jacket and roll up the

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<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, after I left, the lot entered a period of circular squatting by Romani populations and their expulsion by police, but the lot was not used for that purpose during my time there.

sleeves of his blue button-down shirt in acknowledgment of the oppressive heat. As the representative began speaking, working through a PowerPoint presentation showing CAD perspectives of the new project design, there were almost immediate eruptions of discontent and grumbling, including from CIQ officers sitting at the table with him as his hosts. It did not take long for people in the packed audience to began taking to their feet to shout down the proposals he was presenting.



**Figure 16. Aerial view of the Chanterelle site (Accessed electronically at <http://www.parc-chanterelle.fr/aujourd'hui.php> February 1, 2013)  
©ParcChanterelle. Used with Permission**

The plans for the empty lot (Figure 16) had changed somewhat since the time of the prior meeting, supposedly in response to it, but neighborhood residents were not any happier about the new version. Although the design included using the land for a couple of schools, one for day-care aged children and one for primary-school aged children, and there would be play areas designated for both groups, the plans were also mixed-use.

They included a couple of high-rise buildings flanking the block. One of these was to be devoted to housing students at Marseille's university. The other, however, was to be used for social housing. At the front end of the project, there were to be commercial storefronts and a new, high-capacity parking deck. All of the architecture was to be sustainable, and it would also include a park area open to everyone during the day. Many of the building designs also had green roofs, solar panels, and water-efficiency features built-in, an aspect of which the planning office seemed especially proud.



**Figure 17. CAD Prospective Based on Current Plans for Chanterelle (Accessed electronically at [http://www.parc-chanterelle.fr/eco\\_quartier.php](http://www.parc-chanterelle.fr/eco_quartier.php) February 1, 2012). ©ParcChanterelle. Used with Permission.**

With each CAD prospective included on the PowerPoint (see Figures 17 and 18 for similar, although much more recent figures of the project), people's levels of dissent seemed to grow. The largest voices came from two different but surprising groups. Many of the neighborhood's older long-term residents opposed the plan on the grounds that they believe there is too much social housing in the neighborhood already, and expressed



ideas that there were too many juvenile delinquents and too much filth as a result. This was clearly an ideology based, at least for many of them, partly on racism, which some expressed quite openly in statements like, “We don’t need any more little gangs of Arabs or Blacks running around the neighborhood wreaking havoc. They disrupt our lives enough already.” One of those with this view, Felicia, a lifetime Marseille resident in her 60’s and the daughter of a lifelong longshoreman, expressed to me in a later interview that she remembered when Marseille first started building high-rise social housing, and that it had ruined the neighborhood of Belle-de-Mai where she grew up.



**Figure 18. CAD Prospective of the Planned Park at Chanterelle (Accessed electronically at [http://www.parc-chanterelle.fr/parc\\_biodiversite.php](http://www.parc-chanterelle.fr/parc_biodiversite.php) February 1, 2012). ©ParcChanterelle. Used with Permission.**

Throughout the interview, she spouted anti-immigrant rhetoric, stating that the Arabs in particular would never be able to blend into France, that they had different, repugnant morals, that they had no inclination to work, that they mistreated their women, and that when they first arrived in Marseille she knew “for a fact” that they used to keep

chickens and goats in social housing apartments and even slaughter animals indoors. According to Felicia, these people were taking up more and more of the resources of Marseille, and it was a problem that needed to end, drastically and immediately. Felicia told me this, somewhat ironically, as we sat in *her* cluttered, dark and messy social housing apartment on the Boulevard Longchamps, a few blocks away from the site in question.



**Figure 19. View of Mountains from Balcony Apartment of Building Across from Chanterelle. Photograph taken by the Author.**

Another group of residents, long-time neighbors and friends of mixed ethnic origin, had come to represent the interests of residents in the large high-rise social housing complex across the street from the Chanterelle lot. They objected to any building above four stories, arguing that it would block their views of the neighborhood, and, in

particular, their balcony views into the surrounding mountains (See Figure 18), or of the landmark Basilica de Notre Dame de la Garde. For them, the purpose to which the land was ultimately put was less important, but the size of any built project was an issue that was not, as they saw it, up for negotiation. The representative from Marseille's urban planning agency was patient with the dissenters present at the CIQ meeting. It seemed much as though he expected them.

He responded to their concerns by talking up the architect who had made the design plans and highlighting his illustrious accomplishments. He also reiterated the issues surrounding the social housing shortage in Marseille, and refuted any resident who resorted to racial stereotyping in their comments about social housing. Nonetheless, he seemed to be under the impression that the more CAD prospectives he showed, and the more concrete he could make the plans for the residents, the more likely they were to eventually come around to the planning agency's side. He pushed through the PowerPoint quickly, trying to use the images to calm the dissent in the room. When that didn't work, he invoked the model of the project that he had brought with him to show the group. But as he unveiled it, one of the residents became truly irate, saying:

You don't seem to understand a thing we're saying here. You aren't listening to our voices. We met with the mayor and the agency six months ago, and we told you all of our concerns. Instead of taking them into account, you just went and did no matter what (*n'importe de quoi*). The model isn't going to make us happier. We say the status of Chanterelle is still under negotiation, and you're trying to show us these things like it's set in stone! There shouldn't even be a model here!

The planner took a deep breath, rattled, and then responded.

It's not that there won't be any changes to the project from here on out. But we're trying to communicate to you, to all the people in the neighborhood who might be affected by the project, an idea. The model is supposed to help the agency to do

that, and I think if you look at this model, with your mind a little bit open, you may come to the side that the design is not, after all, so bad.

Residents reacted by rolling their eyes and loudly harrumphing. He continued to talk through the model, which nobody could really see as it was at the front of the room and off to the side. He told people to come look at it in small groups when he was finished, and promised he would take their concerns back to the agency. By the end of his presentation, however, many of the residents had left. I stayed, and only a handful of local residents, including two of the officers on the CIQ, expressed any interest at bothering to get a closer look at the model.

### ***Remodeling Social Housing: Views from the Present***

Another encounter I witnessed dealt with a model that was more permanently on display in an under-construction, in-process remodeling of a social housing estate in Marseille's north end. Unlike the other experiences with models, this one did not occur in a context where the person looking at and talking to me about the model was there to discuss architectural plans. It therefore exposes a relationship with a model of a different kind. Instead of an architect showing off the model, I was looking at it initially alone, without professional mediation, when a teenager expressed his views of it to me.

This encounter occurred in April, as I was led on a tour by Natalie, a former urban social worker and budding sociology student, through the neighborhood in which she used to work as part of a team that was set up to be on-site to manage and assist a housing estate's residents during the gradual, five-year process of destruction and rebuilding of their project. Initially developed in the 1960s, this neighborhood had a reputation as one of Marseille's worst. Situated on the outskirts of Marseille, in the *Quartiers Nords*, the

estate was at the midway point of a total remaking, occurring under the auspices of a national program to alter the construction of space to reduce crime, violence, and despair in French social housing neighborhoods. As Natalie explained to me, herself skeptical, the problem, as it had been identified, is that high crime-rates were shown by the national government's statistics office to correlate with the density of populations in high-rise housing projects, which, the program argued, concentrate too many people in the same building. This was thought to inevitably lead to problems of "criminality" and "antisocial behavior," a diagnosis made using a framework of material determinism, although, as Natalie explained, these problems don't seem to exist in wealthy high-rises like the ones near the Calanques or the beach on Marseille's Southern side. Nonetheless, as Natalie saw it, any kind of program that could lead to improvement in social housing conditions was worth Marseille's participation, since there were large problems in the existing social housing structures of the city. It did not matter whether the logic of the government spending ultimately made sense, Natalie believed, Marseille still needed to take a piece of whatever pie was offered.

To demonstrate this, Natalie led me not only around the particular neighborhood where she had worked, but also showed me five of Marseille's other social housing sites, introducing me to other staff involved in these neighborhoods, from community center directors to building managers to other social workers. All of these housing projects were high-rise designs from the 1960s and 1970s (See Figure 20). Many of them were surrounded by heaps of decaying trash everywhere (Figure 21). They often had elevators out of order and residents waiting on repairs to their individual units. All of them had



visible ongoing drug activity, in which very young teenagers were sometimes playing a part, and I spent my afternoon navigating the politics of photography in such settings.



**Figure 20. 1960's Social Housing Unit in *Quartiers Nords*. Photograph taken by the author.**

In the particular project where Natalie had worked though, the team was in the process of re-housing the people currently residing in some of the bright-white, late-1960's era high-rise towers (shown in Figure 22) so those buildings could be demolished. Two buildings were already empty, and as Natalie showed me, the

apartments inside systematically broken to pieces to discourage squatting.<sup>27</sup> Their destruction was scheduled in a matter of weeks. Natalie walked me through them, pointing out all the lighting that did not work, the elevator problems, the drug residue in the stairwells, and the safety hazards of buildings that had not been adequately maintained in years.



**Figure 21. Garbage Surrounding Housing Unit. Photograph taken by the author.**

Residents were being moved both to other housing estates and to units in two newly-constructed, five story, modern, and more eco-friendly units. We had seen the new, colorful, well-windowed buildings with balconies, where some of the units even had fabulous panoramic views of downtown Marseille, including the new port, the old port, and the mountains that ring the city. Of one family's new unit, Natalie joked that she

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<sup>27</sup> For social housing activists, this type of activity is viewed as an utter travesty given the length of waitlists.

planned to join them for Bastille Day every year because they would have the best view of the fireworks of anyone in the city.



**Figure 22. Large 1960's Housing Estate Under Partial Redevelopment.  
Photograph taken by the author.**

After examining the new units and comparing them to the old, Natalie brought me to the community center, because this is where the project's architectural models were housed, one depicting the estate in its former configuration of high-rises, one showing the new, tree-lined, low-rise, imagined future. She left me to examine them, and went off to talk to the center's director. A scrawny teenager with a t-shirt bearing the Algerian flag approached me, curious about what we were doing there. I explained what we had done that day and what my research entailed while we examined the models together.

"Funny, aren't they?" he said.



“What do you mean?” I asked.

“The new model’s fine, but what are we supposed to do with it? It doesn’t let one really picture what it’s going to be like.” He pauses for a second. “But the old model? It’s funny. It’s ridiculous. When you look at the old model you would think we don’t have any windows; or grass; or nearly as many trees as we actually do. You would think we live like sardines in a giant box. The model is made on purpose so the old layout looks like a miserable place.”

I paused, crouching down to get my eyes closer to the miniature landscapes in front of me. He was right. In these models, the “future” is constructed in exquisite detail, with fully-landscaped gardens with tiny bushes and trees, an impeccable paint job on the buildings, and miniature tables and chairs on miniature balconies and terraces. There’s labeling on some of the buildings that makes it clear what each space will be used for. Meanwhile, the “current” model is made up of completely blank buildings and oddly detailed parking lots. I wondered what it was supposed to show in the first place, why anyone had bothered to build it or have it built.

Pushing this question to the side, I turned to the young boy and asked him, “What do you think of the project more broadly?”

He shrugged dismissively “Well that’s the other problem with the models.” He says. “We used to have more grass, but now it’s all a construction site. They don’t show that.” He paused. “They don’t show the moving trucks of all the neighbors leaving that get us from the one model to the other, either.”

***Architectural Models and Prospective Imaging: What kind of Materiality is This?***

As I emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, I believe that architectural

modeling and the prospective images produced by Computer-Assisted Design are objects of a very particular kind. They work to encapsulate visually and materially the complex and very long-term work that goes into rebuilding a site or a city. For those involved in their production or ordering, one goal is to demonstrate ideas. As Albena Yaneva points out in her ethnographies of the design firm of the architect Rem Koolhaas (2009a), and the specific work it did in preparing a redesign of the Whitney Museum in New York, which was ultimately not selected for implementation (2009b), and as Kvan and Thilakaratne demonstrate in their study of the difference in model-making in engineering versus design fields (2003), many architects use modeling in efforts to communicate ideas with each other, to work collaboratively on a design, to test out possibilities and rule some of them in and some of them out, and to see how ideas originally rendered in two dimensions work in three. This is usually a process that they do by hand, with razor knives and foam, paper, wood, and clay.

These experimental models that architects produce at early stages of a project's development are very unlike the elaborate models they produce for competition, display, or presentations to clients and stakeholders. Those, especially when they are designed to hold any kind of permanence, are often contracted out, extremely expensive to manufacture, and very complicated items of elaborate craftsmanship, with specialized firms often engaged in their production, as in the case of the Euroméd model.

In either of these types of models, though, modeling is most often thought about as a way to engage actively and materially with the space, present or planned. Interestingly, Euroméditerranée and other urban renewal projects and centers of urban design around Marseille are increasingly using model-making workshops as a way to

teach people, and especially children, about architecture and the built environment, a practice that I believe emphasizes their views of modeling as processual and imaginative activities.

Euroméditerranée also has a special event planned as part of Marseille-Provence 2013's European Capital of Culture calendar for the presentation of their models, including a new one that they have had constructed entirely in wood (Figure 23). This is not the first time that the display of models has been taken to the level of a cultural or artistic event. In late 2008, other models from Euroméditerranée were displayed in an exhibit at the MuCEM, one of the first exhibits after the Museum was inaugurated, when it still consisted only of the small space at the Fort Saint-Jean.

