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– ON URBAN RE-ARRANGEMENTS: A Suite in Five Movements

THE RE-ARRANGEMENTS COLLECTIVE

Abstract

This movement introduces the ethos of the collective project: its conceptual and practical preoccupations. It focuses on our concern with urban processes on the cusp of change, in the midst of being re-arranged, and thus homes in on the various polyrhythms of intersections, how things come together and diverge, how possibilities open and close in urban contexts of continuously shifting horizons.

Pandemic incentives

During this recent prolonged time of pandemic, the Urban Institute at the University of Sheffield curated a monthly series of discussions with some two dozen colleagues working in urban labs across the global South. These discussions, known as the *Convocation*, were wide-ranging and free-wheeling, conducted not in pursuit of a specific agenda but rather to create an atmosphere of mutual care during a time of protracted professional and personal challenges. One theme or issue that was repeatedly raised by participants centered on all of the *re-arrangements* taking place across their respective urban landscapes.

The re-arrangements invoked did not so much concern the recalibrations or disjuncture of relations within territories, constituencies, states, social institutions, provisioning and regulatory systems. Rather, participants referred to re-arrangements within arrangements, within the plethora of constellations of collective enactment that cannot quite be subsumed under the categories of household, institution and network, or processes of contractual obligation, governmental responsibility and familial reciprocity. While arrangements may incorporate bits and pieces of familiar contextual categories and relational processes, they most frequently circumvent clear definition and are held together, at least provisionally, through a range of artefacts, actors, affects and terrains.

Additionally, while the administration of particular functions is normatively assigned to specific sectors and bureaucratic formations, the actual performance of work is often done elsewhere, in the interstices between formal operations. To trace the management of materials and processes—such as mineral extraction (Movement 2), global health initiatives (Movement 5) or property titling (Movement 3)—entails an intricate architecture of daily itineraries, procedures, instruments, roles, locations, discourses and rituals arranged in shifting choreographies, as the implementation of each intersecting component generates its own unexpected or predictable outcomes in varying proportions. Here, word of mouth, formal and informal mediations, non-attention, spectacular interventions, official protocols and off-the-grid tinkering might all combine to shape what counts as ‘ethical’ minerals, or what global health looks like in underserved neighborhoods, just as these various activities might also barely connect. So often, what is accomplished is both nothing and everything depending upon how the arrangements are framed, how far the boundaries and lines of connection are drawn, what is considered relevant or not. Specifications, then, of how various tasks actually get done in a particular place by particular people—beyond job descriptions and official accounts—are an integral aspect of urban politics.

Given the intensifying scrutiny of social fields, the curtailment of everyday mobilities, and the sometimes expanded terrain of surveillance exercised by different regulatory and service agencies, *Convocation* members said what became visible was the diffusion of *makeshift* residential situations, economic complementarities, operating procedures and social conventions that alternately functioned alongside, tangentially and in parallel with more institutionalized social contexts. What had until now functioned both formally and in the popular vernacular as the relied-upon institutional and territorial designations and their operations proved to be woefully insufficient. Insufficient to understanding the everyday spatial and social practices that now seem to regulate livelihood formations, infrastructures of care, the dissemination of knowledge and the common assumptions and ‘rules’ through which a plurality of urban behaviors is mediated and modulated.

Additionally, such arrangements sometimes become visible only as they shift over time, when their *stagecraft* becomes apparent: the taking-to-the-stage of specific constellations of brokerage, mutual attentiveness, provisional rules and collaborative practice; conditions that were intensified during the pandemic. Like the governance systems of migrant hostels, for example, when they are no longer supported by the subsidies and salaries paid out by formal employers and then have to be kept afloat—along with their residents—by working out new arrangements of resources, social connections, livelihoods and social identities. Place-based arrangements may be converted into more transversal collaborations—such as those described in Movement 3—with the dismantling of an official migrant ‘welcome’ center in Paris and the subsequent pivot to street-based distributions of food and clothing to migrants led by grassroots solidarity initiatives. Elsewhere, household functions may be redistributed across multiple locations, where a single address serves more the pragmatic function of having an address than representing a coherent household unit. The operations within local markets might shift from specific jobs being the purview of particular identities to a proportion of all jobs being allocated to a cross-section of identities.

