Convivial atmotechnics: animating atmospheres of togetherness and indeterminacy in Kingston and Abidjan

Dr Alana Osbourne (Radboud University, Netherlands)
Dr Fabien Cante (University College London, United Kingdom)

Environment & Planning D: Society & Space (accepted version)
https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758241308102

Abstract

This paper draws on ethnographic work with tour guides in Kingston and Brussels and local radio *animateurs* in Abidjan to document their "atmotechnics" – the practices through which they enliven urban atmospheres. Through cross-contextual juxtapositions, we delve into atmotechnics' relational intricacies and contextual variegation. Crucially, we point to their complexity and significance in cities whose atmospheres are fractured by racialized socio-economic divides and practices of territorial control. We show that tour guides and radio hosts animate atmospheres of conviviality by mobilizing repertoires rooted in Black Atlantic countercultures. The resulting forms of conviviality are radically indeterminate: they evade and unsettle dominant models of "reconciliation" or "social cohesion," inviting us instead to think/feel commonality *within* and *despite* fractures. In making this argument, we contribute to scholarship on urban atmospheres, which acknowledges their political nature without considering the street-level agencies that shape them; and we extend scholarship that theorizes conviviality as a non-normative mode of interrelation.

Keywords: urban atmospheres, atmotechnics, conviviality, indeterminacy, violence

Author bios

Alana Osbourne is an anthropologist concerned with forms urban violence and racialized inequities related to coloniality. She investigates how urbanites live with the afterlives of colonialism, and how they subvert these legacies through sensorial and affective negotiations. She has carried out fieldwork in Jamaica and Belgium. Her recent research focuses on the Belgian Parliamentary Commission on the Colonial Past, where elected officials seek to find narrative consensus around the country's colonial history and contemporary forms of racial injustice. She teaches Critical Theory at Radboud University.
alana.osbourne@radboud.nl
Elinor Ostrom Building (EOS),
Heyendaalseweg 142,
6525 AJ Nijmegen,
The Netherlands
ORCID: 0000-0003-2292-0521

Fabien Cante is an interdisciplinary geographer interested in the politics of peace and violence at the urban margins. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in "post-conflict" Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, he has written about local radio as a contested urban infrastructure and a technology of encounter, crystallizing tensions between everyday and governmental visions of peace. He teaches about the politics of technology and urban inequalities at University College London, putting African cities in relation with their European and North American counterparts through a postcolonial, Black Atlantic frame.
f.cante@ucl.ac.uk
North West Wing
University College London
Gower Street WC1E 6BT London
ORCID: 0000-0002-3871-6317

Introduction

On a hot afternoon in December 2014, I (Fabien) sat with Joelle in the newsroom of Radio Fraternité to listen to the first edit of her most recent reportage. A municipally owned station broadcasting over the sprawling district of Yopougon, Radio Fraternité was, at the time, one of the most popular local radio outlets (*radios de proximité*) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Joelle was an *animateur* (host) and aspiring journalist, working unpaid like most of her colleagues in the hopes of making a name for herself in Abidjan's media world – or in the myriad "scenes" that she encountered via local broadcasting. As part of her many duties, she had been tasked by an Ivoirian NGO with producing a 3-minute radio segment answering the following question: "Has life resumed in Yopougon?" (*Est-ce que la vie a repris?*)

Joelle's assignment implicitly evoked the brief civil war that followed contested presidential elections in Côte d'Ivoire in 2011, itself preceded by a decade of intermittent conflict. Post-electoral violence was particularly intense in Yopougon: ethnically super-diverse, the "popular" district (*quartier populaire*) became a hotbed of student-led political militancy in the late 1980s, and later an electoral and paramilitary "bastion" of support for Ivoirian president Laurent Gbagbo (2000-2011). As such, it was one of the last political territories to be brutally "pacified" in May 2011. Without naming or dating this violence, Joelle's reportage testified to its life-interrupting consequences. It also emphatically indexed recovered vitality in the "post-conflict" city. Weaving together *vox pop* interviews, field recordings, and Joelle's own narration, the segment described a raucous urban atmosphere composed of dense traffic, bustling street trade, crowded *maquis* (open-air bars), money concerns and anticipated holiday celebrations. Importantly, Joelle's reportage did more than evidence the resumption of everyday life. In its sonic juxtapositions, and in its subsequent broadcasting, the segment actively participated in shaping Yopougon's atmosphere, adding a layer to its cacophonous *ambiance* and thus amplifying the sounds of life in the wake of war.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, in Kingston's Trench Town neighborhood, I (Alana) hung out with Birdie, groundskeeper for the Culture Yard, a grassroots museum dedicated to global reggae icon Bob Marley. Located in the communal housing structure that Marley once lived in, the Culture Yard is at once a museum, a home for community members, and a launching pad for walking tours of the surrounding area. From his office, behind the lush mango tree that provided a canopy for the shared patio, Birdie fed CDs that played onto the Yard's speakers, alternating Nyabinghi drumming with Marley's classic hits. His music selection was an essential element, a bassline of sorts, in animating the Yard's specific atmosphere. With reference to another eponymous Marley song, he explained that "the museum holds a 'natural mystic'. You feel it? This, here, is a home. It *must* feel like home for all. So I choose my sounds according to that."

At stake for Birdie and his Culture Yard colleagues was bringing Marley's memory alive, infusing it into an embodied here and now. In doing so, they confronted multiple challenges. Like Abidjan, although in a different way, Kingston is a city fractured by criminal, political and structural violence. In their walking tours, Birdie and other guides had to traverse neighboring

communities reeling from garrison politics and torn by rolling turf and gang wars, where residents bore unhealed traumas and continued to pledge allegiance to warring political parties and enclaved territories. Tour guides also had to contend with the dramatic inequalities that distanced residents from tourists, whether relatively wealthier uptowners or members of the Jamaican diaspora, who collectively formed the largest portion of visitors. The atmospheres that Birdie and his colleagues curated at the Yard were thus inevitably bound up in visitors' assumptions, desires, and fears, as well as more or less reductive discourses about what it means to live in the "ghetto."