This represents a contradiction in usages of different kinds of architectural models. In the ones architects use in the everyday, or try to build with children in an educational activity about architecture and urban planning, the processual aspect of the model underlies it, allowing it to hold a status as matter-in-creation. When architectural models are finalized and displayed, they become, for architects and designers, objects of communication and, their museum display suggests, craft, of both the plans presented and the model itself. However, while architects might think that models and CAD perspectives can simultaneously provide opportunities for people to use them while materially processing their ideas *and* serve as clear aids for the visualization of what their projects will ultimately do, my experience indicates that these categorizations are experienced differently by the untrained, sensing bodies of many of Marseille's residents. On the one hand, as demonstrated in the CIQ meeting, this is because an image or a model can make a planning idea seem as though it is final and no longer subject to

community input. On the other hand, as my experience with the model in the housing project suggests, models also leave out the realities of the everyday process of experiencing a renewal project. This, I believe, is part of why these models and images can be problematic to interpret, and can provoke a particular kind of affect in the people who encounter them. This has everything to do with the temporality of these objects.



**Figure 23. Euroméditerranée’s New Model, Constructed in Wood. (Accessed electronically at <http://projets-architecte-urbanisme.fr/euromediterranee-marseille-projet-maquette-perimetre/> February 7, 2013). Photographer unknown.**

In “The Ambiguity of the Photograph,” Berger and Mohr (1995) usefully discuss the important effects that a photograph can impose upon the viewer. Viewing light and time as the two central elements of photography, for these authors, the power of the photograph is crucially related to its unique temporal situation. They argue:

A photograph arrests the flow of time in which the event photographed once existed. All photographs are of the past, yet in them an instant of the past is

arrested so that, unlike a lived past, it can never lead to the present. Every photograph presents us with two messages: a message concerning the event photographed and another concerning a shock of discontinuity. Between the moment recorded and the present moment of looking at the photograph, there is an abyss. [1995:86-87]

Importantly, for these authors the shock of this temporal disruption has been diminished as populations have become used to looking at photographs, and is particularly diminished when one does not have familiarity with the photograph's subject. They argue that now, in an age of sophisticated and familiar photographic viewers, it is only experienced when they see a picture that represents a person who, once familiar, "is now far away or dead. In such circumstances the photograph is more traumatic than most memories or mementos because it seems to confirm, prophetically, the later discontinuity created by the absence or death" (1995:87).

Architectural models and CAD prospectives of finished projects are in some ways like a photographic image, but they have a more complex relationship to the material world they seek to portray. In the case of models, I believe their smallness and their three-dimensionality are important. Models reduce the urban landscape and offer a birds-eye-view that is less familiar than that at street-level, while simultaneously altering limited portions of the landscape they are supposed to represent. CAD prospectives, likewise, attempt to portray a materially realistic and objectively powerful vision of the future. These objects therefore create a perspective that is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, at once material, representational and seemingly predictive. Yet, there are limitations to how predictive these visions of the future can be.

In Elizabeth Grosz's essay "Embodied Utopias, the Time of Architecture" (2001), she works to think through architectural possibilities by juxtaposing notions of the utopic

within philosophy with embodiment, stating that “utopias are the spaces of phantasmically attainable political and personal ideals, the projection of idealized futures; embodiment, though is that which has never had its place within utopias” (2001:131). Following up on Utopic works by Plato and More, Grosz goes on to question why, for both authors, as well as for Rousseau and other philosophers of these ideal spaces, their work to describe utopia has always included, on the one hand, a vision of a positive, almost perfect space, and, on the other, details of that space’s insurmountable flaws.

Describing More’s text, she states:

This ideal commonwealth, which many claim anticipated the modern welfare state, is also, perhaps by necessity, rigidly authoritarian, hierarchical, and restrictive. While no one is homeless, hungry, or unemployed, while gold, silver gems, and other material goods hold no greater value than their use in everyday life (gold, for example is made into chamber pots!), while all individuals are free to meet all their needs, nevertheless they are rigidly constrained in what they are able or encouraged to do. Personal freedom is highly restricted. Individuals are not free to satisfy their desires: debating politics outside the popular assembly is a capital offense; one must get police permission to travel, and even the permission of one’s father or spouse to take a walk in the countryside. [2001: 134]

Why, Grosz asks, would someone bother to create a utopian vision and then riddle it with practical problems? She notes that the contrast is even at the root of More’s word, utopia, which he took from combining the Greek *topos*, meaning place, with either *ou*, meaning no, or *eu* meaning happy, fortunate, or good (2001:135), a conflict that many have interpreted to mean “the good place is no place.” Grosz flips this around, suggesting, instead, that utopia should be understood as indicating that:

no place is the good place. The utopic is beyond the conception of space or place because the utopic, ironically, cannot be regarded as topologic at all. It does not conform to a logic of spatiality. It is thus conceivable, and perhaps even arguable, that the utopic is beyond the architectural... Architecture remains out of touch

with the fundamental movement of the utopic, the movement to perfection or to the ideal, which is conceivable only in the temporal dimension, and above all in the temporal modality of the future. [2001:135]

Utopia, Grosz argues, is fundamentally about time. She draws on a Bergsonian notion of time to explain this, stating:

The past and the present are not two modalities of the present, the past a receded or former present, a present that has moved out of the limelight. Rather, the past and the present fundamentally coexist: they function in simultaneity. Bergson suggests that the whole of the past is contained, in contracted form, in each moment of the present. The past is the virtuality that the present, the actual, contains along with it... We must place ourselves in [the past] if we are to have recollections, memory images. [2001: 142]

As Grosz points out, this also reconfigures the future, making it “that dimension or modality of time that has no actuality, either... The future is that openness of becoming that enables divergence from what exists” (2001:142). Importantly, in the Bergsonian approach to time that she highlights, the past is not, then, something that is inside subjects, but something that subjects have to enter through active work at memory and recollection. It also means that, in Grosz’s terms:

[T]he utopian is not a projection of the future at all, although this is how it is usually understood; rather, it is the projection of a past or present as if it were the future. The utopian is in fact a freezing of the indeterminable movement from the past through the future that the present is unable to directly control. Utopian discourses attempt to compensate for this indetermination between past and future, and for the failure of the present to represent a site of control for this movement to and of the future. The utopian mode seeks a future that itself has no future, a future in which time will cease to be a relevant factor and movement, change, and becoming remain impossible. [2001:143]

In Chapter 1, I emphasized the importance of understanding ethnographic encounters from a perspective focused on movement that avoids partitioning and freezing time in a

way in which it is not experienced in everyday life. The idea Grosz presents of the utopian and its relationship to time is similar to this: the utopian is problematic because it freezes time. This also has important implications for architecture, some of which Grosz envisions, such as that architecture should focus on process rather than the building or performing of ideals (148), that architecture “devote[s] too much politics to blueprints, plans, preparation for the unexpected” (149), and that, in the future of architecture, embodiment, and particularly the embodiment of sexual difference, should be taken into much greater consideration (149). Those all seem like sensible prospects with which I resoundingly agree.

However, in separating architecture generally from Utopic aims, or a larger set of temporal orientations of which the Utopic is perhaps the most extreme, I believe Grosz underestimates the implications of her particular conceptualizations of time for architecture. This is especially the case when we consider architecture in all of its phases as interacting with people through their bodies. While individual building design may not always perform this movement, city planning can feel very much like it does, especially when made concrete in so called visualization aids of models and CAD images. When understood in this way, Grosz’s ideas help to explain a disconnect between the materialization of the future presented in objects of urban planning and the imagined world they are meant to provoke.

While models and CAD images may be trying to interpellate a subject into an imagined future, the experience of time as virtual, as an accumulation of pasts into a present, prevents subjects from experiencing this future as it is made material.

Materializing the future seems to cut off other potential courses of reality. Experiencing



architectural models and CAD prospectives as *really, materially predictive* closes the loop of indeterminacy and cuts off potentialities of becoming. This genre of object evokes an engagement that is simultaneously material—with the object presented, and imagined—as representative of a planned vision not yet activated by the past and the present. It indexes the present and the future as part of the same moment, creating a doubling effect that may be experienced as uncanny. To understand the precise workings of this process, I invoke the works of Sigmund Freud, Louis Althusser, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to propose that models and CAD images offer, specifically, a phenomenological experience of what I call “the ideological uncanny.” I use Grosz’s work to expand their notions, pointing to the ways that these experiences are, fundamentally, about the temporality of prospective architectural materialization.

***Understanding Embodied Ethnographic Moments: An Uncanny (Dis)Place  
Or, the Ideological Uncanny***

In this chapter, I have taken my own and interlocutors experiences of CAD prospective images and architectural models as a starting point for analyzing the shifts in feeling, and in *modes* of feeling the city, that are taking place all over Marseille, much of the time. But how, then, to account, for experiential moments which challenge the distinctions between subject and object, and which unify experiential, representational, and conceptual realms? How to interrogate the ways in which sensory, aesthetic, or embodied experience of the material environment are connected to broader ideologies and political processes? I argue that a conceptualization of the *ideological uncanny* provides a helpful starting point, and can begin to describe the experiential moments I have laid out in this chapter. I define the ideological uncanny as a class of experience that

occurs when the shifting material world interacts with people's bodies, laying bare the world's ideological content, and provoking an affective sense of disruption and an embodied response. The most famous exploration of the aesthetic experience of the uncanny is undoubtedly that of Sigmund Freud (1919), who defined the concept as an experience of the return of the repressed, wherein one's sensory encounters with the material world begin to seem invalid or untrustworthy, and evoke a longing for an unattainable home—the safety of the womb. Often, the uncanny is brought about by an encounter with lifelike doubles, which raise questions about what is alive and one's ability to perceive life; this recalls the fear of castration and inspires a fear of death. But without following Freud into the murky waters of castration and romantic subjectivity, the uncanny can be an extremely useful concept to understand the sensory experience of urban change. In taking Freud's concept up in this partial way, I follow Joseph Masco's use of the “nuclear uncanny” in an analysis of the aesthetic of the nuclear age (Masco 2006), and Anthony Vidler's use to explore some of the aesthetics of modern architecture (Vidler 1994). Masco provides an extremely useful summary of Freud, which I take the liberty of quoting at length:

For Freud, the uncanny consists of (1) a sudden loss (or distrust) of one's senses (often represented as a fear of being blinded) and (2) the psychic ambiguity produced by inanimate objects that appear to be alive. Describing the uncanny as a slippage whereby ‘the distinction between reality and the imagination is effaced,’ Freud identifies the uncanny in a number of social forms: automatons, ghosts, dead bodies, and doppelgangers. For him, the uncanny is that which blurs the distinction between the living and the dead, the hallucinatory and the real, and which, in essence, makes sensory experience untrustworthy and strange... However, what makes the uncanny weird is that it is often informed by outmoded cultural forms, beliefs that are supposed to have fallen away in the age of industrial modernism. The supernatural aspects of the uncanny are ultimately for Freud moments of cultural as well as psychic slippage, episodes where animistic

beliefs colonize the modernist everyday, points of confusion where an industrial society wonders if ghosts might, in fact, still exist. The uncanny evokes fear, then, because it is an instant when modernist psychic and cultural structures become momentarily undone or out of joint, thus revealing the dangerous vulnerability of the human sensorium to an uncertain and uncertainly haunted universe. [Masco 2006:28-29]

As a framework that lays out a particular class of experience, one in which the living world and its representative doubling can be seen to act upon people's consciousnesses, collide with their senses of self, reframe and challenge their sensory experiences of the world, and bring up buried cultural anxieties, the uncanny is an appropriate starting point for understanding the experience of a shifting urban environment made materially projective. In Marseille, the ways people know place are constantly challenged; their intimate senses of their urban environment is replaced by new, hollowed out material configurations, such as those empty facades on the Rue de la République, and the oddly ephemeral predictions of virtually-created CAD prospectives. If we understand Grosz' utopic as also uncanny by virtue of its relationship with time, and view architecture's material prospective objects as utopic visions, then this can explain the reactions such objects provoke. But why an *ideological* uncanny?

For Althusser, "ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1972). For him, what is represented in ideology is not existence, but people's relation to those conditions of existence, contained in material apparatuses and practices. In Althusser's conceptualization of ideology, it only functions when it remains unconscious, when it masks its existence. Indeed, the replication of the system of production, and of the political and economic subjectivities it requires to function, depends on people believing that what is ideology is actually real. Ideology is

also what interpellates the subject. Without ideology, and without it constantly masking itself, the “modern subject” cannot exist; for Althusser, the subject always already *is*, and this is because of ideology’s constant work.

Both of these conceptualizations depend to no small degree on modernist notions of subjectivity as individual actor, an assumption I have challenged throughout previous chapters. While using these concepts, then, I wish to avoid reconstituting this particular problematic frame. Fortunately, however, the important features of Freud’s uncanny and Althusser’s ideology are not their location inside the subject’s head, even if both Freud and Althusser conceptualized them that way. Rather, the characteristic that makes them useful for my purposes here is their nature as unconscious to the subject. In order to use these terms without carrying with them their problematic baggage, therefore, we need a conceptualization of the unconscious that does not depend on the bounded, agentive subject. Although, importantly, as I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Merleau-Ponty’s conceptualization of interiority can be unsatisfying, he does begin to offer a way to conceptualize the unconscious that moves beyond its Freudian sense, which, it is important to remember, was articulated not only through a distinction between the subject and the world, but even as a proto-neurological location. Drawing from images produced of layered archaeological sites using new technologies of surveying and photography, Freud produced “topographical” maps of the location of the unconscious at the darkest depths of the human brain (O’Donoghue 2007). As Fuchs points out in his “Body Memory and the Unconscious,” however, a close reading of Merleau-Ponty offers a counter-point to this notion of the unconscious as internal, bounded within confines and regions of the brain inaccessible to the subject, and anatomically buried:

If we reject a topologically structured unconscious beyond consciousness – an independent intra-psychic process which impacts on the experiencing subject from outside, so to speak – then we may ask whether the unconscious might not be considered another mode of experiencing that manifests itself in the *horizontal* dimension of the lived body and the lived space. The paradigm for this would be the ambiguity of the body itself which, while seeing, always remains unseen, and of whose dispositions I often remain unaware, which in fact come to meet me from outside, namely in the form of the attractive or repelling objects, the inviting characters and field structures of my environment. Such an unconscious would then, as Merleau-Ponty writes, "... be found not [at the bottom of ourselves] behind the back of 'consciousness', but before us as the structure of our field" [Merleau-Ponty 1969, 180]. It would be the unrecognized reverse side of our experience and conduct, or its other, hidden meaning. [Fuchs 2012:75]<sup>28</sup>

In other words, while Freud viewed the unconscious as part of internal psychological structure, for Merleau-Ponty it can exist instead in our relationships to the material world, and more specifically, in the forces of attraction and, especially, repulsion that govern our relationships with material objects, the inversion of our bodily actions within the world. When the unconscious is conceptualized in this way, then, the Freudian "uncanny" and Althusserian "ideology" have the potential to be liberated from their dualistic roots.