Beyond these adjustments in extraordinary times is the sense that the arrangements of particular concern to the *Convocation* always exist on the cusp of re-arrangement. In other words, that their particular shapes and operations assume particular forms and conventions that enable and prepare them for a wide range of shapeshifting adjustments; that they instantiate a mode of temporariness as a default position. Certain arrangements may hold in place, may provide stability and care for the time being. But then surrounding conditions may change, and participants may grow increasingly anxious as to whether they are missing something important; when the work necessary to keep things together isn’t worth whatever the arrangement provides.

This is a situation where arrangements do not only exist to respond to present conditions and anticipate future ones; it is one where they already ‘know’ that the complex of everyday life, no matter how habitual and ensconced in predictable rituals of management, is altered through its repetition. Here, the volatility of urban conditions requires both the sedimentation of learned responses, durable ties and practices *and* readily mutable, mobile consolidations of alliances and collective problem-solving. As such, re-arrangements are not only a matter of space but of time as well. It is a process of living *through and with* conditions that simultaneously prolong and alter a polyrhythmic response system where the protocols of living can be both enduringly unchanging and incessantly different.

Arrangements or assemblages

At first sight, these notions of arrangements might seem like a reiteration of those of assemblage that have been well established in urban analysis over the past two decades. Our collective work has not been overly concerned with focusing on the salience of conceptual distinctions or overlaps; the focus has been to emphasize the interplay of constellations, practices, compacts and affect in engendering particular

forms of responsiveness and maneuver rather than thinking about overarching forms of urban organization. That said, we draw upon two seminal articles by Ian Buchanan (2015; 2017) that attempt to re-anchor assemblage theory within the ambit of arrangements, particularly as a closer translation of what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explicitly referred to as *agencement*.

Within urban studies, assemblages are largely seen as a ‘gathering of heterogeneous elements consistently drawn together as an identifiable terrain of action and debate ... [that include] arrangements of humans, materials, technologies, organizations, techniques, procedures, norms, and events, all of which have the capacity for agency within and beyond the assemblage’ (Baker and McGuirk, 2017: 4). For Buchanan, however, the assemblage is less a ‘thing’, less a gathering, than a series of *conceptual propositions* for how to operate at the intersection of various multiplicities which are also always eluding one another. They are multiple and simultaneous enunciations responding to each other and momentarily re-making a field of operations to accommodate this mutuality. By implication this entails multiple (re)adjustments among clearly designated and recognized institutions, ways of speaking, and the incipient potentialities of each of these things to deliver different formats and perspectives. To put it more simply, *agencement* is a curation of collective responsiveness coming from the world to a changing world which is, in part, changed by the very ways in which it is being responded to.

Often viewed as the actualizations of virtual causes or immanent processes, Buchanan insists that the causative force of the assemblage rests in the details, the very bits and pieces of the materials and discourses themselves that converge, and which are *retrospectively* mapped as the virtual. The assemblage is a formation that structures. It is something complete in and of itself that instigates a diagramming of a field of relations. As Buchanan puts it:

the assemblage is the productive intersection of a form of content (actions, bodies and things) and a form of expression (affects, words and ideas). The form of content and the form of expression are independent of each other—their relationship is one of reciprocal presupposition (one implies and demands the other but does not cause or refer to it, for example a sunset is an array of colors produced by the diffraction of light, but this does not cause us to see it as beautiful or melancholic; by the same token, our concepts of beauty and melancholy do not compel us to apprehend sunsets in this way) (Buchanan, 2015: 390).

If the household, for example, is considered as an assemblage, it is an *idea* about structuring a field, a crystallization and conveyance of desire, a means of assembling the resourcefulness and salience of its endurance and reproduction, a diagram for affecting relations beyond itself—such as in a workplace or a community. It is an ongoing reference and solution to generalized problems across contexts, becoming, for example, refuge, model, breeding ground, counterpoint or place of accountability. While the household may manifest itself in different ways, it cannot just become anything; there are defined limits. In contrast, arrangements concern continuous alignments, adaptations and improvisations, which may take elements and practices from all over the place.