In this article we bring together our individual ethnographic research with local radio producers in Abidjan and tour guides in Kingston through a focus on *the crafting of urban atmospheres* in *fractured cities*. Radio production and guiding/curating are of course distinct professional fields, and Joelle and Birdie's practices, as radio host and tour guide respectively, are oriented toward different audiences, spatial scales, and immediate objectives. Yet we argue that, despite these differences, Joelle and Birdie's work is fundamentally about attuning to (Stewart 2011) and attempting to shape atmospheres – to enliven a "natural mystic," in Marley/Birdie's words. To begin with, urban atmospheres are the material that they both work with, the elusive yet affective and multisensory "stuff" that they harness for radio broadcasting and tour guiding. More than a tool or a medium, however, urban atmospheres are for Joelle and Birdie a realm of self-conscious intervention. Simply put, they don't just use atmospheres as part of their daily work, but actively seek to mold, inflect and change the atmospheres they inhabit.

To underscore this active and interventionist engagement with atmospheres, we conceptualize Joelle and Birdie's otherwise specialized practices as "atmotechnics," a term we borrow from Ilan rua Wall (2019) to gesture to the work of deliberately shaping atmospheres. In the second section of the article, we detail how our ethnographic approach to tour guiding and broadcasting as atmotechnics contributes to the rich scholarship on urban atmospheres. While it is well established across geography, anthropology and sociology that atmospheres are sites of collective sensing, sense-making and contest, most analyses focus on the materialities from which atmospheres "arise", on the institutional management of atmospheres in strategic public or commercial spaces, or on the collective production of atmospheres by more or less coordinated crowds (in stadiums or protests, for example). By delving into atmospheric intervention as individual craft, and at street level, we further pluralize who is involved in shaping urban atmospheres. By focusing on atmotechnics in Abidjan and Kingston's "popular neighborhoods," we foreground subaltern agency beyond mere "attunement" and reaction to dominant atmospheric conditions.

After conceptualizing radio hosting and tour guiding as atmotechnics, revealing their atmospheric implications, we argue that Birdie and Joelle's atmotechnics are geared toward *conviviality* (Gilroy 2004). That is, their aim is to foster and enliven convivial atmospheres. Pressed to address and work through enduring urban fractures, Birdie and Joelle harness the shared, in-common nature of affective atmospheres in an attempt to make new forms of living-together tangible, or sense-able. But beyond their explicit intentionality, we show that it is their ultimate indeterminacy that orients atmotechnics toward conviviality. Indeterminacy, we

acknowledge (following Wall), is always inherent to atmotechnics, because no single actor – even skillful individuals like Birdie and Joelle – can fully control how atmospheres will register for others, especially in multitudinous urban environments. But indeterminacy is also, we suggest, a positive, generative quality of convivial atmotechnics. It points to relationalities or modes of togetherness that do not require envisioning a united, reconciled polity, but rather lets togetherness emerge (or not) from unspecified commonalities to be worked out from the brute facts of co-presence and exchanged affects. Indeterminacy is what allows convivial atmotechnics to open a field of possibility for new, unscripted forms of togetherness. In sum, indeterminacy is a consequence of atmospheres' unknowability and unenforceability, which in convivial atmotechnics comes to signify openness to a togetherness "without guarantees," to borrow from Stuart Hall. Through this argument, which we build in the third section of the article, we contribute to a better understanding of conviviality's atmospheric qualities.

Before we delve into our discussion of convivial atmotechnics in Kingston and Abidjan, a word on the fieldwork and collaboration that underpins this article. The empirical material that forms the basis of our analysis was collected individually during our doctoral research. Fieldwork in Kingston involved a year (2014-2015) of ethnographic research in Trench Town during which I (Alana) spent most of my time in and around the Culture Yard participating in, and shadowing, tours of the museum and of the community. During this time, I focused on the layered forms of violence and inequity that local guides worked through as they curated and transformed parts of their neighborhood into a tourism commodity (Osbourne 2019). In Abidjan, I (Fabien) spent 8 months (2014-2016) embedded in four local radio stations, including Radio Fraternité where Joelle worked at the time. I accompanied her on several of her reportages, spent many hours hanging out in the newsroom or in the nearby radio café with her, and attended 7 of the live radio events that she helped set up across Yopougon in 2015 (and which we discuss later in the article). While I focus on Joelle's story here, in her background and practice she exemplifies animation more broadly on Abidjan's local airwaves, a distinctive practice and social world that I describe in more detail elsewhere, drawing on interviews and ethnographic conversations with dozens of radio producers (Cante 2018).

As co-authors, we met in an experimental writing collective that convened online during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in which we shared and responded to vignettes from everyone's research. It was in the context of this larger group's sometimes freewheeling conversations that we came to realize our shared interest in how ordinary urban dwellers navigate and shape urban atmospheres. This interest further crystallized around readings we sent to each other, around more ethnographic vignettes, and around hours and hours of Zoom calls. Our "experimental" comparison (Lancione & McFarlane 2016) across Kingston and Abidjan did not set out with pre-established concepts; nor is its intention to fully itemize the similarities and differences between contexts and practices. Rather, building on the ethnographic work that underpins our individual research, our collaboration articulates conceptual bridges between sites. The argument that follows is an open-ended process of finding resonances and observing connections, which we have formalized through broad and heuristic headings – atmotechnics, facture, conviviality. We use

these categories to gesture to related practices we see across locations while recognizing that in each city they are articulated through different languages, vernaculars and emic categories (as we return to in the final section). This approach is reflected in our writing which, as much as possible, favors an integrated and seamless joint authorship to show how each concept is enriched and illustrated by thinking across individual field sites. To use a musical metaphor, we aimed for a duet and sought to minimize instances of "handing over the mic" in the analysis.