Given its link to lived experience, Merleau-Ponty's unconscious is continuously created within the present, but is difficult to project imaginatively into the future—it is impossible for the body to adequately predict the pulls and pushes of attraction and repulsion within a given material interaction. Merleau-Ponty and Fuchs both also emphasize the importance of body memory within the Merleau-Pontian unconscious. It is partly because we have moved in certain ways in the past that we are able to feel the attractions and repulsions objects engender, without necessarily even having to be aware

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<sup>28</sup> Changes made to the quotation and citation to reflect the English-language translation of *The Visible and the Invisible*

that we are doing this. So, much like the notion of the present that Grosz presents, drawing from Bergson, for Merleau-Ponty the present unconscious is an accumulation of prior experiences—it is important to remember here that, at its base, that is also what makes up the unconscious for Freud. However, there are a few major differences. First, Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization does not rely on a process like repression. Rather, the unconscious for Merleau-Ponty accumulates out of that which one experiences sensorally, but without it rising to the level of awareness. Second, rather than being hidden in the deep recesses of a topographic brain and expressing itself in pathology, however, like in Freud's notion, Merleau-Ponty's unconscious expresses itself in everyday interactions with the material environment. However, one cannot predict such interactions in advance—the Merleau-Pontian unconscious does not project itself out into the future. It is precisely its routine that makes it unconscious. Therefore, Grosz's Bergsonian conceptualization of time works well with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological unconscious. When combined with the idea of models and CAD images as representing the present as the future—and changing only some aspects of a given area's design—Freud's explanation of the uncanny as something that is based on false doubles makes sense here. There remains, therefore, only one missing piece: the particular role of the ideological within this interaction.

The Utopic visions Grosz describes are fundamentally ideological. So too are urban planners' and architects' imaginations of the future. Both of these sorts of ideological visions represent particular kinds of hopeful engagement with the future. However, if we are to believe in Grosz's Bergsonian conceptualization of time, an attempt to make the future materially felt is disruptive. It closes off the openness of time.

Similarly, for Althusser, ideology is successful in interpellating a subject only when it remains imaginary. In that case, it structures the subject, interpellating her—this is a sort of unconscious process too. However, by materializing an ideological vision of the future in a model or prospective image, it is no longer simply imagined, at least not for bodies unfamiliar with the concept of models and prospective imaging as ephemeral forms of communication or ways of working through a process. Rather, they represent an ideology made material, rather than imaginary—and they do this through their odd combination of temporal outlook and material presence. I therefore argue that the ideological uncanny, within the urban projects I describe here, is a moment when ideology's imaginary nature is stripped bare, when people are confronted with urban change that interrupt the flows between the urban material world, their sensations of that world, and their movement-based, shifting conceptualizations of themselves and their experiences within the city. Whereas, in the everyday, Marseille is experienced in flux, in moments of the ideological uncanny, that flow is interrupted. In its place, a sense of disruption surfaces, a fear wells up that the eventuality of all of these shifts is unattainable to embodied, sensory experience; a present moment is carved out that separates the future from the past, rendering it impossible and interrupting the narratives of change people craft through their bodies, their affective attachments, and their movements through urban space.

In modern anthropological analysis, it would be foolhardy to claim that the interior experience of my ethnographic interlocutors is something that I can truly know, in any sense that is not intersubjective. However, in presenting the ideological uncanny, one that is based in the accumulation of bodily memory over time, and present in material

interactions rather than buried deep inside the brain, I argue that it is possible to develop theoretical conceptualizations that leave a place for representing the everyday, constant flows between interior experience, sensory encounter, conceptual awareness, and embodied engagement with the material world.

### *Conclusion*

The urban projects at work in Marseille are fundamentally making over the local landscape, yet, as I have shown, the categories anthropologists usually use in analyzing such processes, including discourse and semiotic analysis, and tracing the social construction of space and place, remain unable to account for the ways such processes are experienced. In beginning from sensory experience, one must contend with frameworks that are usually depicted as multiple, entangled, but analytically separable. These include individual experience, social and political relationships, conceptual frameworks, and national and transnational political economy.

Yet in the urban context of Marseille, I argue that all of these are simultaneously and constantly at play, and experienced through the body, as people's routes through the city, the sights and soundscapes of individual neighborhoods, their affective hopes for the future, and their material, economic, and political engagements are in a state of constant flux.

As discussed within the literature, architectural models are often treated as imperfect, controlling representations of a real, experiential space that is constantly shifting but can never be accessed by social scientists or fully controlled by state actors. In frameworks such as LeFebvre's (1991) and Scott's (1998), architectural models stand in for the real, experiential world; both are constructed socially, but they are separate, and



need separate frameworks for analysis. Yet in the tour group's embodied response to the Euroméditerranée architectural model, that of the Algerian youth in the housing project under construction, and the CIQ meetings attendants responses to CAD images and models, we encounter an example of an object that is itself experienced in the world, through my and my interlocutors' bodies, along with whatever social and ideological projects it may represent. The fact that we moved and moved, and never seemed to gain a sense of place in relation to these objects, can be fruitfully read as a moment of an ideological uncanny. In the next chapter, I take this analysis further by proposing a phenomenology of dreams that interrupts notions of subjectivity and the unconscious.

## Chapter Five

### Dreamscapes in Flux: An Ethnography of Fleshy Anticipation

#### *Introduction*

Imagine a town suspended in incompleteness, in a state of perpetual flux, where the architecture around you seems to change in the time between morning and evening and a building that you pass on your way to work might be reduced to rubble when you return in the afternoon. Picture, if you will, a city where the neighbors who you see one Saturday might have relocated two weekends later; you do not at first know that they have gone, their move is so sudden, but you hear about them, in vague whispers as people start to wonder at their absence. Eventually, you see their cousin; you ask after them. “Have they taken a vacation back home?” “No, habiba,” the cousin says, shaking his head, “they’ve moved to the thirteenth. The rents went up. But at least their complex there has some larger apartments; some space outside—a garden for the children to play. I think they like it. They’ll make the best. They promise we’ll see them at soccer picnics, but one never knows...they’re making a new life now.”

Imagine a town, at the same time, where promises drip from the tongues of planners and functionaries like honey. “More jobs,” they say, “More companies will come to the city. These renovations will attract more wealth.” The promises that accompany the changing environment seem to stick to the city like honey, too, unlike the temporary jobs you take one after another in an effort to make ends meet. You hope each one will be permanent, but they never last. They are never intended to last.

The projects happening around you have visible effects. Big blue and white tents are erected downtown each spring supposedly for job placement, yet you never hear of anyone getting hired. What do you make of these displays, and of the politicians who work to bring them, of the Republic and the European Union that help support them? Will such programs ever bring anything to fruition? You are skeptical, like you are of most political lines after years of broken promises and corruption. You've heard these lines as long as you have lived in this city, in your cramped apartment, in a neighborhood where car horns wail and construction clatters up from the street, having become the comforting soundscape of home as you adjusted over the years. Though skeptical, still you wait, always aware of the next change around the corner, anticipating it, bracing yourself, smelling it on the wind.

In the other chapters of this dissertation, I have focused on demonstrating how Marseille's urban renewal projects come to be sensed through the body—the way internal clocks adjust to the sounds of construction; how friendships and communities come to be built around a shared smell, taste, or sound; the ways that material objects of renewal evoke bodily responses and how these then map onto urban politics. This chapter, however, asks a question that is a bit different by examining sensation outside of the strictly material realm. Or rather, it examines the interplay between realms of human experience that are material and those more ephemeral. How, I ask, is the unconscious—or what is generally labeled as the unconscious—affected by the changing material environment? More specifically, I ask, how does the changing urban environment materialize in people's dreams? How do these dreams change and evidence the way people interpret their environments in the waking world?

### *The Architecture of Dreams*

In Christopher Nolan's 2010 film *Inception*, the plot centers around a team of for-hire "dream security experts" who break into people's dreams to steal ideas. The film focuses on whether the team can instead implant an idea in the mind of a client's corporate rival by inserting themselves into the rival's dream, then making him believe the idea germinated in his own unconscious. This is a process known as "inception," and thought to be impossible. Before they can undertake the mission, the team needs to replace its architect, who it lost after he sold them out to an unhappy client following a failed assignment. This task is complicated. They need an extremely gifted architect willing and capable of illegally altering the landscapes and design of dream-worlds to make complex, contained environments in which the dreamers and the security team can collectively operate. They find such a person in Ariadne<sup>29</sup> (Ellen Page). As she begins to learn the rules of dream architecture, however, she gets herself into trouble, at first altering too much too fast in real-time, ignoring the warnings of her teammates as she shifts buildings and defies the usual laws of physical space. The dreamscapes' natives or "projections"—note the Freudian dream interpretation language—begin to turn on her when they experience visible, conspicuous shifts in the architectural landscapes of the dream, as Ariadne disrupts the laws of physics, altering gravity and erecting one new physical feature after another before the projections' eyes.

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<sup>29</sup> The character's name is obviously drawn from Greek mythology wherein Ariadne, the daughter of Minos, was given in payment to Athena to supervise the Minotaur's sacrificial labyrinth. In mythology, she ultimately fell in love with Theseus and helped him defeat the Minotaur. In most accounts, however, he abandoned her as soon as they escaped, and she ended up marrying Dionysus.

In the film, we are led to believe that Ariadne doesn't listen to the team's initial warnings because the temptations to play with architectural space in a devil-may-care, no rules environment are just too strong, ultimately motivating her to keep at the task of dream architecture despite her initially frightening encounters. She becomes more careful as she continues, but still builds and alters in rapid-fire the landscapes of dreamworlds that exist as uncanny environments—radically different yet somehow familiar-seeming landscapes in which the targeted dreamer and the team can all operate.

This progression of events is all well and good in a Hollywood film script, but in real life, how do the architectural universes of our dreamworlds come into being? What might these universes reveal about the collective orientations created by sharing space and time with particular material, human, and non-human actors, and the kinds of phenomenological orientations that brings about in different locations? Whereas in Nolan's film, the characters' dreams are being tampered with intentionally for the purposes of profit, in Marseille, an alteration in dream-life is a side effect of the renewal processes going on there in a material environment that is broadly and diversely shared. I argue that Marseillais dreams embody a particular set of attitudes that define the city in the contemporary moment, and reflect a specific character of the city's social life, a mood I refer to as "fleshy anticipation."

In some ways, all urban renewal is like a dream, at least for the people who are not involved in its planning or direct execution. The building you pass in the morning may be obliterated by the time you return in the afternoon—evoking a question of whether it was ever really there in the first place, whether the rubble in its wake is "real" now, and how it should exist in your experience in relation to the future building that will

ultimately replace it. This sense of rapid temporal shifts evokes a sense of the uncanny in waking life, not unlike the experiences of models and CAD perspectives articulated in Chapter 4, although Freud’s use of the term usually referred to experiences in literature and dreams (Freud 1919). In Marseille, I argue that whether one is awake or not, the intimate, homely sense one has of one’s neighborhood becomes challenged as the architecture shifts (See Figure 23). This closely follows Freud’s literal definition of the uncanny or “unheimlich” – what he defined as the strange that is found within the familiar or homely.



**Figure 24. Jarring Juxtapositions. Photograph taken by Author.**

Furthermore, in experiencing conceptualizations of urban renewal projects, city-dwellers can at most project themselves into someone else's design by examining the plans. The plans are someone else's (or, most often, a team of other people's) dream or vision of the future. They may or may not reflect a future that matches the city-dweller's hopes or desires. In a great deal of dream research, as di Mageo points out (2011), dreams are seen as spaces where a person's unconscious has the opportunity to work through a "problem," a theory that is strongly associated with, although perhaps not originating from, the psychological work of Alfred Adler (1931). Importantly, Adler saw this theory as legitimate because it lent unity to the experiences of conscious life and dreams, thus making the individual into a coherent unit of analysis (1931), which for Freud he or she was not. Under the Adlerian view, the rapid-fire changes going on throughout Marseille could be seen to turn the physical landscape into *individual* problems of the sort then likely to re-arise in dream-life. Whether this fantasy of the future is more wish or nightmare is entirely a question of one's own principles and views of the direction the renewal will go, of trust, or not, in the municipal government and—in Marseille—of faith, or not, in the designers of Euroméditerranée and the city's other projects to carry out a program of work that will satisfy individual hopes.