Confirming the philosophical orientation of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of *agencements*, then, permits greater latitude and flexibility in terms of thinking about arrangements. While keeping a more delimited notion of assemblages in the *background*, it is possible to think through their implications, after-effects and spillovers, rather than attempting to adhere to a specific method of application. As such, it becomes useful to ask not just how one may know an arrangement, but also what are the elements that may be curated into one. The texts of the collective gathered into this intervention attend to

these two prompts by thinking about the types of holds that may intervene in a particular place and time to, for instance, give form to externally desired conditions (Movement 2), compel movement and the accumulation of workable knowledge among fractured urban populations (Movement 3), impel specific modalities of sensory attunements (Movement 5), or make an event into a collective trigger of people's experience of the past (Movement 4).

The intervention's four main movements approach arrangements in different ways. In some instances, arrangements appear as 'things'. Indeed, there are things: things which are composites, brought together by multiple forces but which acquire discernible form; things that act as platforms, stabilities, with real material elements and effects. At other times, arrangements trace (more or less linear) paths. Or they act as surrounds, as relational fields that thicken or dissipate. Movement 4 most explicitly addresses arrangements as events and durations. Arrangements do not stand outside of these things as much as they work (and emerge) through them. The collective uses arrangements as a lens for connecting different lines of action between the inside and the outside; moving across these lines as a means of navigating with different senses, putting together specific kinds of forms that settle, for the moment, the ways in which different forces and entities will relate, what they will do with and for each other, and how they move on. It is these interactions between sensing, forming, navigating and timing that make up the specific modalities of re-arrangement here.

When participants from the *Convocation* pointed to the importance of re-arrangements in their discussions, they weren't pointing to the insufficiencies of households, neighborhoods or institutions—no matter how insufficient they might be on so many levels. Rather, they pointed to modes of responsiveness that seemed to come from undetectable locales or from geographies and circuits that they never knew existed even as they may have lived in their midst. Something else was inhabiting urban spaces that perhaps was there all along, that seemed to alter its guise as soon as one attempted to put one's finger on it, but which nevertheless made itself manifest, sometimes through the repurposing of the familiar—a newfound busy-ness of dormant streets, or a fortuitous alignment of once submerged practices or sensibilities that borrow each other's cover and emerge, at least temporarily, out into the open.

Holding arrangements

As indicated, re-arrangements are a matter of time, of navigating the oscillations between stability and improvisation, the immediacy of adjustment and long-range calculation. The arrangement is a particular kind of 'hold' that both mimics and alters more familiar institutional forms. Arrangements not only take hold for varying durations, but also take *hold of*. They are where people find themselves in the *hold*. Seized, lured, secured: methods of being folded into some scheme, agenda or debt. They are held up (interdicted), slowed down—as a means of scrutinizing, assuring, benchmarking or sorting. They are made available for certain kinds of labor, referencing and evaluation. As such, there are many holds: the home, factory, bar, church, mosque, club, mall, office, prison. Each with its own language, affects, eligibility and affordances. People have to move across different holds, and the circulation itself brings different problematics, energies and resources into each hold, potentially destabilizing them at the same time.

Of course, any such version of the hold cannot help but return us to the hold of the slave ship, which for both Édouard Glissant (1997) and Christina Sharpe (2016) not only points to the abyss and the technique of immobilizing and eviscerating subjects in the interest of imbricating them as constitutive elements of the plantation, but in doing so, engenders a cruel birth. A cruel birth of a fraught collective without the means to negotiate a sense of commonality beyond the terms that have been applied to diminish them (providing they have not perished along the way, either through debilitating illness or by jumping ship). What emerges from this act of dispossession is a sense not simply of

being ‘in the same boat’, but of a mutual making of a ‘boat’ that will take them forward beyond any destination specified by their capture. Simone Browne (2015) has extended this discussion to encompass pervasive architectures of surveillance and scrutiny.