In the first section, we unpack the shared atmospheric dimension of tour guiding and radio hosting and detail how this can contribute to the rich scholarship on urban atmospheres. We then discuss Abidjan and Kingston's ongoing histories of violent fracture, which frame analogous (but not identical) anxieties about living-together, and through which Joelle and Birdie weave their atmospheric practices. In the final section, we turn to why conviviality is a useful term to understand the outcome of Birdie and Joelle's atmotechnics, evoking atmospheric relationalities that were as indeterminate as they were meaningful - indeed, meaningful *because* their indeterminacy shaped a refusal to consign the violence of Kingston and Abidjan's fractured landscapes to a pathology curable through restorative or peacebuilding initiatives.

Atmotechnics: enlivening urban atmospheres

In his article on urban protest policing, Ilan rua Wall borrows the term "atmotechnics" from philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2016) to designate "the techniques that aim to *create, manage or change* affective atmospheres" (Wall 2019: 147, emphasis in original). In Wall's analysis, atmotechnics primarily refer to the (British) police's trained ability to "read" and inflect protest atmospheres, for example by increasing tension and anxiety through kettling or, on the contrary, by responding to surges in collective feelings of anger or anxiety with de-escalation tactics. Wall's discussion of police atmotechnics might seem worlds removed from local radio broadcasting and tour guiding. Yet we begin from Wall's conceptualization because he gets closest to the kind of deliberate atmospheric interventions that we want to highlight, even as we extend his proposition beyond policing and toward subaltern, counter-hegemonic practices.

Scholarship on urban atmospheres has long recognized that they emerge out of a broad constellation of materialities and occurrences (Closs Stephens 2015a; Gandy 2017; Fregonese 2017). Shopping malls, festivals, religious rituals, political mobilizations, local gatherings and performances of national belonging all involve, and are lived through, shifts in urban atmospheres (e.g., Anderson 2009, 2010; Bille et al. 2015; Edensor 2015; Edensor & Sumatojo 2015; Closs Stephens 2015b; Eisenlohr 2021; Steadman & Coffin 2023). Researchers have highlighted how different actors – such as public authorities, event organizers, retailers, protesters, or indeed police forces and counter-terrorism units – deliberately seek to influence affective atmospheres by leveraging various elements in urban environments. They do so through interventions in spatial design and architecture, adjustments to public lighting and the broader visual surrounds (e.g., through screens, flags, police presence…), the modulation of urban soundscapes (e.g., for noise reduction or, on the contrary, for fanfare), and the choreographing of human assembly (including the prohibition of assembly, as during COVID-19 lockdowns [Laketa & Fregonese 2023]). Yet as

Bille and Simonsen (2021) have recently suggested, even as scholars have pointed toward urban atmospheres as sites of planned intervention, they have focused primarily on the spatial and material configurations – what Fregonese and Laketa (2022; also Allen 2006) call the "affordances" – that give rise to specific atmospheres, rather than on the *practices* through which actors respond to and "affect" atmospheres in the moment. This is not to say that scholars have completely ignored people's situated agency in navigating and contributing to collective atmospheres. Fregonese and Laketa (ibid.), for example, consider how Paris residents used public space in the wake of terrorist attacks to remake the city's atmospheres. Closs Stephen's (2015b; 2022) conceptualization of nationalism as an affective atmosphere details the minutiae of how crowd participation (e.g., in chanting and applause) in mediated events contribute to its situated thickening and re-activation. Eisenlohr (2021) documents how ordinary Shi'a Muslims stake a claim to Mumbai's atmosphere through participation in street processions. The edited collection on *Consuming atmospheres* (Steadman & Coffin 2023) connects design interventions with their practiced experience, pointing to atmospheres' negotiated, multi-authored nature.

However, in this scholarship, participants' contribution to the sensing and shaping of atmospheres is largely incidental and unreflexive. People shape urban atmospheres (of tourism, retail, religion, or nationalism) merely through their "being there" and taking part in crowd activities - more or less willing and self-conscious vectors for the circulation of affects and collective feelings. One exception to this mode of analysis is Corsín Jiménez and Estalella's (2013) study of how residents of Madrid reflexively engage in crafting neighborhood atmospheres through people's assemblies, and value relationalities as "neighborly" precisely on the basis of their contribution to a shared atmosphere. It is this kind of deliberate and reflexive intervention in urban atmospheres that we want to foreground through Wall's concept of atmotechnics. Wall (2019: 149) acknowledges that in a protest situation, "there is not [always] a clear line between intentional atmospheric engineering and actions […] which are undertaken for different reasons but which have very clear atmospheric effects." Yet atmotechnics designates the "intentional engineering and actions" part of the continuum. The focus on atmo-*technics* further emphasizes the element of thoughtful and pre-planned craft that goes into shaping atmospheres, as well as the role of specific technologies for sensing and inflecting moods and affects.

For these reasons, we prefer the term atmotechnics to the more encompassing concept of "atmospheric practices" proposed by Bille and Simonsen (2021). That is, we consider atmotechnics to be a narrower subset of atmospheric practices. Whereby the latter are broadly understood as "the practices of the lived body taking part in atmospheres" (ibid.: 304), atmotechnics points to those more specific practices which involve deliberate intentionality and (technologically supported) craft. Likewise, Kathleen Stewart's (2011) concept of "atmospheric attunement" captures a general disposition – the attentive and reflexive commitment to the emergent character of everyday life – that is part of atmotechnics, but remains overly diffuse and doesn't quite get to the active, interventionist, and skillful practice that we want to conceptualize through our ethnographic juxtaposition.