In this chapter, I explore cases of (sleeping) dreamlife in Marseille. Specifically, I examine dreams where the dreamer describes the dreamscape as a falsified version of his or her neighborhood—an uncanny projection of a neighborhood or local place they know intimately that is somehow altered in the context of the dream. These dreams pivot on a single trope: the idea of the place you think you know, but that becomes unfamiliar in the context of the dream, a sentiment often also described in waking responses to urban

renewal and its material productions, as I have shown in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4. Here, I try to think through the ways this trope expands into the unconscious, where it can be taken up more literally and more dramatically.

My approach depends on taking the sensory content of dreams seriously—on viewing them as connected to and in dialogue with the material environment experienced in waking life. Freud, other early psychoanalysts, and their anthropological contemporaries (see Mageo 2003:4-5) saw this sensory portion of dreaming as surface, “manifest content,” which they thought useless for actually interpreting a dream or for discovering universals about the human unconscious (remembering, of course, that Freud’s project was two-fold: treating patients and developing the science of the human mind). For Freud in particular, “manifest content” contained mostly “day residues” from waking life that offered no major psychoanalytic utility (Freud 1913), acting instead to disguise the major meanings of a dream, its deeper “latent content” which related to individual wishes and struggles. My examination of dreams, however centers on their ability to tell us something about collective social life—that is, social life in a collective that includes multiple actors, both “animate” and “inanimate”—although this particular binary is rendered untenable in a phenomenological approach that views time, space and people as mobile, and in the experience of renewal, which renders supposedly “inanimate” pieces of the built environment into active, shifting participants in urban life. Exploring these sorts of spaces in dreamlife allows me to ask: how collective are our dreamlives? What sorts of phenomenological orientations do they index? What sorts of political possibilities might they demonstrate or open up?



Dreams have long posed a complication in the study of humans and human thought, one on which Descartes' original Enlightenment opposition between the knowing mind and the sensing body was based. In considering the depth of sensation Descartes felt during his dreams, he wrote, "I see so plainly that there are no definitive signs by which to distinguish being awake from being asleep" (1998:60). This posed Descartes' central dilemma. If dream-life felt equally real as waking life, how could one posit the existence of a true reality? How could a person know that it was in this realm of the really real that she was operating?

It was on this basis that Descartes insisted that the so-called rational mind be granted a status of superiority over the carnal, sensing body and the information obtained through it. In short, the commonality of sensation in dreams and waking life demanded that the sensory realm—and with it the body that experiences sensation—be sublimated to the workings of the rational mind.

A similar opposition also defined much of early anthropology's distinction between "primitive" and "civilized" (or rational) minds; for E.B. Tylor, primitives could not distinguish between dream-life and reality (1873). This same opposition between rational, "civilized" minds and "primitive," sensing bodies is one that sensory studies, along with phenomenology, certain strains of post-structuralism, and feminist theory have long sought to overturn.

However, though religious traditions of valuing and interpreting dreams have existed and persisted throughout much of history (see Mittermaier 2011 for one in-depth discussion), the social science of dreaming is a relatively more recent phenomenon, and began in earnest with the rise of psychoanalysis in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Yet, as the “father” of psychoanalysis, Freud’s work on interpreting dreams put forth a rather basic view of their relationship with everyday life. For Freud (1913), dreams are about the expression of wishes one unconsciously seeks to fulfill, and they are best interpreted by looking at their symbols, which can bear little relationship to the material objects presented. Dream interpretation for Freud is about getting to the root of the libidinal desires a dream expresses. The sensory and material experience of the dream for Freud is just a cover for more deeply held unconscious desires. Also importantly, for Freud, the dream is always primarily about the dreamer as an individual facing her—usually her, for Freud—own pathologies and life circumstances.

Even in more contemporary anthropological studies of dreams, the individual, although increasingly seen as culturally embedded and interactional, is still the basic unit of analysis for most studies interpreting dreams (see, e.g. Hollan 2004, Tedlock 1987, 1991; Graham 1999; Kirsteglou 2010; and Mittermaier 2011 for an excellent exception). One recent collection, for example (di Mageo 2003), asks about how dreams help create and demarcate the self, which, although understood as a fluctuating, emotional, affective and embodied creature, is still at its base an individualized one. However flexible the concept of subjectivity has become in anthropology in recent years—and the literature shows that it is very flexible indeed (see Biehl et al. 2007)—it still too often rests on a model that distinguishes the individual from her material and cultural surroundings. At most, most concepts of subjectivity see the individual as in a constant relationship of give-and-take with her surroundings, but not fundamentally integrated with them.

This sort of thinking pervades dream studies in anthropology, even up to the contemporary moment. For example, in di Mageo’s latest book (2011), she emphasizes a

cataloguing of archetypes or “cultural models” that appear in dreams, and draws from a study of the dreams of undergraduates in the Pacific Northwest to show how these cultural archetypes become embedded in dreams and therefore help define the subjectivity and cultural emplacement of the dreamers. Using information from the neurobiology of dreaming, she attempts to draw generalizations about what happens when humans dream, and categorizes most of the dreams she analyzes as “anxiety-based” (di Maseo 2011:25). This work is undoubtedly useful and important, but rests on viewing the material content of dreams as mere symbols of a larger cultural reality—one that exists as a particularly anxious moment. For example, she sees cars in the dreams she collected as representing a cultural model of the “traveling self” which views selves in the United States as “free, mobile and autonomous” (di Maseo 2006:465). The material contents of the dream are, for di Maseo, useful in what they reflect culturally and symbolize psychologically, but they are in no way full sensory realities. I have critiqued symbolic and semiotic approaches to the urban environment in Chapter 4, and the same critiques can be applied to their use in the interpretation of dreams. Just as objects in the urban material environment do more than symbolize or stand in for meaning, objects in the dreamt material environment can be conceptualized as engaging, provoking, and relating to a fully sensory body of the dreamer. Although this is not a typical approach taken with dreams, I argue that dreamt life can expand our conceptualizations of the sensory realm in important ways.

The approach I advocate for here therefore places more emphasis on the pull of the actual sensation of local circumstances in enveloping the unconscious and creating dreamscapes from collective life. Rather than seeing dreamscapes as “sensorially

deprived” as does di Mageo (2003:28), my approach is to examine the sensory content that dreams do have and to analyze the ways that content reflects attitudes towards the material realm. In particular, I ask how material engagements between what we usually consider subjects, and between those “subjects” and what we usually consider “objects” manifest in dreams, and examine the material relationships that dreams therefore embody. I argue that it is only through a detailed, phenomenological account of the sensory journey of a dream that we can determine how it impacts the dreamer’s consciousness of reality, and in turn, how that reality interchanges with the unconscious in the initial creation of dreams.

Methodologically, my exploration of dreams results from a half tongue-in-cheek interview question, which I originally designed to throw troubled interviews in new directions, but instead started yielding interesting data-- the personal dreams people were willing to share with me as an ethnographer. It’s true, when asked if people had dreams about the urban space they wanted to share with me, some people—many of them—replied that they didn’t remember their dreams. Many others, however, did remember, and had something they wanted to share. Others didn’t remember at first, but contacted me later to share dreams they had and remembered and that they thought relevant to my research. All of these dreams brought out a sticky situation, however—how does one interpret the dreams of others and their interpretations of their own dreams anthropologically and rigorously, without falling into a classic psychoanalytic trap, for which I am ill-trained and to which they were not submitting their dreams anyway?

Dreams also raise an especially sticky question of intersubjectivity in anthropology. Can one really know what it is like for another person to experience a

dream? What sorts of exchanges take place in the recounting of a dream, and what risks and potentials open up in using dreams as data? In this chapter, I will attempt to make an argument for the use of the dreams recounted to me—and not only the fact and process of their recounting—as a crucial sign of intersubjective and interobjective engagement in Marseille.

I argue that dreams in Marseille are one place where it is possible to see an overall mood in Marseille of collective anticipation—one that comes directly out of people's engagement with a changing physical urban landscape. I argue against interpreting this mood of anticipation using typical arguments of neoliberal subjective anxiety, which I find problematically diagnostic and inappropriately impositional of one mode of thinking about the future.

In my analysis, I will recount some of the dreams I was told, try on some possible explanations that position them within a solely late capitalist interpretive framework of anxiety, and then see how the idea of intersubjectivity itself helps us understand the dreams differently than does an anxiety framework. I rely on Walter Benjamin's idea of the "optical unconscious" and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of "the flesh" in my analysis. I follow Merleau-Ponty in exploring how, if, "the difference between perception and dream not being absolute, one [might be] justified in counting them both among our experiences" (1968:6), I work to see where exploring those experiences might end up if we examine dreams and perceptions among the same cloth. I argue for exploring Marseillais dreams as part of a "fleshy anticipation" that characterizes the overall mood of the city during my fieldwork.

***Gleaming White Buildings and Feet off the Ground: Nadia's Dream***

Nadia was 34, with fair skin, dark black hair and round, almond-colored eyes. She lived downtown in the relatively poor neighborhood of Noailles, in a cramped apartment with her husband and her two children, while she waited on a social housing list for an acceptable apartment to be offered to her. She had been waiting a long time—more than four years. As her job, Nadia worked somewhat inconsistently, selling clothing in local flea markets a few days a week, a task that required her to rise before the sun to assure a good market position.

One afternoon, Nadia and I sat in her home, which was packed to the brim with bags of clothing and knickknacks that she stored between days at the markets. As we drank coffee at the blue card table she used in her kitchen, Nadia told me about a dream she had had on what she considered to be a typical night the previous week. By her account, nothing special had happened before she went to bed, but the dream itself had been remarkable:

I was walking down my stairs to my street and then at first it was very familiar but then it changed from my street. I was trying to get to the butcher shop but I could never seem to get there, even though I really wanted to arrive. Instead, I was trapped endlessly in the vegetable market until it, bit by bit, became this series of buildings made out of gleaming white bricks. It was impossible either for me to find the butcher shop or to find my way towards home. And, in the dream, as the buildings changed, it felt like I wasn't really in my body, wasn't fully in my body. It felt like I was in my body, but at the same time I was half-flying—I could see everything from the same height as my head but my feet never touched the ground—my feet glided. And I kept thinking about my children back at home and what they would eat, how they were to eat if I never could find my way back to them in this maze of gleaming white buildings. And as I was beginning to think more about this thought, and yet to grow comfortable with my flying body, the alarm went off and I woke, and my children were asleep in their beds and I was still in my body. Nothing had changed.

Nadia's dream had begun at her own front door, before changing slowly to become something quite different than her own street. This street could not quite be incorporated into her own body in its usual ways, so she sensed the world differently, not through walking feet but through flying a bit above the street. The neighborhood was familiar to her, but at the same time, became gradually different until it was something entirely different, entirely new. Then, in this "maze" of gleaming white buildings, her alarm went off, and she awoke into her normal life.

When I asked Nadia to interpret her dream, she talked about the changes in Marseille. "Neighborhoods change all the time now," she said. She also talked of how she finds the vegetable market emblematic of her challenges to make a living, since the clothing markets where she works are often not far beyond the fruit and vegetable markets. She spoke of trying in the dream to get to the end of the fruit and vegetable market, even though in this case it wasn't to get to work, but to get to the butcher shop to buy meat for the Saturday meal she was making.

Her neighborhood has several hallal butcher shops, but the one where Nadia buys is renowned. She considers the butcher a friend. We had been there several times together, and I had seen her laugh and flirt with him. As she describes, his absence and replacement with those white buildings was a sign that something about her neighborhood was essentially different in the dream. That difference made her lose her way, but not entirely uncomfortably. After all, she began to grow comfortable with her flying body, if not quite in control of it.

The one thing in the way of her comfort in the dream was her fear for her children, so I probed more into this element of what she described. “Why, in the dream, were you so afraid about your children, do you think?” I asked. Nadia responded:

“In the dream” Nadia said, “I was afraid that they would have nothing to eat and I was worried there was no one to look after them.”

“But I think there was more meaning beyond that.” She continued. “Afterwards in thinking about the dream, I think I was afraid. I had fear that I had come to France for there to be a better life available to my children than what I had myself in my youth in the violence of Algeria. And there has been for them a better life... Yet in the dream, in all of those gleaming white buildings, my children were not with me there.” Nadia repeated. “My children were not with me there. My body was not even with me there. At least not in a typical sense.” She paused. “At first I thought my dream expressed a fear. Something about my children’s place in the new downtown Marseille that is appearing now. It has already been so hard for us to find a home in the central city. And now I’m not sure it will be possible for us. We may not be able to find a permanent home in central Marseille. I think Marseille thinks Arabs are dirt in all that gleaming white.” She laughed. “But then the other thing is that the dream was really beautiful. The sun was hitting my back and making the buildings shine so clearly and so white. So then I thought maybe my children weren’t with me there because I was looking through that neighborhood looking for a place for them, that I knew there would be a place for them there. The places I know that have buildings that look like that are the same areas where I would like to live when we find a permanent home. So maybe I was flying through there because I was going to find an apartment there. The flying was beautiful. It was not unpleasant.”



I followed up, asking more about the flying in Nadia's dream. "I agree," Nadia said. "The flying in my dream was the most interesting part. It made it so that the dream was more comfortable, not like a nightmare. It was beautiful to fly over central Marseille, to see it from above and to experience myself as part of the landscape there, just a little above the streets. I was not all the way high up, just a small bit. That part, dear, was not unpleasant. I don't know why I was flying."