No matter how brutal, the need to be ‘held’ is an ambiguous position (Philip, 1997). The rhythmic oscillations between intimacy and interdiction, of being visibly supported, demonstrated, and being ‘kept away’ from potential harm. Holding that addresses the vulnerability of a person as vulnerability to capture, and the creation of overdependence. To have a hold placed on your ‘account’—on your ability to develop an open-ended narrative for ‘your story’. Holding is not only consolidation, not only the gathering up of bodies and things into a machine that maximizes the resources and energies of those gathered. It can also operate as a *baseline* from which only one direction forward is possible. The desire to be (a)part of something, to attain or acquire, submits to a pause in the action, in the incessant negotiating, contesting, detouring processes of moving on. You want to exercise a sense of autonomy? Ok, go ahead and acquire land or a house. But acquisition is also something that needs to be held, secured, defined, distinguished, and is linked to a dependency on all of the procedures that will register this ‘autonomy’. You want to participate in a collective appeal to forces beyond your direct control or discernment? Ok, join the church. But be prepared to have the expressions of your faith scrutinized any which way but loose.

Holds are not only matters of institutions, contracts or even social compacts, but expressions of the connections already present in-between dozens of micro-plans issued daily. They are connections that seem to indicate that a commoning was there, already in place: a shared project or atmosphere that was *already* in-the-making. The capacity for that atmosphere of plans to move forward, to arrange things at a minimum degree of shared orientation, is the indication of a sense of direction, a *propulsion*, an aspired state that is not and cannot be reduced to any of its component parts or temporalities, or any of their rationales, but which is nonetheless of their making, of their becoming. It is the way in which people’s actions are enjoined in ways that either have too many plausible explanations or none at all. They sense that things are moving in a particular direction, and that sense holds them together; not as a team or organization or neighborhood, but as a collective force nonetheless.

The capacity of persons to get by, cooperate, and sometimes act in concert requires them to live as if they were always, at the same time, living somewhere else. Migrants in Paris, popular majorities in Abidjan, diaspora returnees to Mogadishu and even mineral traders in Congo are all compelled to build tactical alliances with differently situated persons so as to navigate urban anonymity, hedge against uncertainty, and share knowledge about where and how arrangements can be made or un-made (Movement 2). In attending to navigation as a response to the holds of contextual arrangements, the point is not to valorize movement as a necessity, but rather, to read it for the possibilities it intensifies when one is facing the unknown. In this way, the interface between the concrete empirical status of people’s identifiable location, their modes and practices of dwelling *and* the ways their lives cut across territories, times and recognitions of all kinds—the *what might be taking place*—is a matter of the rhythms of opening and closing; all the different modulations of exposure a door provides with its hinges. For all holds are *incomplete*, dependent as they are on marking the difference of an ‘other’, something outside themselves. They are always subject to re-arrangement.

One might think of the dilemmas of Walter Benjamin’s (1968) notion of *now-time*, which he wrestled with in his ‘dialectics of the standstill’. That somehow the continuous unfolding of possibilities could only come together in the interruption of temporalities speeding ahead, fading behind, circling back and veering off. Where they all converged ‘in the now’: something extracted from a background of both endless possibilities and deterministic constraints. For the history of that moment is unprecedented and cannot be reduced to a repetition. Whatever has constituted that moment is fully within it,

in a way not dissimilar to being ‘in the groove’—something that requires a ‘router’ to demarcate and materialize a specific territory, but which remains fundamentally unsettled and loose.

To be ‘in the now’ is a long way from being ‘in the know’, as things are coming at you from all directions. It is a process where different *baselines* are at work, the propulsive rhythms, reverberations, undertow and underpinning of more lateral relations. All of the tricks, deals, improvisations, adjustments and repurposing that goes into making these holds work (even if not necessarily in the same key as the one in which they were designed). Likewise, the importance of acoustic and affective registers, of things feeling each other out, as well as senses of foreboding, mystery and excitement. The timing of these holds—albeit fleeting—may impart the ability to detect patterns, craft solutions or make calculations that may provide some restraint against the changing circumstances of the changing present. We are saying that *in time* the coalescing forms, emergent affects and calculable means of maneuver are some of the ways through which we may come to know the contours of the arrangements in which we find ourselves.