Through the notion of atmotechnics, ultimately, we emphasize the creative agency that is exercised in and through atmospheres, as well as the skill associated with making atmospheres crackle, move, swirl, resonate, or touch. In this broad definition, our use of the concept departs from Wall's (2019) in several ways. First, where he discusses atmotechnics as the institutional coordination of group practices, and as a set of quite strictly diagrammed techniques (Wall analyzes police training manuals), we suggest that the concept can be useful to also designate individual practices that stem from more implicit, embodied know-how and less codified skills - which we turn to below. At a more political level, atmotechnics in Wall's understanding are about using atmospheres as an instrument for social and political control. In contrast, Joelle and Birdie's atmotechnics operate at the grassroots, and in the final section we argue that they make manifest counter-hegemonic, non-prescriptive possibilities for urban togetherness, even as they do not immediately appear to be politically motivated (they are not, for example, the atmospheric practices of protesters).

The rest of this section delves further into what atmotechnics entail for Joelle and Birdie. We highlight the skills and craft that they deploy to enliven atmospheres, and why we can understand this to be a primary focus of their work. While radio producers in Abidjan and tour guides in Kingston often set out to generate specific affects – joy, abandon, wonder, curiosity, a sense of concern – they must first ensure that audiences inhabit a shared moment, or "scene" (Stewart, 2011), when/where *something* happens and registers, where/when vitality itself surfaces and becomes palpable. To do so, they mobilize sound, which we foreground throughout this paper, but also sight, smell, taste and texture, pointing to the multisensory labor of atmotechnics.

The connection between atmotechnics and atmospheric enlivening is perhaps most obviously expressed by Abidjan's local radio producers, who refer to themselves as animateurs, and their craft as animation (Cante, 2018). As an inherently atmospheric practice, animation works through music, voice, bodily movement, and a mode of address that Malcolm James (2020) describes as "sonic intimacy." Through sound and its associated vibration, radio animators bring relational vibrancy to all sorts of occasions, suggesting that radio is an inherently atmospheric medium, and not just in the sense that it operates through the airwaves. Anthropologist Brian Larkin (2008; also Hirschkind, 2006) has noted that radio in urban contexts contributes not only to the circulation of symbols and information, but to the composition of an enveloping sensorium in which private and public life become entangled and impress upon each other.

As our opening vignettes make clear, Birdie's crafting of "natural mystic" at the Culture Yard also involves the use of sound technologies and musical curation to create broader maps of intimacy. The incarnate, breathing feel of the museum, which also doubled as a shelter for a few community members who lived on the premises, was at once authentic and curated, public and private. Just as the Yard had come alive as a site of struggle and a harbor for national audiences through Marley's 1974 classic song "No Woman No Cry," decades later, and in a touristic configuration that opened the space up internationally, music continued to infuse the museum's atmosphere with everyday vitality. Having passed the red, green and gold gate that surrounds the museum, and stepping into the Yard's large, shaded communal structure, travelers were aware that

the space they were visiting was the "government yard" evoked in "No Woman No Cry." As they sat under the mango tree in the museum's entrance, the lyrics resonated both for Bob Marley and for themselves, in a sonic frame within the frame, as per Birdie's intention:

I remember when we used to sit
In a government yard in Trench Town
And then Georgie would make the fire light
A log wood burning through the night
Then we would cook cornmeal porridge
Of which I'll share with you.

While Birdie's musical diffusion and Joelle's radio animation emphasize the aural dimension of atmotechnic work, atmospheres hinge on more complex webs of sensory prompts, and sound is always experienced in synesthesia (Howes 2004). Music also allows for a corporeal experience of place which mobilizes multiple senses simultaneously. This was not lost on Birdie, for whom the task of enlivening Bob Marley's home could be curated through various channels: in addition to working with music and sounds, he mobilized the feels and tastes of the museum, pitching the Yard's atmosphere as a hospitable enfolding. As a groundskeeper this meant organizing museum life so that the well-kept greenery, the swept courtyard, and exhibition rooms meshed with the cooking and conversing that were essential to the museum's twin function as a lived-in space. The sounds played on the speakers entwined with the warm scent of meals being prepared, fresh laundry hung out to dry, and with the smells of ganja smoked as locals gathered to talk. This inhabited warmth was further extended to guests when Culture Yard staff offered them a taste of porridge, recalling the convivial meal Bob Marley mentions in "No Woman No Cry" (see Jaffe et al., 2019). In such instances, tasting cornmeal porridge enabled an embodied ingestion of the song and a multi-sensorial experience of place.

This atmosphere was broadened through walking tours, in which Birdie and other tour guides let visitors amble along a predetermined route through Trench Town, pointing to smells (the sweet and acrid scent of jackfruit; the mellow scent of ripe mango when in season) and picking out sounds from the ambient neighborhood hum (a recording studio, the latest dancehall tunes spilling onto the street from an open window). Mediated by the guides' presence and their buoyant, patois infused commentary, the co-relations between these elements enlivened the atmospheric fabric that tourists were immersed in.

This deliberate assemblage of sensory, environmental and affective elements was not the purview of Kingstonian guides alone: radio animateurs in Abidjan enliven atmospheres off the airwaves as well, in live shows (which we discuss later in the paper) or in a myriad of side-hustles (*gombos*) that see them hosting private events, official ceremonies, or street advertising campaigns. Relating practices in Abidjan and Kinsgton, our argument is not that tour guiding and radio hosting are more similar than they are different; simply, we posit that there is value in conceptualizing them as discrete examples of atmotechnics that work through an array of sensory mediums. Such a conceptualization broadens the concept of atmotechnics itself and diversifies its possible

application in the study of how urban dwellers give shape and texture to atmospheres – including in the arduous post-conflict contexts that Joelle and Birdie work from.