***Just Walk Around the Block: Jean-Marc's Dream***

Jean-Marc was a young architect working in a private firm in downtown Marseille. Although not directly involved in the major renewal projects, like Euroméditerranée, Jean-Marc's firm was often called in to rehabilitate buildings of various sizes in the private sector, a task that was intricately related to the renewal of downtown. When I had first spoken to Jean-Marc, the shy 28 year-old who became more animated when he spoke of architecture had told me that he didn't remember his dreams. He contacted me a few weeks later to invite me for a drink downtown at the Vieux Port, though, and to say that he had something he wanted to discuss with me. Excited, I arrived early for our 6:30 pm rendezvous, a habit I could never break even though timeliness in Marseille usually meant someone would arrive at least ten minutes after the scheduled meeting time. Jean-Marc, true to form, arrived ten minutes later, his dark hair messy from the gusty wind and his button-down shirt wrinkled from a long day at work. We exchanged bises, and then he sat down across from me and rolled up his sleeves matter-of-factly, waved the waiter down, and ordered a beer. Then, Jean-Marc began to talk, quickly.

“I called you, Nelly, about a dream,” he began. Then, he spoke. It was all I could do to keep up. “It happened last Saturday night.”

In the dream, I was walking through one of our recent building projects, when suddenly the building began coming down in pieces around me. At first, it happened slowly. A piece of plaster here, then a piece of cement behind it. I at first was confused, and then troubled. It bothered me. I began to walk down the stairs, examining the damage, wondering how on earth we would repair it, if it was some fault in the building materials or, I hoped not, a fault in the architectural design itself that would need it all to be redone. At first I was just investigating. All I could hear were sounds from inside the building. I took that to be a good sign... we had thickened the walls as part of the renovation so that the building would have better soundproofing, and installed double windows. Anyway, I was gradually descending the stairs, checking one floor underneath the next, to see what was happening on the floors below. It's a building with six floors...

Jean-Marc paused, taking a sip of his 1664, which had just arrived, and, I guessed, waiting for me to edge him on, for dramatic effect.

“Go on,” I said, raising my eyebrows.

Well, then it started happening faster and faster. Plaster and tiny pieces of cement were just flying at me. There were obviously no hard hats, and I knew it was no time to be in there, so I was descending more and more rapidly until I was running and my feet barely touched the ground. I just wanted to be out of there. And I heard stronger and stronger the sounds of the street of Marseille out front.

Jean-Marc sipped again.

And then, I got out of the front door and into the streets and I looked back and... everything was fine. The building was absolutely, completely, in fact, fine. I had been frightened it would crumble around me but there was nothing wrong with it. Nothing at all. I took a walk around the block and then reentered, and I went upstairs and threw open the windows so I could hear the street of Marseille, and then I was able to keep going about my work. There was one little piece of plaster, barely bigger than my little finger, that was out of place. That was evidence that what had happened had been *real*, you know. But it was so strange. I had the impression that all I had needed to do was let in the sound of Marseille and I could continue. And that's how I awoke.

Jean-Marc finished his telling. We were quiet, for a minute, while I processed what I heard. He then asked me what I made of his dream, “from an anthropological view.”

“Well, Jean-Marc,” I said. “If I’m honest, I am more interested in what you think of your dream, really.”

He laughed. “It makes me think I should stop going into these buildings unfinished without a hard hat,” he said. Then, more seriously, “it makes me wonder how much we can separate *Marseille*—you know, the character of Marseille—how much we can separate that from these new constructions and renewals. I was at first puzzled, in the dream, about what mistake we had made, what error the builders had made to cause the building to fall apart. That was my primary focus, really, *to locate the problem*. But then it turned out that all that I needed was to take a walk around the block. To be out in the city for a moment.”

Jean-Marc paused, before finishing, non-committal, “I don’t know. I suppose... I really don’t have any idea how to interpret it.”

***Eerie Silences, Not the Belsunce That I Know: Mohammed’s Dream***

Mohammed was one of my key interlocutors. Although, like Jean-Marc, he initially told me he didn’t remember his dreams, one Saturday morning he called very early to ask if I wanted to come over for breakfast. “Nell,” he said. “I have a dream to tell you about.” I packed up my bag, yawning, and headed over to his place in the middle of Belsunce. He buzzed me in and then stood at the top of the stairs, outside his apartment door, tapping the banister excitedly as I walked up the three flights.

“Hey, you” I said, as we exchanged bises.

“Come in, Nell. Sit down in the *salon*,” Mohammed said. “The tea’s already making. I prepared *beghrir*. Let me tell you about this dream.”

“Let me take off my shoes,” I said, laughing. Mohammed was usually very big on manners. That usually included not calling me before 10 am, and certainly did not include rushing me into the house. This had to be some amazing dream.

We sat down in the salon. Mohammed brought in the tea and checked on it, then poured. He brought out the pancakes and some honey, too.

“Okay.” He said. “Get out your recorder.” It was already out and on, and I gestured to it. “Oh. Good. Now are you ready? Can I tell you about my dream?” I nodded, sipping tea. He lit a cigarette, moved the recorder closer to himself, and then rested back in his seat as he began recounting.

Okay. Good then. I’ll start. I was walking around Belsunce, just like we did on the walking tour I did with you. I was taking almost exactly the same route. I went down past the restaurants where the little retirees eat. And then up past the art galleries and then over by the schoolyard on Rue François Bazin. But there was something completely strange. I was searching and searching, but there was no one on the streets. It was *vide*. Completely empty. No one out... not even by the wholesalers. More empty even than *floer* time at Ramadan. Just... nobody. I was the only person in the streets. I went down by the library, by Alcazar, too. Then I went into the library, and thumbed through the books, but no people were there. Not in the cramped doorways. Not over by the *Centre Bourse*. Not underneath the scaffolding in all of the construction sites in front of the different colored apartments’ facades. Nobody. There wasn’t a single person in the streets. I was alone. In fact, totally alone. I went over by the salesman with all the blankets and over by the butcher shops, over where they sell those big ugly carpets, and there was no one. The stores were all open and I wandered in and out and touched the metal teapots, the carpets, the house wares, the groceries, but there was no one. Not a person. Not a single person. I was completely alone.

I was out searching. I thought I might have to search forever. There wasn't a sound in the streets, except my feet hitting hard against the pavement and the cobblestones. Clap clap. Not a single sound I didn't create myself, and the sounds I was making were amplified, strange. I was completely alone. And then, just as I was beginning to panic, I heard in the distance a single car drive by, the engine going "put put put." I couldn't even tell which direction it was in, but I heard it, off in the distance. And that's when I woke up.

What do you think it means?

Mohammed took another drag of his cigarette, and paused, before looking me straight in the eye. "There you have it." He said. "What do you think it means?"

"I have absolutely no idea, Momo." I said. "Maybe you're lonely and it's time to let your mother have her way and find you a nice girl back in Morocco?" I teased. He laughed, shrugging his shoulders and hitting me on the arm before clicking his tongue in protest.

"Is that the best you can do?" He asked. "I mean, it was strange. Very strange. In this neighborhood you would think it would be a blessing to have a little quiet, even if just for a change! But no, not that quiet! I was really troubled! Without the drivers honking their horns and then getting in fights with each other outside my doorstep! Can you imagine?" Mohammed laughed. "It was so odd, to have that much quiet, here in Marseille. Here, in Belsunce."

"What were you thinking during the dream?" I asked.

"Not much, really." Mohammed replied. "I mostly, in fact, just wondered where all the people were, why they weren't out shouting at each other, talking in loud voices, making a racket. It's not the Belsunce that I know. And I was thankful when I heard that one car

drive by. So thankful. I thought ‘Thanks Be to God.’ And then I could awaken. Do you have any thoughts on what it could mean?”

I shook my head before replying, “Not yet, but I’m glad you remembered it.” I said. “Thank you for telling me. And I think you’re right. It’s not the Belsunce that I know, either. Marseille *is* all that noise.”

### ***Anxious Subjects or Intersubjective Beings?***

One way to interpret the three dreams I have recounted here would be to rely on recent anthropological work on subjectivity, and in particular that produced in an atmosphere of neoliberalism, where economic security is increasingly difficult to find due to the globalization of the economy and weakening systems of state support, and where increasing multiculturalism makes anxieties about the maintenance of traditional cultures grow alongside economic worries, especially in Europe (Grillo 2003). Aihwa Ong for example, has demonstrated that workers in developing economies and states are expected to be flexible and adapt quickly if they are to continue to be relevant and successful in an increasingly neoliberal world (1999). This expectation itself produces anxieties for workers who must be constantly ready to change positions and take on different roles and responsibilities in order to stay afloat, and also redefines notions of citizenship in the contemporary world.

The concept of subjectivity relates to these increasing expectations of flexibility, especially when one considers the historical roots of the term “subject,” which, as Mamdani has shown (1996), long applied to those who were considered to be under the rule of a king or a government, but often lacked the rights inherent in notions of citizenship, a distinction particularly important in colonial rule in Africa. Foucault’s

notions of subjectivity are also important to consider here. Through his notion of governmentality, Foucault believed that subjects' identities were created through relationships of power that defined even the way individuals thought about themselves and held themselves responsible for their own behavior (1990, 2000). Nonetheless, however, Foucault's subject was a self-aware entity with choices—however limited—about how to act.

In her book, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (2006), Sherry Ortner reviews some prominent social theoretical tools we have used over the past few decades in anthropology to understand what she considers to be major questions in the discipline. In a chapter addressing the question of subjectivity, Ortner argues that a robust conceptualization of subjectivity is needed in anthropology in order to more accurately portray the complexity of our research subjects' lives and also to allow for us to conceptualize their capacities for meaningful political action—something Ortner understands as their agency (2006:109). This subjectivity, for Ortner, is inherently anxious, at least in the moment of late modernity, late capitalism, or neoliberalism. By subjectivity, Ortner “mean[s] the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought desire, and fear that animate acting subjects. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on ” (2006:89). Pointing to the relationship between the individual and society as both the key to understanding subjectivity and a central debate within 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy and anthropology, Ortner argues that attention to subjectivity nonetheless fell out of mode with post-modern social theorizing, which she refers to as fundamentally anti-humanist (2006:90-91). Interestingly, the work she criticizes as post-modern and anti-humanist

includes feminist critiques that challenge universal human nature on the grounds that it more often specifically indexes, rather than a truly universal humanity, a gendered (male), colonially empowered, and raced one (see Scott 1986; Spivak 1988; Ortner 1997:90-91), critiques that would seem to dovetail with Ortner's earlier feminist projects (e.g. 1974). Ortner sees practice theorists like Bourdieu, Giddens, and Sewell as recentring the human sciences on the question of the human, even if there is "an area of thinness in all of their work...: a tendency to slight the question of subjectivity, that is, the view of the subject as existentially complex, a being who feels and thinks and reflects, who makes and seeks meaning" (Ortner 2006:92). For Ortner, we cannot understand political action without agency, which depends on this conceptualization of subjectivity.

In her attempts to rescue an agentive subjectivity, then, Ortner draws on and applauds the work of Clifford Geertz in particular, and opposes his view of subjectivity with that articulated in the work of the cultural critic Fredric Jameson. For Ortner, Geertz's major contributions to anthropology were his conceptualization of culture—which has since been much maligned as too rigid and bounded—and his idea that cultures produce particular kinds of subjectivities. For Ortner, Geertz's work on subjectivity is most visible in his work on the Balinese, and in his view that particular kinds of anxiety undergird the Balinese cultural experiences of which he wrote (Ortner 2006:98-99). In fact, Ortner interprets Geertz as claiming anxiety as a central undergirding feature of all subjectivity, stating "anxieties of interpretation and orientation are seen as part of the generic human condition, grounded in the human dependency on symbolic orders to function within the world" (Ortner 2006: 101).



Next, Ortner interprets work from Fredric Jameson and Richard Sennett as showing that anxiety is a major source of emotional weight that has needed to be explained in the late capitalist or neoliberal era. In Ortner's reading of Jameson's analysis of the Bonaventure hotel and the anxiety the space provokes in post-modern consumer culture, subjectivity becomes difficult to handle in the Bonaventure hotel that Jameson critiques (or in any unordered, chaotic space) because there is a disjuncture between the body and the built environment. For Ortner, an attempt to wander through the poorly organized Bonaventure hotel demonstrates this. She quotes Jameson:

It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment... can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects [Jameson 1984: 44; quoted in Ortner 2006: 122]

Ortner goes on to express concern that Jameson's response leaves not enough room for political action, stating:

Although he gestures towards conventional radical politics, Jameson's final call is not to the barricades but to practices of conceptual organizing of the world, specifically the practice of "cognitive mapping": "The political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping" (Jameson 1984:54). In the course of such mapping "we may again be able to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects and regain a capacity to act and struggle which is at present neutralized by our special as well as our social confusion" (Jameson 1984:54). [Orton 2006: 103]

Ortner next goes on to analyze Richard Sennett's work on changing work dynamics in the late capitalist era (1998). Ultimately, she concludes that rescuing

subjectivity within a late capitalist world allows us to look for “countercurrents” of culture and moments where the regimes of power are challenged or interrupted.

While I understand the benefits of an agential subject for certain types of political analysis and organizing, by the end of Ortner’s analysis I remain unconvinced that subjectivity, and in particular its resting in individual consciousnesses and wills, is either necessary or the most effective way to look for the countercurrents she aims to find, particularly if subjectivity is defined by anxiety as it is in her reading of Geertz. The problems with this argument are multi-fold. First, although Ortner is correct that a culture concept can have important uses in, for example, political strategizing, it seems to me that the Geertzian concept of culture on which her analysis of subjectivity depends does, in fact, suffer from flatness and a sense of inflexibility through time. Why would anthropology want to revive this concept and make it a key to understanding something as flexible and individually variable as subjectivity? Ortner also implies that the cultural formations of subjectivities can be traced, but does not demonstrate how. Might not conceptualizations of subjectivity that specifically focus on interrelationships within the material world and unbounding the human be opened up by thinking through a firmly intersubjective being-in-the-world rather than an individually-bounded subject? As I will demonstrate below, Marseillais dreams might allow us to further explore an intersubjective and interobjective mode of being.