But perhaps a ‘now’ is increasingly put on hold; or rather, the ability to get hold of things in the now acts to destabilize the very notion of the ‘hold’. For all of the George Floyds held down; for all of the lives put on hold; for all of those desperate callers needing medical treatment put on hold; and for all of those epidemiological procedures unable to really hold the virus at bay; the sense of being ‘in’ anything—dependent as it is on a demarcation or bordering—increasingly does not hold. If a large volume of everyday transactions seems to obscure geography, where anyone can seem to reach anywhere, and if the configuration of supposedly safe operational spaces or spaces of domestication prove increasingly to be traps overrun with indebtedness, toxic intimacies, contagion and excessive obligation, it becomes increasingly difficult to imagine an arrangement capable of holding things together, aside from larger measures of coercion.

Another way to consider this is that the biopolitics of the urban has legitimated control on the basis of securing the prolongation of life and separating out the individual from the social body in terms of ensuring the freedom of an individual to pursue that which maximizes their value and endurance (Lemke, 2011). But perhaps instead of life ‘coming first’, relegating the technicities of the urban to the service of enhancing the capacities of that life, it is more important to emphasize the enduring fragility of life, whose every impetus toward coherence or integral form is interrupted by the very artifice that is relied upon in order to engineer such coherence. Here, life is conceived as something all over the place, constantly vulnerable to forces and interruptions beyond its control, where every endeavor to attain a measure of control relies upon ‘artificial means’ that simultaneously defer entropy but open up new forms of exposure to unanticipated conditions of vulnerability (Colebrook, 2019).

Life is by ‘nature’, then, always bordering on its dissipation, such that the enactment of liveliness seeks less to prolong itself than to express itself, and the expression is always a risk, a potential transgression of the very conditions of its possible prolongation. In such a formulation of life, the necropolitical instrumentalization of death and failure diminishes as a form of power, as life is indifferent to its repetition; or rather, the repetition results in something unrecognizable yet occupiable nevertheless (Moten, 2018).

Re-arrangements, as a means of navigating the incommensurable and the excessive, thus correspond with the sense that the liveliness of the urban does not rest with its disciplinary apparatuses or statutory provisioning, its biopolitics or sanitary regimes. Rather, it rests with its ‘inoperativity’—all of the details of technical operations (including scripts, rehearsals, role plays, deceptions, gestures, movements and transactions of varying rhythms) and mediums that do not constitute labor or produce anything specific. All of these artifices are less representative of self-projects

than an apportioning of selves and bodies to and with each other in ways beyond the calculation of proportionate value.

Approaching re-arrangements

Given the importance attributed by the *Convocation* to this notion of re-arrangements, the Urban Institute embarked upon an initiative to carefully think about and through re-arrangements. Over a period of several months and in multiple workshops, a dedicated group of young scholars has been mobilized to study re-arrangements, and this ensemble of essays represents the collective effort to say something useful about them. Importantly, the collective has been designed with a majority non-white composition so as to pursue more expansive and politically incisive epistemologies.

Through a series of collective discussions, we organized ourselves into several working groups to pursue specific themes created in order to facilitate a process of collective writing in a way that best resonated with our own work and interests. The texts written by these sub-groups were then discussed and refined by the full collective. This introduction has presented some of the issues, quandaries and possibilities we reflected on in our discussions as a way of foregrounding the collaborative work being introduced here. Given that arrangements and their inherent instability/mutability cannot easily be traced or mapped, let alone grasped as complete, singular entities, the essays that follow propose different points of entry into unfolding fields of relationality. These points of entry will be partially recognizable as geographical locations: those where our research is grounded; where the arrangements that concern us ‘land’ or unfurl in particular ways.