Atmotechnics through fractured grounds

Kingston and Abidjan, in their own ways, are cities fractured by racialized socio-economic divides as well as long-honed, multi-scalar practices of territorial control that seek to determine who belongs and who doesn't.[1] The contours of urban inhabitation, in each city, remain molded by what WEB Du Bois (2007 [1903]) identified as "the global color line." Put differently, these cities exist as distinct outcomes of entangled histories of enslavement and colonization, as well as ongoing processes of racialized dispossession, signaling different forms of blackness (see Simone, 2016). The resulting fractures register at the level of urban atmospheres, where they imprint on collective sensing and sense-making, even when violence is not immediately discernible. Sara Fregonese (2017; 2021), writing from Beirut and Paris, has shown how atmospheres, in moments of conflict escalation, at once condense and diffuse the presence of threat in the city. In Kingston and Abidjan, enduring and regularly reiterated atmospheric fractures continue to enforce intangible yet affective borders that partition urban space and hum with antipathy (see Navaro-Yashin 2012; Laketa 2016; 2018).

Against this backdrop, radio animateurs' and tour guides' atmotechnics register the endurance of collective urban life within and against political and structural violence. While contending with different historical legacies and afterlives, Birdie and Joelle work with and through atmospheres to trouble separations between here and there, past and present. In so doing, they show that, just like soundscapes, atmospheric cartographies can be animated and stretched, so as to make them enfold larger terrains. This is a potent characteristic of atmotechnic work carried out in fragmented urban terrains, as it motions to an amplitude at once rooted in a sense of place and sprawling beyond entrenchment.

At the time Joelle was working for Radio Fratenité in Yopougon, the district's atmosphere was charged with memories of recent armed conflict (1999-2011). This "post-conflict" atmosphere must however be contextualized within multi-scalar processes of economic and political violence that can be traced back to colonial occupation (continuous police harassment, arbitrary demolitions of "informal" residences and trading spaces, suppression of oppositional speech, toxic waste dumping by transnational corporations, routine military intervention to preserve neocolonial interests… see Matlon, 2022). Yopougon's atmosphere, in other words, was shaped by both structural and conjunctural violence, which combined to fuel lingering ethno-regional resentments,

[1] Drawing on the register of fragmentation to refer to spatialized differences and heightened urban divisions, especially in cities reeling from conflict (Anderson, 2010; Calame, Charlesworth and Woods 2009), urban scholars have observed and documented constellations of spatial belonging and segregation across a wide range of regions (e.g. Caldeira, 2001; Rosen and Razin, 2009). They have chronicled the associations between spatial and social inequalities (Vaughan & Arbaci 2011), the juxtaposition and enclaving of socio-economic difference (Graham and Marvin, 2001), and the complex sets of identifications that city dwellers hold or attribute to each other in distinct locations. Conjointly, these writings have shown how everyday spatial practices, reinforced by urban designs as well as larger political discourses, form webs of belonging that represent various classed, racial, religious, local and national interests that can generate broken urban patterns.

anxieties about material survival, as well as fears about state surveillance and more shadowy sources of political retribution. In 2014, these atmospheric pressures were fragmenting districts like Yopougon into micro-territories of antagonism, stoking paranoia about whose "side" anyone was on (even without a clear sense of what the competing "sides" might be – echoing Laketa 2018), and making public expression fraught with danger.

For Joelle and her colleagues, Yopougon's urban fractures loaded ordinary animation practices with added uncertainty (about who would participate and how things would "land" – see Cante, 2023a), even as it charged everyday broadcasting with added hopes or expectations. Enlivening atmospheres through radio animation was inevitably about more than people feeling energized and sharing a pleasant moment. Beyond the sharing of affects and the rhythming of everyday life, at stake was the ability for atmospheres to cross through or permeate lines of socio-spatial demarcation. The sonic atmotechnics of animation thus became a medium through which to traverse and connect enlivened geographies across urban fractures.

Again, radio is well suited to this connective work, audibly folding distinct sites together through atmospheric circulations. Most obviously, the sonic intimacies that radio weaves through the ether connect producers in the studio to their situated audiences, and this connection is often performatively acknowledged on air through various "spatial markers" (see e.g., Pardue, 2011; Klaess, 2022). All phone-in shows on Radio Fratenité, for example, asked callers to identify what neighborhood they were calling from, and this geography often became the starting point for banter. Joelle's playlists also deliberately mixed musical genres that denoted multiple geographical scales, often all at once. Yopougon is known as the most active incubator of popular music in Côte d'Ivoire, not least because it is a thoroughly creolized district, whose demographics and street languages stem from long histories of migration and mixing. In Joelle's playlists, then, *zouglou* and 'traditional' (usually regional-language) bands could be heard as simultaneously local and national (Konaté 2002), while reggae, hip-hop and *couper-décaler* entangled the local with the inter- and outer-national (Bahi 2021). In Yopougon's popular neighborhoods, radio connects adjacent households whose private listening and conversations become part of a neighborhood soundscape, or various trading stalls and workshops from which radio filters into the surrounding street or courtyard (Larkin 2008). Radio's atmospheric geography thus stretches across intangible distances but still audibly embodies relations of proximate communication, the more immediately tangible material culture of individual and collective listening. In other words, it blurs the boundaries between the domestic, the neighborhood, the city, and a wider world at large.