Second, Ortner does not acknowledge potential risks involved in attempting to separate subjectivity out as a human condition, even when the human is conceptualized as existing symbiotically with a culture and environment around them. What Ortner refers to as post-structuralism’s “anti-humanism” can in another light be seen as an effort to avoid

anthropocentrism and to take the role of material environments and non-human actors more seriously, which, as I have discussed elsewhere in this dissertation, might open up potentialities for progressive action on issues of the environment and (Bennett 2001, 2010; Morton 2007; Latour 2005). Below, I will also discuss how more consideration of the material environment also might change the ways we consider human inequalities, rights, and violence.

But even if we accept that a conceptualization of the subject of the sort Ortner puts forth is necessary, I worry about Ortner's particular take on subjectivity as the sole, or even the primary location of agency, and her emphasis on anxiety in its formulation. This emphasis is partly an idea that she puts forth, and partly her reading of how subjectivity works in the specific regimes of neoliberal late capitalism. In addition, I see political risks in the use of anxiety in diagnosing the agentive individual subject—even if we accept that such a subject exists and exists universally. These risks are amplified, in fact, where dreams are used as data because of anxiety's status as psychological diagnosis (dsm5.org), and anthropology's ill-suitedness for engaging in diagnostic projects and well-suitedness for critiquing such projects (Kidron 2012a, Illouz 2007, Metzl 2010, Ramos-Zayas 2012). As anthropologists and historians like Eva Illouz (2007), Emily Martin (2007), Jonathan Metzl (2010), and Carol Kidron (2012b) have shown us, diagnostic categories such as depression, mania, trauma, neurosis, or anxiety come weighted with a large amount of cultural and medical baggage and mean specific things within societies—including the French society I write of here—where such emotions are often medicalized. Anthropologists would do well to be cautious about how they use these terms, no matter what societies they work in, especially in an era where a

globalized pharmaceutical industry works to cast emotions and moods as sites of chemical treatment. As Emily Martin has shown in her work on manic depression in America (2007), traits associated with illness like anxiety or mania may get used in different ways when applied to objects in the world than when applied to people. For example, mania in markets may be a desirable or “normal” descriptive, but mania in people is often, for better or for worse, streamlined to treatment with medication cocktails (2007). We should be cautious, then, of diagnosing neoliberal subjects as anxious, even if they live in a time period where they are expected to exhibit constant flexibility and lack certain means of security (Martin 1995). Indeed, we should be especially cautious of “diagnosing” anxiety when using types of data with a history of being used as instruments to pathologize people, as is the case with dreams (Freud 1913).

Politically speaking, casting the current moments of globalization as producing subjectivities that are fundamentally anxious also seems overly broad and sweeping, and potentially politically paralyzing. This is precisely the conclusion in Franz Neumann’s essay “Anxiety and Politics” (1957), in which he argues that, no matter how prevalent anxiety might be in a given society, only the citizens free from its pathology are truly capable of participating in the public sphere. Anxiety seems to me to imply a form of reactionary tension that is potentially irresolvable, or at the very least irrational, while the proponents of neoliberalism would like critics to believe that it is deeply rational (Brown 2003). This thus recreates an old debate where those with power are judged rational and controlled by the mind, and those without it are judged as emotional and unpredictable. In light of all of this, the presence or absence of anxiety in subjectivity should be ethnographically analyzed, not simply presumed.

This is not to deny the presence of anxiety totally in the Marseillais dreams I have presented here. Interpreting these dreams through a lens of anxious subjectivity is certainly possible. The three interlocutors I have presented here can all, in some ways, be seen as perfect neoliberal anxious subjects, and their dreams interpreted to reveal these concerns as present and influential in their personalities and daily lives.

Nadia, for example, has to travel around to a variety of markets and sell diverse wares to make a somewhat unpredictable living. She depends on the French state to meet the gaps in this living, receiving both housing subsidies and assistance with the children's costs from the government, and ultimately waiting for that government to step up to provide permanent social housing, which she has experienced as unavailable and untrustworthy within France's current economic climate. One of her own interpretations of her dream was to see in it a manifestation of her worries about her children's place in what she sees as "the new Marseille" being brought about through the processes of urban renewal. Her dream directly expressed wonder, if not direct anxiety, about how her children would be fed while she was lost in her dreamt version of her neighborhood, a space she could no longer navigate.

Likewise, Jean-Marc's dream experience of the building initially decaying around him was at first described as one in which he worried there must have been some kind of mistake made in the building site on which he was working. He describes part of the emotional experience of his dream as hoping there wasn't a flaw in the architectural plans for which he was responsible. The building coming apart, dreamt at a time when projects were being put on hold due to the global financial crisis in 2008-2009, could also be interpreted as a sign of fear that his work would dry up. This explanation would not,

however, account for the importance of the walk around the block or of opening the window in the building to let in the sounds of Marseille that the team had worked hard to block out.

Mohammed, at the time of my research, was in a position where he was taking one temporary job after another, and where many of his friends were leaving the neighborhood of Belsunce as rents continued to rise. He felt the character of his neighborhood changing, from one that had started out as being mostly culturally North African, something he identified with, to becoming increasingly filled with students and gentrifiers. He had recently ended a long-term relationship, and was facing a future different from the one he had long envisioned. His dream of walking his neighborhood and finding it empty and silent could be interpreted as manifesting his discomfort with these neighborhood shifts and his concerns about being alone.

The three dreamers might even agree, at least partially, with these anxiety-based interpretations of their dreams. But just because our interlocutors' models of interpretation may confirm certain models of a Western individualized subjectivity, or of an anxious one, does not mean that those models are able to tell a complete story of what these dreams do and how they were experienced. The pieces these interpretations leave out of the dreams, especially the sensory details, I suggest, make up an important part of the dreamt experience. I posit that dreams are not only important for the motifs they represent. Anxiety may give us part of the picture, but so might interobjectivity and intersubjective engagements. Rather than leaving the dreams at the level of symbolic interpretation and individual diagnosis, then, I ask how dreams might be a place where humans' material entanglements and intersubjective commitments can be seen and

worked out. How do people engage during sleep with the raw material worlds that surround them when they are awake? How does this evidence the ways they “be and become” in their changing worlds, and what possibilities for political engagement might be envisioned differently by thinking through this question?

I view the Marseillais dreams I outline here to be moments of opportunity to engage with these questions, even (and perhaps especially) if it moves us away from thinking through the seemingly straightforward effects of neoliberalism and late capitalism and towards other ways our interlocutors exist as subjects in the world. Just as Ortner worries that Jameson’s interpretation of the Bonaventure Hotel leaves too little room for resistance to the ways postmodernism recasts the human body, I am concerned that Ortner’s notion of subjectivity accounts for too little of subjects’ sensory experiences and imaginative engagements with the world around them. This is not to say that neoliberalism, late capitalism, or anxiety play no role in Marseillais dream-life—for surely they do—but rather argues that anthropological analysis, critique, and attention to detail may be capable of opening up other, complex modes of analysis about precisely what roles they play, and about what roles the material environment might play, too. I see these three Marseillais dreams as particularly strong pointers to that role.

So, given these problems, it is important to ask the following questions: what is it about the current moment, or experience of it, that Ortner (2006) and others believe anxiety so fully captures? What other concepts might also highlight this feature?

While I cannot be entirely certain, I believe that anxiety’s wide appeal in an era of neoliberalism may be based on its temporality. Anxiety is forward-looking, and resistance and other forms of political action generally require an envisioning of the

future and its alternatives. The process of envisioning the future is also extremely important when talking about Marseille's renewal projects and people's responses to them, as I have demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation. However, instead of thinking of this forward-looking reflection as characterized by anxiety—a posture which might indeed cast Marseille within the “oppositional” role that the urban planner Jerome used to define the city in Chapter 2, I prefer to think of this forward-looking in terms of anticipation.

Anticipation lacks some of the negativity and diagnostic pathology of anxiety, and allows room for feelings of hope, resistance, caution, or a simple wait-and-see attitude. At the same time, it does not preclude the political potential of envisioning the future. While anxiety categorizes the forward-thinking subject as pathological, anticipation simply notes her forethought, which may or may not have a sense of foreboding. Anticipation also allows for shifts in mood with the fluctuations of time and environment. Where anxiety troubles itself with the apocalyptic potential of the future, anticipation leaves itself more open-ended, allowing for the potential of the urban population to regain control of the city's shifts and push them in progressive directions (as in the reclaiming of some renewed buildings within the Euroméditerranée zone for squatting and social housing). For these reasons, and especially in light of the city's multiculturalism, I prefer anticipation as a way of describing Marseille's mood at the time of my fieldwork. Precisely the character of this anticipation still remains to be fleshed out, however. For assistance with that, I turn to Walter Benjamin and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

***Benjamin and the Optical Unconscious***



Mohammed, Nadia, and Jean-Marc's dreams all feature interactions with the city as a primary actant with which the dreamer is intersubjectively engaged (Latour 1993, 1995). In Nadia's dream, the urban environment changed gradually underneath her as she flew just above it, lost, wandering, unable to find her destination, but flying along pleasantly enough. In Jean-Marc's dream, the building on which he was working began to fall to ruins around him, plaster and concrete flying apart and hitting his body as he searched for whatever rupture was causing the decay. In Mohammed's dream, he wandered through his neighborhood, touching the material objects that make it up, hearing only the amplified sounds made by his own body as he searched for the other humans that take part in his everyday waking world and the comfort of the sounds they produce. In all three of these dreams, it is the material stuff of the city that formed the dreamer's counterpart, each dreamer feeling this matter through the sensory, visual, embodied, and tactile dimensions of dreamt life. This tactile, sensed stuff of the city defined the setting or backdrop of each dream, and the location itself was part of each dream's problematic.

In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin writes that, "the mode of human sense perception changes with humanity's entire mode of existence. The manner in which human sense perception is organized, the medium in which it is accomplished, is determined not only by nature but by historical circumstances as well" (Benjamin 1977:388). In the case of these dreams, Marseille's architectural renewal configures the dreamers' perceptions. Whether in the gleaming white, new buildings Nadia flew over, Jean-Marc's crumbling renovation juxtaposed with the historical Marseille neighborhood that surrounds it, or Mohammed's deep sense of

empty silence in the familiar landscape of his home turf, all three dreams feature a landscape where the shifts of renewal are the central indexed theme. How do we interpret the ways renewal swept into the unconscious of these three different subjects, altering the landscapes of their dreams simultaneously with altering the landscape of their neighborhoods?

Benjamin argues that the optical unconscious is a shared milieu, produced by the technological capabilities of film which change the way human vision is organized, enabling the human eye to see features it would previously have ignored:

With the close-up, space expands, with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject... Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye—if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man [sic]. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional section of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is a familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here, the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics just as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. [1977:402-403]

Benjamin's optical unconscious is like a sensory background with which the image can, after film, be more complexly interpreted. Although Benjamin's conceptualization refers to an initial moment of uncovering this new unconscious, his essay implies it is, once opened, a Pandora's box of the ocular. Once the human eye has envisaged the fluctuations of movement and scene that the camera enables, all vision is forever opened up. If film so changes our abilities to perceive, then how might perception shift in

circumstances where the architectural micro-landscape is remade in rapid-fire, where the processual features of landscape are constantly and violently laid bare?

The idea of movement also informs all three dreams' sets of imagery, as moving through architectural space is the motif in all three dreams. In Nadia's dream in particular, this moving through takes the form of flying, transcending the physically possible in a way that mimics the technical capabilities of film. The movements of the architectural landscape itself are also important, however, as when Jean-Marc felt the building fly apart against his body, and Mohammed moved objects within the material world around as he searched for other humans inhabiting his neighborhood landscape.

Interestingly, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin argues that architecture is subject to an aesthetic of distraction, rather than attention, contrasting it to the other forms of art he is discussing as changing with film's new ocularity (1977). However, the Marseille dreams show us that architecture may not always be taken in passively, and is certainly not so in Marseille's situation of architectural flux. To me, these dreams demonstrate that the bones and guts of architecture have been laid bare in the Marseille context, that rapid renewal has opened in the Marseillais population an awareness of the built environment's simultaneous fragility and potentiality. But how might this shared architectural optical unconscious in Marseille articulate with the city's overall mood? What might the optical unconscious do in translating out into action? Understanding Marseille's mood as one of anticipation, and these dreams as representing that mood, can help shed some light on these questions.

In Marseille, the three dreams I have discussed show an attention to the minute material, architectural details of renewal. More specifically, all three of the dreams

juxtapose renewed architecture with pieces of the city's remaining "traditional" landscape, forming a dreamt latticework between the new and unfinished and the long-standing traditional, gleaming white buildings interlaced with vegetable markets, the noisy neighborhood surrounding the clean lines and double-glazed windows of Jean-Marc's renewing building, Belsunce's construction scaffolding intermingled with old shops and grayed walk-ups. This juxtaposition points to a shared Marseillais optical unconscious that places the renewal process at the center of dreamlife, and makes dreamlife in Marseille an opportunity for the emergence of, in Latour and Yaneva's conceptualization, the "gun that makes all buildings move" (2008). In their essay on the subject, Latour and Yaneva oppose the problem of conceptualizing movement in architecture with Etienne Jules Marey's famous invention of a photographic "gun" that allowed him to capture the phases of the movement of a gull (2008), ordinarily too fast for the human eye to process and comprehend. Architecture's movements, for Latour and Yaneva, are opposite to this, nearly impossible to see and difficult to conceptualize because they are painstakingly slow, and produce at the end a finished building that masks the mobility of its production and use, seemingly arrested forever in time and space. But while this may be true on the level of the individual building, my work in Marseille suggests that the ability to see architectural mobility shifts when the single project with its single construction site is scaled up across an urban landscape. At the point when architectural revision simultaneously and quickly reaches far across a geography, seemingly all architecture can be seen in a new light, potentially as ephemeral as that found in a dream.