Fabien Conte has been researching the social and political (re)arrangements that have historically given life to local radio as an urban infrastructure in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, and in turn, how radio practices can re-animate loose arrangements of cohabitation within the fractures of political violence. Kavita Ramakrishnan has explored migrant navigations of Paris, the infrastructures of care enacted by migrant solidarity collectives, and their re-arrangements amidst a racialized border regime. Ajmal Hussain interrogates the hold of regimes of race relations in the UK’s second city—Birmingham—that have been made and re-made over the past half century and more, through a range of accommodations and contestations between marginalized groups and institutions. Muslims, as the contemporary *other*, negotiate citizenship in an atmosphere of biopolitical control, within which they work out sensibilities for inhabiting the city and how to *jive* with temporalities that propel them as the (new) vanguard of a re-arranged politics of difference in the city.

Alana Osbourne visits technocratic and bureaucratic spaces in Brussels, more specifically the buildings of the European Union and the ongoing national parliamentary commission on Belgium’s colonial past. These bureaucratic settings are permeated by affects that generate sensory fields of engagement with temporal, racial and legal re-arrangements. Rike Sitas—straddling scholarship and creative practice—is fascinated by the role of art, culture and heritage in urban justice, paying particular attention to the affective and aesthetic politics of re-arrangement and artistic urban research predominantly in Cape Town. If colonial and apartheid projects were socio-cultural in their formations, perhaps imaginative responses can also play a part in their undoing? Surer Mohamed investigates the ways in which land is made available and managed through the enduring conflicts in Mogadishu. Adeem Suhail has long been engaged in the ways in which authority and rule are shaped in one of Karachi’s most contentious districts, where people, places and objects tend to get caught within complex arrangements of contradictory desires that leave them bent, brittle and broken.

Timo Makori investigates the dynamics of labor and wageless life in the artisanal mines in the eastern and southern provinces of eastern Congo as mediated and historically formed by processes of accumulation and dispossession at both the national and global levels. Francesca Pilo' has explored electricity infrastructural change in Rio de Janeiro's favelas as a re-ordering process through which the state and market actors attempt to re-define norms of belonging in the urban community, and how technology and objects play a central role in re-arranging these infrastructural relationships.

In the convivial cauldron of collaborative writing, individual field sites and projects have given way to resonances and crystallizations, amongst other forms of mutual inspiration. Importantly, our conversations over the course of a few months centered on an ethics of care in our thinking and writing together, demonstrating other modes of creating community within the academy (Nagar, 2014). From these conversations emerged four thresholds of mutual concern, four shared threads of interrogation through which we, as a collective, approach the ever-elusive mess of arrangements, namely: *form*, *navigations*, *temporalities* and *sensibilities*. Each of these threads structures a co-authored essay, in which individual voices have not been completely dissolved, but hybridized, as we all pooled and wove together our sometimes dissonant, variously disciplined conceptual vocabularies. The result is not intended to be seamless, and certainly not definitive. Like arrangements themselves, the essays are broken holds, points of arrival that are already points of departure, both for ourselves as urban thinkers and, hopefully, for the reader.

In the second movement looking at *form*, Makori, Pilo' and Conte take their cue from Bernard Stiegler's (2011) notion of an arrangement as a tendency toward the perpetual composition of elements, in spite of the inherent opposition that exists in its formation. Building on this theoretical formulation we attend to the actually-existing dynamics in our diverse field sites encompassing artisanal mining supply chains in eastern Congo, electricity provision in Rio de Janeiro's favelas, and local broadcasting in the *quartiers précaires* of Abidjan. What we collectively glean from these sites is an enactment of (re)arrangements as projects of formalization that seek to impose and even fix a form to spaces historically constructed as marginal. This impositional arrangement operates as a governmental desire to fix a form by re-signifying both subjects and spaces.

Re-signification as a process happens in three articulated ways. First, by designating a particular model as the ideal form of being a subject; second, by containing the mutability of alternative forms of the arrangement; and finally, by replacing the previous human and non-human intermediaries in order to maintain the new form of the arrangement. Despite these strangulating attempts to determine arrangements, to give them form and shape, the failure to maintain such form is visible in all our cases and shows that processes of formalization are always incomplete. This incompleteness fuels the continuous governmental compulsion to improve projects of formalization, which materializes in arrangements as attempts to extend the mechanisms of the state and the market. Yet their failure also makes clear the impossibility of foreclosing all room for maneuver, which remains a defining feature of marginal spaces.