Radio Fraternité leveraged the expansive and connective geography of atmospheres most explicitly to address urban fractures in a series of weekly "public shows" (*émissions publiques*) that ran from March to September 2015. These shows staged local broadcasting as live performances in different neighborhoods across the district. Typically, they involved station staff setting up a soundsystem, chairs, and occasionally a few tents for shelter in a micro-local public space (usually a dirt football field) on a Saturday afternoon. Joelle and her colleagues then took their routine animation skills to this live "stage." They used their amplified voices and embodied charisma (pacing the empty circle between the rows of plastic chairs, going up to specific audience

members), their knack for word-play and jokes, and their networks with local musical artists – who were invited to perform one to two songs each – to enliven the afternoon. Through their atmotechnics, they sought to infuse neighborhood atmospheres with collective joy and fun, to move bodies to laughter and dance. At the same time, they were recording the live show, an edited version of which was later broadcast. The combination of liveness and broadcasting harnessed the expansive potential of atmospheres, from micro-local immediacies to district-wide diffusion. As such, the example of public shows makes clear the role of radio atmotechnics in actively stretching atmospheric relationalities. In the shows, Joelle and her colleagues' atmotechnics sought to enliven atmospheres that would cross the lines of neighborhood antagonism (political polarization, ethnic resentment, inequalities between generations and tenures…), as well as the real and imagined boundaries that might mark one neighborhood out as being "against" or splintered off from another.

This spatial transgression is also inherent to the sonic culture of Trench Town, a particularly emblematic example of how sounds of enclavement – and by extension atmospheric particles – can be extended beyond local and transnational ruptures, whilst always retaining a distinct quality of place. If the rock steady, reggae, and dancehall of Trench Town have come to signify Jamaican culture more broadly, they do so by always, simultaneously, hailing the ghetto. Artists like Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, or the Abyssinians have become worldwide ambassadors for reggae, and local dancehall artists continue to headline international music scenes. In the words of Nadia Ellis (2015: 400), music can "claim space and […] create vastness out of apparent nothingness." In a beat, the place defined by spatial rims and socio-economic borders is dislocated, traveling around the globe.

It is from within this sonic culture that tour guides welcome national and international visitors. In doing so, they invite the crossing of the liminal divide between wealthier uptown districts and the ghetto, as well as the ruptures that delineate gang turfs within the neighborhood. Kingston's territorialized inequalities and the violence that continued to give them tragic salience in everyday life were products of plantation slavery, political predation, and an inherited and pervasive logic of colorism. From its inception, Jamaica's bipartisan political system was associated with a form of electoral turf politics in which voters, coerced by the presence of local gunmen – or "dons" - fought over access to homes, work, or essential infrastructure, and defended or enforced political ideology within their territory (see Sives 2002, 2010; Harriott 2008; Thomas 2011). In Trench Town, and in the neighboring communities, this created entrenched party lines and borders along which violence was notoriously reanimated at election time, throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s (Gray 2004; Sives 2010; Jaffe 2015). By 2015, when I (Alana) first met Birdie, car tires, wood debris and empty barrels occasionally blocked roads as competing gangs, led by dons who were variously connected to party politics, clashed. These temporary partitions participated in flaring up old spatial wounds and upholding already fractured atmospheres. While political and historical violence in Kingston was routinely reduced to popular pathology, tracing continuities between political, structural and gang violence, Birdie explained "we in the

community suffer from it. Many a dead… Many. It a *war* alright." Yet in their tours, guides like him emphasized an extensive aliveness.

This was perhaps most apparent when, through walking tours, Birdie and his colleagues took tourists up to "No Man's Land" before circling back to the museum. This vast stretch of barren land also colloquially referred to as "Dead Man's Gulch" or the "Berlin Wall," effectively cut Trench Town in half, marking the border between two political enclaves. During the height of electoral wars, residents were run out of their dwellings and their houses were destroyed, leaving a gaping battlefield that had been untouched since the 1970s, exposing the neighborhood's violent past like a raw scar.[2] Omitting to narrate this history to visitors, tour guides drew attention to a local recording studio instead. Run by a neighborhood association, and strategically located in the only building on that stretch of No Man's Land, the studio extended an invitation to artists across the border. Aside from the studio, the building's other two rooms housed the government backed "Restorative Justice Centre." Acknowledging that the courts remained largely inaccessible and unaffordable for a majority of inner-city residents, the Ministry of Justice had a set up the center, manned by staff trained in conflict mediation, in the hopes of short-circuiting the more informal, extra-legal, and often violent means through which neighborhood disputes were settled. Strolling past and ignoring the center, Bridie took tourists to the cramped studio, filled with amplifiers and recording equipment, in which he would enthusiastically recount the stories of musicians who had worked with and through political violence to create Trench Town's emblematic soundscape. This mediation of tourists' embodied experience, in which the area's materialities, borders and music were selectively brought into a dialectic relationship, generated a particular experience of place, a distinctly hospitable atmosphere amidst fractures. By pointing to the multisensory atmospheres of daily life in Trench Town, guides downplayed histories of conflict, highlighting instead how downtown, as a whole, was resilient in the face of structural violence (Osbourne, 2019). In doing so they avoided the reiteration of urbicide, refusing to condemn neighborhoods like Trench Town to social and political death over and over again (McKittrick, 2013).

A common thread that appears in Joelle and Birdie's atmotechnics is their desire to enliven atmospheres towards conviviality. Yet, in both cases, this conviviality is not pitched as an effort to 'reconcile' or 'repair' broken territory. Rather, the atmospheric work deployed by radio animateurs and tour guides eschew the territorialized visions of harmony that are often parceled with post-conflict narratives of togetherness. Circumventing the oppressive structures that political settlement and post-conflict repair entail, Joelle and Birdie thus operate at different scales or levels: within specific situations, and within more expansive "structures of feeling" (Williams 1961), and the "stretchy" quality of atmospheres connects these different levels.