In Marseille's atmosphere of constant change, everyone is forever waiting for the next change to come about. In a walking tour, Mohammed described this to me best when he said, "I never know which building on my street will be the next to end up with scaffolding. It's a type of game to leave the house everyday, wondering whether any new buildings will have this. Whether any new neighbors will have arrived or old neighbors will have left. To read the paper and see what new plans are being announced that day."

Euroméditerranée is a large renewal project that has been redirecting traffic in Marseillais daily lives since 1995, and surrounds Mohammed's neighborhood on three sides. The scope of the project has recently expanded, meaning that this largest of Marseille's renewal efforts now alters the daily lives of even more people as they navigate their neighborhoods. Even for those not regularly touched by this particular renewal project, though, Marseille's collection of older housing stock, its rapidly changing real estate market, and its position as a city under development mark much of the urban downtown as a space in extreme flux, even more so than every space is always already in flux by virtue of being subject to the basic laws of temporality and existing as phenomenological places-in-the-making (Ingold 2000, Massumi 2002).

For Marseillais, then, their experience of their city is marked by this constant state of flux. They experience their city as alternately disintegrating around them—as indexed by the disrepair in the streets and in insalubrious old buildings, for example—and constantly subject to rebuilding. Rather than being marked by a sense of fixity, then, the urban environment is marked by its inconstancy. This is what leads to what I refer to as a mood of anticipation—a sense that one's approach to the present contains within it a

mode of attention to what comes next, and that the landscape is never cut off from this attention.

By “anticipation,” I do not index a sense of untarnished hope, although I would argue that hope is an important component of the overall anticipation present in Marseille—hope for the renewal projects to improve the economic situation of Marseille and potentially solve problems like the housing shortage and lack of jobs. But this hope is not the full story. Nor does anticipation index simple anxiety. Rather, anticipation is a temporal mode of waiting and seeing what comes next, of relative openness to the constant fact of change.

This anticipation came out in a variety of contexts, from the waiting for an appropriate apartment done by people on social housing wait-lists to the mood of the drivers with whom I sometimes rode along as we navigated the city, who would tell me that they didn’t know what route they would need to take because it would depend on new road closures and construction obstacles. It also came out in the discourses of artists, as they waited to hear information about the plans for the European Capital of Culture 2013 celebrations, one of whom told me, “I don’t know what they’ll do, precisely, for the Capital of Culture activities. Like anything in Marseille, it’s a question of waiting to see, for the moment, but I have hope that it will be open to all kinds of art, and a bit of worry over the ways it might not.” These kinds of mixed orientations to the future are well described with the word of anticipation.

But how does this anticipation matter in the way people interact with their environments and in their political orientations? A discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the flesh can help us to answer these questions.

### *Merleau-Ponty's Flesh*

In “The Visible and the Invisible,” Maurice Merleau-Ponty outlined a concept of the “flesh” as both the origin of thinking subjects and the realm in which they operate. For Merleau-Ponty, the flesh binds humans and the material world in which they live. This is best expressed for him in the idea that the body is both the sensate organ through which the world is experienced and a tangible object within it. This, for Merleau-Ponty, makes us need to rethink the typical division between subjects and objects, and to instead view them as part of the same system, which is what the flesh refers to. Writing of the body, he comments, “Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 133). Therefore, the body cannot be considered as separable from the world of objects, but is instead part of that world, part of the “flesh.” For Vivian Sobchak, this philosophical move grants a new possibility for ethics:

This overwhelming investment in and self-displacement in the ‘flesh’ of the world is an unselfish, radically decentered, and expansive self-interest. It is an incorporation that, through reaching toward or touching the material object that is other than oneself, seeks to actively grasp a concrete sense of how some of the world’s objects may also be subjects. That is, such passion seeks to grasp what it is to be not only an *objective subject* but also a *subjective object* whose intentionality and alterity can be sensed from without. (Sobchak 289-290).

In other words, for Sobchak, the idea of the flesh expands the number and forms of materiality that can be granted the status usually reserved for subjectivity, a status that in Western philosophical thought is most often limited to the human. Indeed, this limitation

to the human is implied in the conceptualization of subjectivity put forth by Ortner and discussed above, a move she sees as necessary in order to conceptualize the agency she sees as necessarily implied by political action.

Sobchak's notion of "reaching toward" also dovetails nicely with the notion of anticipation. Subjects in Marseille, when conceptualized as part of the city's flesh, are, through anticipation, attuned to shifts in the material environment and the calls of the material world. This is why I refer to the mood in Marseille as one of "fleshy anticipation."

I suggest this mood allows for a reconceptualization of political action that can be seen as coming out of the community of the material world extended to include both human and non-human actors/objects. This is especially the case in forms of political action that include nature or the environment as part of a collectivity needing valuation and protection, but also applies to forms of political action that extend quests for rights beyond those considered immediately part of a political constituency, including the (admittedly problematic) broad claims people make on behalf of a broadly-conceived "humanity." As Miriam Ticktin and Didier Fassin have shown, such claims often have difficulty in transcending the material inequalities between humans and fail to put those material inequalities at issue (*see* Feldman & Ticktin 2010).

Furthermore, however, notions of subjectivity that identify it as corresponding to a singular human belie an anthropocentrism that can be problematic for political activism. This is less true of the notion of the flesh, which values the humans as part of the material world, born from it, and continually embedded in it. In an article about the built environment and political violence, Martin Coward argues that the destruction of the built



environment can and should be seen as a form of political violence (2006). His case draws particularly on the case of the destruction of the Stari Most, or Old Bridge, in Mostar, in Bosnia Herzegovina in 1993. In this argument, he draws on the work of Croatian writer Slavenka Drakulic in her 1993 *Falling Down: A Mostar Bridge Elegy*, in which she compares a photograph of the banks of the river after the destruction of the bridge with a photograph of a Bosnian Muslim woman who had been killed by having her throat slit. Drakulic writes, “Perhaps it is because I see my own mortality in the collapse of the bridge, not in the death of the woman. We expect people to die. We count on our own lives to end . . . The bridge [however] was built to outlive us . . . it transcended our individual destiny. A dead woman is one of us – but the bridge is all of us” (1993:15).

In looking at this example, Coward points out that it necessitates a rethinking of an anthropocentrism “in which the activities of human beings are understood to be of paramount interest and engagements with the remainder of the world are construed solely in terms of the uses to which humans put their material context” (2006:421). Coward points out that, in recent conflicts, the destruction of the material built environment (what he calls “urbicide,” a concept he expands on in his 2008 book), has existed in a complex relationship with genocide and forms of violence against humans.

Certainly, a major problem for Marseille’s poor within the context of renewal is the ongoing destruction of social housing units even at a time when people wait for years on lists to get access to such units, and viewing this as a form of violence would better prioritize greater material equality as a goal of the French nation-state. I observed this practice occur repeatedly with a number of different high-rise developments, including

that which I described in Chapter 4, which the government was tearing down in the belief that such high-rises themselves create social problems through an architectural design scheme of high modernism that is now understood as misguided and outdated (Scott 1998). However, with most of these destructions, the number of HLM units in Marseille went down at the same time that the number of people needing them steadily increased. So how do the dreams I have analyzed here change when they are considered to reflect something about a transsubjective “flesh” instead of representing individual subjective anxiety?

For Nadia’s dream, her flying and feeling of being outside her body becomes more important. As she flies along above the city, she is not separated from the material concerns of her immediate responsibility, as she remembers that there is a need for someone to feed her children. At the same time, as the landscape changes to the gleaming white buildings below her, she says her flying is not unpleasant. Her flying flesh is thus a part of the landscape, a part of the changes that are going on underneath her, even if she is not certain where she ultimately will fit in. When analyzed this way, Nadia’s dream can be seen as one of a hopeful anticipation, something she acknowledges in her analysis when she talks about how the buildings she experienced in the dream seemed like those she hopes to eventually find a permanent home in. It is her connection to the architecture of the city that may be demonstrated in this dream, then, rather than her alienation from Marseille’s change. This echoes early analyses of immigration that challenged notions of *anomie* and emphasized the ability of migrants to quickly adapt to new urban circumstances.

Jean-Marc's dream can also be reinterpreted as one that privileges Marseille as a holistic urban space rather than one that can be simply worked around. In Jean-Marc's dream, the problems that occurred while he was in the building, being hit with flying debris, were eliminated from the moment he stepped outside. His walking around the block can be seen as an action that recenters the building under renewal as placed within the Marseillais landscape, rather than being separable from or somehow above the neighborhood in which it is situated. It is specifically the sound-proofing that is a problem for the building in Jean-Marc's dream. When Jean-Marc returns to the building to continue working after his walk, he throws open the windows so the noise of the Marseille street can be heard. At that point, there was only a bit of plaster out of place, evidence that the dream occurred, but not the catastrophe that happened when the building was approached as an entity set apart from the urban landscape and its character, as represented in "the sounds of urban downtown."

Mohammed's dream of Belsunce is perhaps a bit more of a stretch, but my interpretation of it within a conceptualization of Marseillais Merleau-Pontian flesh emphasizes that the material environment is a prerequisite, though not alone enough, for him to feel his belonging in his neighborhood. One way of looking at it is that Mohammed had to experience a wandering of the landscape, and to touch the material objects that make up the world, before the problem of its depopulation could be solved. As he picked up the silver teapot in the house wares shop, ran his hand across the carpets and blankets at other stalls, and pawed the books in the Alcazar library, his connection with the material environment of his neighborhood was able to reach a crescendo at which point the existence of other human subjects could be reaffirmed. The items

Mohammed touched and places he went were those he most identified with Belsunce as a Mediterranean or inclusively North African space, and their continued existence in the dreamworld could be seen as a site of hope for his continuing to belong there.

In all three cases, I would argue that the material environment sensed in each dream was not simply an impoverished field on which projections of internal conflict could operate or tropes of cultural values could take expressive shape. Rather, the objects, the landscape, and the architecture in the dreams can be seen as essential to the dream's "plots" or, as I prefer to conceptualize them, experiences.

The dreams can also be seen as expressing particular cultural values of each dreamer that come directly from their specific valuations of the material world. In the case of Nadia's dream, she spoke about the gleaming white buildings she flew over in the dream as a possible location for her future home, although this was not her only interpretation. This related back for her to the reasons she migrated to Marseille in the first place, and fit with the idea that the new areas being built in central Marseille might provide a place for belonging for her, her children, and those like her, who have been waiting a long time for the embracing arms of the state to offer social housing downtown. Alternately, she believed that Arabs might be considered dirty within all that gleaming white. The dream is thus not a pre-written script, but a site from which multiple interpretations are possible.

For Jean-Marc, his dream expressed a value he personally held as an architect that, whatever the renovations may bring, they would not change the character of Marseille as he envisions it. The dream expressed an ideal that the architectural projects on which he works can remain in harmony with the neighborhoods in which they are

situated. This may be a pipe dream, but it is a value that nonetheless can be seen within the dream, and that runs counter to many people's fears that the new buildings are a form of ethnic or social cleansing of the downtown area.

For Mohammed, the dream expressed the types of material objects he values in his neighborhood, the material backdrops that he sees as making it a friendly place for he and other North Africans to live. This included some long-standing sites—the market-stall styled stores, the small North African restaurants where people can eat, including the retired construction workers that were part of Marseille's first phase of post-war migration, who he refers to as the “little retirees.” But the sites he went to also included the Alcazar library, one of the major recent renovation projects in Marseille, and an area he thinks of as important to the community and particularly its children. Given this, his dream can be rather neatly read as reflecting the attitude of anticipation I suggest in this chapter. It does not take a stance on whether the renovations going on will permanently alter the character of Belsunce, on the one hand, or provide a better environment for its current residents. It shows Mohammed in the meantime, however, as tuned-in to the neighborhood, still part of Belsunce and with Belsunce still part of him, as he waits to see what comes next.

### ***Conclusion***

Although the particular cases I present in this chapter are based in experiences of dreaming that were made possible within a context of Marseille's urban reconfigurations, the approach I am advocating to understanding dreams that has possibilities for revealing beyond the Marseille case. This approach moves away from viewing dreaming as representing exclusively individual attitudes or problems that are separated from waking

life and understanding them as a potential locus of intersubjective and interobjective—and hence communal—expression.

If the collectivities needed for progressive politics are in fact made possible through sensory experiences, as I argued in Chapter 3, examining dreams as part and parcel of experience opens up a number of dimensions for the politics of the senses. Dreams' political potential has long been denied by approaches that emphasize the separation of the dreamer from the collective, intersubjective and interobjective relationships that dreams can index. Importantly, dreams are a qualitatively distinct type of experience in which dreamers are not confined to the materially possible. Precisely because of this, the sensations of dreaming allow a reconfiguration of the limitations of existing material worlds. As I have tried to show, however, this does not mean that dreamers are not materially engaged within their dreams. Attending to the particular configurations of that material engagement can demonstrate new, more open forms of intersubjectivity and interobjectivity, and new valuations of material engagements that are not experienced in waking life.