In the third movement on *navigations*, Ramakrishnan, Mohamed and Conte examine how (re)arrangements are made and reworked as people navigate fractured, ever-shifting landscapes of urban opportunity, conflict and uncertainty. Drawing on fieldwork in Paris, Mogadishu and Abidjan, we point to the fragile, collective and anticipatory knowledges accumulated during navigations, and to how these knowledges become contained within and (re)constitute embodied archives. Amidst violent processes of dispossession and disarticulation, 'finding one's way' involves three modalities that constantly draw and build upon embodied archives: *choreography*, or

how bodies and shared knowledges act in concert; *calculation*, or the continual finessing of stored knowledges through re/un/learning; and finally, *absence/presence*, or the strategic decision-making about when to seek out visibility. Ultimately, individual and collective navigations reveal the entanglements between bodies, institutions, collectivities and urban space, and point to openings in which individuals can challenge pre-scripted futures.

In the fourth movement on *temporalities*, Suhail, Osbourne, Sitas and Hussain explore the temporal relationship between arrangements and re-arrangements, addressing the question of how an obdurate and ‘sticky’ temporal order may give way to palpable re-arrangement of the ways in which subjects experience time. Eschewing a concern with linear homogenous time, it addresses the processes of re-arrangement by understanding the dynamics of grave events, hauntings of the past, subtly changing rhythms of everyday life, and the force of potential futures in synchrony. Specifically, it interrogates temporal re-arrangements effected across the world by the murder of two figures that echo across time and space: Patrice Lumumba of Congo in 1961, and George Floyd in the USA in 2020. The article addresses how these two events bring into temporal proximity spatially disparate locations from across the world. In doing so, it addresses the re-arrangement of time as it becomes palpable in Lubumbashi, Cape Town, Brussels, Karachi, Birmingham UK, Minneapolis and Atlanta. In thinking through the temporality of a re-arrangement, we pay particular attention to the textures of time: its granular and experiential dimensions which mark the phenomenological aspects of a re-arrangement.

In the fifth movement on *sensibilities*, Osbourne, Sitas, Suhail, Hussain and Conte ask whether thinking with re-arrangements can help us account for that which is hidden, unseen or nested in the recesses and folds of urban practices. And if so, how we might then talk about and account for elusive parts of an arrangement that both exert an influence and are influenced. The essay uses sensibilities as an entry point into the intangible interactions between subjects and (re)arrangements. It is concerned with the ways in which the embodied and spatialized ricochet off each other in relational ways—attending to the ‘roiling maelstroms of affect’ described by Nigel Thrift (2008). Although they shape the ways in which we approach the world, the elusiveness of sensibilities makes them hard to work with; they emerge from muddled, imprecise spaces and moments to structure life in cities such as Birmingham UK, Brussels, Karachi, Abidjan and Cape Town.

Focusing on these five cities, and using the rich concepts of affect, aspirations, sensoria, atmospheres and ‘atmotechnics’, we sketch out some of the questions concerning positionality and atmospheric or affective agency within shifting and antagonistic urban constellations. Because sensibilities are embroiled in what we think of as gut reactions, intuitions, feelings, and the ways in which our senses and sensibilities have been cajoled into shape, we place the sense-able subject at the heart of our investigations. It is the subject’s body that is at one and the same time permeated by the forces that influence the arrangement, and an agentic tool through which to influence the arrangement itself. Gesturing to this relationship between sense-able subject and (re)arrangements, we outline another way of knowing the urban, one that accepts incompleteness, absences and incomprehension; one that doesn’t ‘hold’ the city but ‘feels it out’.

These essays, as movements in a suite, attempt to respond to each other, to work their way across each other’s landscapes in improvisatory movements. They are platforms for future work and collaborations. Rather than trying to sum up, to reach definitive conclusions, these movements conspire to chart possible zig-zagging pathways across other works, opening themselves up to being re-arranged.

THE RE-ARRANGEMENTS COLLECTIVE

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