The generative indeterminacies of convivial atmospheres

[2] Since 2015, several local and government-backed projects have sought to revive this area, slowly changing its look and feel.

If atmotechnics charge atmospheres with aliveness, and work through complex spatialities, the question remains of what figures of togetherness are enacted or made sensible. The tour guides and radio animateurs we worked with sought to craft *shared* moments and scenes. How to understand the kinds of being-together that take place through enlivened atmospheres? And what significance does this atmospheric togetherness take on in cities fractured by histories of violence? At stake in these questions is the possibility of translating atmospheric aliveness into what Paul Gilroy (2004) and others have conceptualized as conviviality, or the ability to live together across difference and violent inequalities (see e.g., Amin 2012; Vigneswaran 2014; De Noronha 2022; Singh 2023). This is, of course, far from a strictly analytical concern. When Birdie enlivens atmosphere in the Culture Yard, or takes visitors around the streets of Trench Town, he must contend with the drastic inequalities that separate tourists from residents, as well as with the divisions of garrison politics. When Joelle animates the airwaves, whether she is self-consciously reporting on life after war or playfully admonishing her studio partner for his raunchy misogyny, she inevitably reckons with the fractures that linger in Abidjan's atmosphere, and which make a unified radio public unlikely, if not impossible.

Conviviality is our chosen interpretative framework to draw out the significance of our interlocutors' practices across Kingston and Abidjan. *Convivialité* exists in Ivoirian French, but Joelle and her peers were much more likely to discuss their work in terms of making "peace" in the wake of the civil war (see Cante, 2020; 2023b). Birdie, on the other hand, would draw from the Culture Yard's significance as a bastion of Rasta faith and culture and describe his practice as geared towards creating "unity" and "one love." Mindful of the specificities and epistemic wealth each of these terms hold, rather than using them across contexts or suggesting that they might be interchangeable, we mobilize Gilroy's (2004) influential use of the term conviviality as an umbrella rubric under which practices of crafting togetherness take resonance.

We also argue - following Gilroy, De Noronha (2022) and Singh (2023) – that conviviality provides a political imaginary of togetherness that is better suited to the unsettled, postcolonial multiculture of cities like Abidjan and Kingston. The fact that Gilroy theorizes conviviality from the double vantage point of postcolonial planetarity and British urban cultures is significant for our own cross-contextual juxtaposition. His concept, and the multi-sited geography that underpins it, invites us to position Kingston and Abidjan alongside London in a shared urban world that is structured by colonial inheritances and transatlantic flows, past and present.[3] In the previous section we noted that Kingston and Abidjan's urban fractures – the multiscalar lines of violent inequality and socio-spatial sorting that traverse them - cannot be understood without attention to the legacies of French and British colonialism, amongst which are shifting racisms and the continued residualization of impoverished urban majorities. For all their differences, and despite varying degrees and forms of violence, it is possible (necessary, we would suggest) to interrogate urban fractures and conviviality as shared *problématiques* across Côte d'Ivoire, Jamaica, and Britain, rather than think these spaces separately via the exceptionalizing categories of "post-

[3] There is unfortunately no room in this article to fully excavate how both cities have been shaped by and contributed to what Gilroy (1993) famously termed Black Atlantic circulations.

conflict" and "divided" cities (Calame et al. 2009; for a challenge to these categories, see Rokem 2016).

Gilroy's understanding of conviviality allows us to begin from the premise that togetherness within the racist structures of the postcolony is a strained and ever-incomplete process. As Amit Singh (2023) reiterates, conviviality in Gilroy's argument departs from both "post-racial" fantasies that posit the ultimate transcendence or erasure of differences, *and* from the multicultural model which envisions neatly bounded, always-already constituted social groups sharing space and power. Singh's emphasis on the "messiness" of convivial relations in an East London kickboxing gym, where racism as a structural force regularly (re)surfaces in everyday interactions, nicely illustrates conviviality's continuously emergent, necessarily reiterated nature.

Building on this conceptualization, we want to insist on what Gilroy (2004: xi) calls conviviality's "radical openness": its non-prescriptive, non-teleological, ultimately *indeterminate* nature. This radical openness is important to keep in mind when considering the convivial "effects" of atmotechnics, and the relationalities that Joelle and Birdie enliven. As Wall (2019: 148) notes, "the atmospheres that emerge [from choreographed police intervention in protests] will always remain just beyond control," however rigorously trained the police might be, and however superior their weaponry for enforcement. The uncontrollability of atmospheres stems in large part from the fact that they are inherently relational, which is to say co-authored and emerging from a multitude of events and practices. As Bille and Simonsen (2021: 303, emphases in original) put it, "[atmosphere] is not *in* the relation; atmosphere *is* the relation."

Returning to our contexts of study, Birdie and Joelle confront not only the inescapability of urban fractures, but also the indeterminacy of atmospheric relationalities. Although they are skilled "atmotechnicians," they cannot guarantee that atmospheres will "work" – that affects will circulate, that feelings will swell, that audiences will feel enveloped, that resonances will gain meaning. There is simply no way for Birdie and Joelle to ensure that everyone in their audience will be "reached," that they have succeeded in fostering intended affects, or that an atmosphere will even register as shared in the first place. Moreover, there is no way to know how and to what extent atmospheres imprint upon other participants' subjectivities. Given atmosphere's existence as surfaces, their relation to interiority remains unpredictable and unenforceable, conditioned by a variety of situational and individual factors (Anderson 2009). There is thus a double challenge here. The first, for Birdie and Joelle, is how to foster convivial atmospheres; the second, which we share with them from our position as researchers, is how to sense and to interpret their outcome.