Expanding the concept of sensory anthropology to account for dreamt experience thus opens an important window into realms of aspiration, fantasy, and imagination in which people transcend the modes of confinement and limitation, which exert themselves in waking life. In addition to a collectivity in which to realize political aspirations, the process of achieving a progressive politics necessitates an imagining of a material world that is somehow different from that of everyday limitations. Dreamscapes can provide an opportunity for that process of imagination to occur. Scholars, however, are likely to miss that moment's potential if they insist on interpreting dreams for the anxious or

problematic content they might signal for the individual alone. Using a sensory approach to dreams that takes seriously the embodied sensation of dreams, dreamers' relationship to their lived material worlds, and their participation in a community opens a window on the progressive potentiality of dreaming, allowing dreamt experience to be redeployed for the attainment of progressive ideals.

## Conclusion

I sit at my table, reflecting on the experiences that have brought me to this moment. First, the experiences of writing: the physical cramping of my hands, aches in my knees, thighs, and back from sitting too long in the same position, cross-legged on the couch; the fatigue and exasperation of realizing that a particular articulation is inadequate; the butterflies of excitement at each new idea or particularly satisfying encounter with a theoretical text; the ghost headaches that remain as traces of countless migraines; the urgency and nerves of phone calls, online chats, and conversations with colleagues and friends testing out a potential approach; the overwhelming vastness of an empty page, newly-remembered or newly-significant experience in the field, or unexpected dream about Marseille; the nostalgia and longing for the city engendered by writing down each vignette.

Next, the experiences of fieldwork: the nerves of approaching an unfamiliar person or place or preparing for an important interview; the surprise of running into someone I knew or some scene on the street I could never have imagined; the grit in my face and eyes; the wind swirling around my body; the hassles of navigating bureaucracies I didn't understand; the easy camaraderie of an afternoon with someone I knew well; the emotional and embodied reach of attempting to experience the world as felt on someone else's skin; the width of the rifts this sometimes provoked; the comfort in the familiarity of my husband and dog at the end of a long day; the gratitude for other people's generosity of time, spirit and experience; the revulsion of garbage or other people's racism or any unkindness to interlocutors I considered close; the vulnerability of devoting



myself to comprehending another's perceptions or of walking home alone after a late night dinner; the confusion and sense of suspension when the project hit bumps in the road; the glow of a sunny afternoon coffee or vibrant dinner on the terrace with friends; the bustle of the Vieux Port or the streets of Belsunce; the grief as my fieldwork year came to an end.

Also, the experiences of graduate school: the constant immersive mood of inquisitive aspiration; the collegial comfort and intellectual challenge of discussing ideas with people who were passionate and smart; the weight of realizations of how much I will never know and things I will never get to; the embrace of an office where everyone worked separately but understood each other's similar tasks; the frustration of reading; the imaginative encounter of reading; the joy of having time to read and having so much to read in not enough time; the high of a funding or intellectual success; the support of a community.

Finally, one last set of experiences, of the idea of concluding at all: the sense of the uncanny provoked by conceptualizing any end to a project with which I have lived for so long; the aspirations that the work I have produced will be somehow adequate; the hopes for the potentiality of the project's contribution to a discipline, a literature, and a world. It is to this last experience, and particularly the strange temporality it invokes, that I now turn.

"Conclusion" is a word that undermines some of the arguments about temporality that I have presented in this dissertation: that time, like space, people, architecture, and materiality, is mobile and ongoing; that it is productive to avoid artificially bracketing experience into snapshots that disconnect them from their temporality; that imagining the

future can be both productive in its progressive political potential and disruptive of sensations of how time works. In light of all of these perspectives on time, I wish here to give the idea of “Conclusion” a different temporal sense. Rather than rearticulating the various arguments and individual analyses that make up each chapter and my overall argument, I instead would like to lay out my specific hopes for what this dissertation has accomplished and can accomplish. Then, in recognition that a project is like time in that it never really ends, I will also outline some potential directions this work raises for future research. Thus, instead of conclusions, I am going to talk about hopes, on the one hand, and plans, on the other.

### *Hopes*

This dissertation has examined the everyday experiences of renewal and urban change in Marseille from a variety of perspectives, and has focused specifically on experiences emanating from embodied and sensory engagements between people and material objects and environments within the world. My first hope is that I have provided my readers with a dynamic, true-to-experience, and evocative “sense of the city.” Performing that task for the specific contexts in which an anthropologist works is something that ethnography at its best is uniquely able to do—that is, able to do in a way that is different from other genres that might attempt to do the same thing. Unlike a novel, which produces an imagined context, or a film, which documents an imagined or real context by visually framing it and temporally fixing it, ethnography is faced with the task of bringing together a variety of actual experiences, reproducing them (usually primarily in text), and somehow, despite the ways this process might impoverish the

experiences as they were lived, rendering understandable their character, coherence, and significance.

However in the paragraph above, I highlighted also my hope that the Marseille presented here is evocative of a “sense of the city.” Early in the dissertation, I argued that Marseille as a city might be this project’s central character. Just as I have tried not to impoverish my interlocutors and undermine their complexity in my depictions of their lives, I hope that I have represented Marseille in all of its glorious and multi-faceted intricacy. I believe the specific emphasis I have placed on sensory encounters bolster this attempt—in recounts of sensory experience the city is rendered more vibrant, as a space that produces particular engagements and reactions. This is important for a number of different reasons, but the one most relevant here is that it makes ethnography more evocative by involving the bodies of readers with the ethnographic account.

A sensory perspective on urban renewal, which I understand as just one form of material environmental change, also deepens our understanding of the stakes of this process. Rather than focusing exclusively on those whose lives are most disrupted by urban renewal processes—like those whose residence location is changed because of renewal’s physical or economic effects—a sensory approach to understanding environmental change highlights that it has significant everyday impacts on a large proportion of city-dwellers, such as changing the routes they take through the city, altering the way particular neighborhoods feel, and reconfiguring the city’s architectural aesthetics on a broad scale. These impacts are felt in all temporal dimensions—in present experiences of navigating through a changing landscape, in disrupting the continuities

between remembered space and its current iterations, and in reconfiguring people's aspirations for themselves and their cities.

Although I have already argued, variously and widely, for sensation's importance within anthropology and within everyday life (waking and dreaming), another hope I have for this dissertation is that it demonstrates the political importance and potential of sensory experiences. These experiences are foundational, I have argued, in senses of belonging, in identifications people make with human and material others, in forming political collectivities, in rethinking a city or nation's economic strategies and potentials, in negotiating senses of national or transnational identity, and in imagining progressive futures. Sensory experiences also include experiences of material differences and inequalities between people, and can provide a potentially new frame for conceptualizing such inequalities. Furthermore, emphasizing sensory experience allows for understanding and demonstrating the multi-directionality of relations between humans, usually considered politically capable subjects, and material objects that surround them, too often conceptualized as inert.

I have no delusions that I have solved here the important and complicated questions of agency and what should politically count. I hope, however, that this dissertation has demonstrated that emphasizing the sensory dimensions of experience and the fundamental material basis of our everyday encounters generates moments and methods with which it is possible to rethink such conceptualizations. I believe that performing those rethinkings—especially by inquiring into the most radical and drastic conceptualizations of agency possible—is a political imperative in this moment. That is, humans are presently faced with increasing numbers and frequencies of environmental

catastrophe directly brought about by climate change. In light of this, it is past time for humans, for our own good, to acknowledge that potential solutions to such problems must involve a decentering of the human subject as the single being that counts most in the world. In the service of this aim, possibilities might be opened up if we either grant agency to everything, or alternately, conceive of an anti-anthropocentric politics in which agency is no longer central. Scholars have a major role to play in this process, and sensory approaches to scholarship may be able to illustrate the potentials and limitations of those positions. The concept of “ecology in motion,” may also have a place in such rethinkings, and I intend to continue to use, think about, and evaluate that approach.

I hope this dissertation has also made methodological strides within ethnography, both in general, and in work particularly about the senses. I have advocated for a mobile ethnographic approach both theoretically and methodologically, which stands on the shoulders of a number of other works within the subfield of sensory anthropology and draws on a culturally and historically sensitive phenomenology. I believe this method enables anthropology to answer certain fundamental disciplinary questions differently. These questions include, for example, what varieties exist in modes of interacting with the material world? How do we capture experiences of the ephemeral? How does ethnography overcome its temporal barriers? How do people variously value material environments around the world? I also believe there are interesting methodological contributions made in this dissertation through some of its specific methods. These include the walking tours approach I designed, the reliance on soundscapes and using them to elicit further reflection in interviews, the approach I take to dreams, and also,

potentially the uses of GIS, including GIS data I have already collected but not examined in depth in this dissertation.

I also hope that this dissertation has highlighted intersubjectivity and interobjectivity, their critical importance to anthropology and other dimensions of human experience, and the challenges, potentials, and limitations to studying these dimensions of experience or using them as methods to study anything else. I hope to have shown how important it is to reach and reach, ever further, to understand how other humans and other creatures might experience the world, not only through their eyes, but in their ears, noses, bellies, arms, and on their skins. I also acknowledge, however, that fully eclipsing the spaces between human bodies is not possible. I advocate that anthropology nonetheless continue to try, and to conclude from such experiments whatever we can, even when those conclusions are tentative, partial, or preliminary.

### *Plans*

In this section, I will briefly sketch out some of the potential plans and possibilities for future research that this project has raised, based on its specific findings. These include both projects that are specifically located in the world and more general anthropological questions for which we do not yet have full answers. It in no way encompasses, however, all such directions and potentialities. I divide the specifics I do discuss based on a number of broad themes. These are just a few of many potential future research projects stemming from this dissertation and the particular sets of issues it raises and methodologies it employs. They do, however, represent generative sites of inquiry that build on the currently presented research.

*Marseille:*

The renewal projects ongoing in Marseille raise a number of important questions, but as of yet, they have not provided the answers. It remains to be seen how the renewal projects that are going on there will shift the landscape, the urban aesthetics, the city's economy, its position within France, Europe, or the Mediterranean region, its political corruption, its reputation or its demographics. It will certainly be interesting to track how these projects evolve, and how Marseillais attitudes about these projects shift as they continue to exert influence on the city. However, it is equally important to remember that all of these features of urban life, and who counts as Marseillais over time, are constantly shifting anyway. It may be difficult to measure what ultimate effects the renewal projects have.

*Architecture:*

One of the major findings of my research in Marseille is that architects and urban planners, although there is a great deal of diversity within their ranks, have been inadequately conceptualized within anthropology, and especially within studies of cities, materiality, and urban renewal. Architects and planners have a job that is characterized by a particular temporal dimension and approach. While most (perhaps all) architectural and planning projects are designed to respond to the particular needs of a place, a population, and a landscape, architecture makes a major and long-term intervention on a landscape. Architects and urban planners are thus constantly imagining a future, whether it is one they bring into development or a potential one they ultimately shift or discard. Although some of the anthropological literature conceptualizes planners and architects as potentially megalomaniacal social engineers, in my experience their imaginings usually take place within a framework of hope—that they will be chosen to carry out the projects

in which they invest their time, that such projects ultimately are functional and beautiful, and that (at least among French planners and architects) whatever projects they complete will do genuine social good in some way, although their visions of that good are diverse. Architecture is also in the midst of some important transformations, especially in terms of sustainability and its own ecological approach and in terms of the technological tools available to complete architectural and planning tasks. Closer attention to architecture and planning processes therefore has some interesting potentials for anthropology, and is an object worthy of further study.

*Environment:*

This study suggests that we take broader account of materiality and the environment, and I have pointed to some features of the environment globally that necessitate that we do so. But anthropology has only a limited number of accounts of how people are responding to environmental shifts. I think it would be especially enlightening for both political and sensory anthropology to consider how people imagine, use, and relate to the material environment differently after environmental catastrophes, and how architects and planners in particular respond to such events. Although anthropology has accounts of humanitarian interventions of various kinds, we do not yet have accounts of architectural humanitarianism.

*Other Mediterranean Cities and Sites:*

This dissertation goes into some depth about the ways that the Mediterranean—as region and Sea—gets imagined and deployed within specific Marseillais projects, discourses, and socialities. I have, in a limited way, also sketched out how that might relate to other discourses about the Mediterranean at the national and European level and



in academic and popular culture. However, one potential issue raised by this dissertation is how the Mediterranean might be imagined differently in other Mediterranean settings, including other Mediterranean port cities. It would be productive to use this dissertation in a comparative way with other Mediterranean cities, especially reversing coasts once again to consider how the post-colonial relationships with Europe are reconfiguring such environments in light of transnational European and Mediterranean cooperation. One particular place of interest is Algeria, which, following years of post-colonial conflict, has one of the most generally unaffordable housing markets in the world, exploring the question of how their sense of the Mediterranean region reconfigure housing expectations and understandings of the problem. issues of housing alongside conceptualizations of the Mediterranean as a region.

### *Last Thoughts*

The single biggest intervention I have tried to make in this work is into the field of the politics of the senses. The importance and potentials of a sensory approach to understanding the politics of everyday life, and to devoting more attention to thinking through the politics of sensory life, should not be underemphasized. Ultimately, my hope is that this work has adequately demonstrated the ways that such approaches can be generative. Rather than relegating the aesthetic dimensions of human experiences to the realm of the politically neutered, scholars should work to understand the ways that their political potentiality might reconfigure understandings of experience more broadly, including conceptualizations of how particular objects, experiences, and people come to be valued.

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