This double challenge is well illustrated by the public shows in Yopougon that we describe in the previous section. As mentioned, these shows deliberately sought to re-infuse neighborhood and district atmospheres with lived and felt togetherness across micro-local and larger-scale divisions. Yet the atmospheres they enlivened, as noted, were also shaped by ongoing processes of state surveillance, censorship, and reconsolidated political domination. These structural and conjunctural factors mixed in neighborhood atmospheres with micro-local memories of violence, known or suspected partisan affiliations and resentments, residues of mutual suspicion and tab-keeping routines. Together, these elements swelled in public shows' atmospheres as contradictory

impulses and dynamics. On the one hand, residents feared being seen in public celebration, which could be interpreted as allegiance to the post-2011 regime. Many public shows I attended with Joelle felt stiff and flat (see Cante, 2020, 2023a). Animateurs sometimes admonished audiences for their visible, palpable lack of enthusiasm. But they had to focus on trying to generate positive affects, and were extremely wary of disciplining public participation, lest they be heard as cogs in the apparatus of political control. In contrast, some public shows were undeniably lively, including in the Yopougon neighborhoods of Gesco and Doukouré, both super-diverse and largely "informal," but commonly associated with opposing political orientations.[4] In both areas, the public show's "stage" was overrun by exuberant youth, some of whom were unabashed in voicing a critique of post-war injustice during interactive segments, most others being content to have a dance and a good laugh.

Yet even in these instances, which could be described as emphatically convivial, animateurs refrained from ascribing meaning or "success" to any event's atmosphere. They were aware that, as fun as a particular show was, they could not guarantee the authenticity of audiences' participation: some residents might have felt compelled to attend, fearing their absence would be interpreted as defiance of the post-conflict settlement. As one resident in Gesco put it, festivities were haunted by the possibility that "white smiles" might hide a "black heart" (*dents blanches, coeur noir*, a popular Ivoirian proverb). More fundamentally, Joelle and her colleagues were fully aware that convivial atmospheres could not unmake enduring political and economic violence, at any scale. What they enlivened was a mode of living together that envisioned no settled point of arrival, because it could hardly be premised on defined identities or expressed intentionalities (see also Cante, 2023b). By working with the indeterminacies of atmospheres, in other words, animateurs wrangled with conviviality understood as radical openness, in Gilroy's terms. In this openness, violent fractures do not disappear. They are not forgotten in a fit of abandon, or papered over in momentary reconciliation. They are, rather, held in suspension (see Choy & Zee 2015), swirling amongst other atmospheric elements, mixing the actual and the virtual; and in that moment of suspension, before things (re)settle, the effects of urban fractures remain undecided.

In Kingston, meanwhile, Birdie and his Culture Yard colleagues faced similar – albeit different – exigencies. The museum catered to (inter)national tourists, for whom guides curated a consumable atmosphere, and Birdie's concern for how these atmospheric enlivenings "landed" was primarily business oriented: satisfied tourists wrote good reviews and, sometimes, came back for repeat visits. But as the museum doubled up as a community space and home, the boundaries between commercially oriented atmospheres and those that were lived through by locals continuously blurred in ways that made them indissociable. The guides' task grew more complex and imprecise as they maneuvered ties between the museum and the spaces outside the red green and gold gates that visitors toured. Trench Town residents routinely expressed their grievances with the museum in street corner conversations, as well as more official community meetings held

[4] Doukouré was attacked in 2011 by pro-Gbagbo militias. It was targeted as a predominantly "ethnic Northern" and allegedly pro-Ouattara constituency. Gesco, widely regarded as a pro-Gbagbo territory despite the neighborhood's size and fuzzy boundaries, was a primary target of "pacification" at the hands of pro-Ouattara forces.

in the local football club's common room. Some of these complaints articulated a refusal to be a part of the Trench Town product. As a neighbor to the museum put it, residents didn't want to be toured or "photographed like in a safari." Others lamented the commodification of black cultures of resistance, voicing a tension inherent to Rastafari's staunch anti-materialist ethos and the need to nurture viable communities within wider capitalist and oppressive structures (see Thomas 2011). A majority grumbled about the financial gains generated by the museum, begrudging the sometimes opaque ways in which these were redistributed within the community. Whether area dons with competing political affiliations, related gangs or disenfranchised neighbors, various competing parties eyed the museum space with envy, wishing for the money to trickle down in ways that best suited their interests. As a result, the museum existed in a fragile network of financial payoffs and strained negotiations, a landscape of resentment towards - and need for - the museum. "Unity", then, could not exclude friction.

The Culture Yard guides could not work to resolve or settle these tensions: they were the product of historical, layered and multi-scalar political and economic violences. Rather, their aim was to work with the sensuous and the atmospheric to give shape and form to what Joella Bitter has termed "the politics of relationality" (2021). Much like the impossible tasks of animating a live peacebuilding event in the context of political oppression, or the project of creating convivial atmospheres through political enclaves and neighborhood power-struggles, atmotechnics work towards stoking atmospheres of resolute indeterminacy. There is something about the atmospheric quality of conviviality that escapes capture. And there is something about operating at that elusive (fugitive?) but deeply sensuous level of togetherness that makes it very politically important – not just to allow life to go on, in spite of the climactic pressures of violence (Sharpe 2017), but to allow fleeting glances, tastes, whispers of the otherwise.

Conjointly, the atmotechnics of Joelle, Birdie and Blaise demand that we shift our attention from attempts to suture the fragmentations of urban living to foregrounding the processes (atmospheric and otherwise) that offer ways of living with and through rupture together. Conviviality then, is a set of ongoing, mutable relations that speak from – and of – the breaks, and atmotechnic practices become *convivial tools* (via Illich 1973) through which to counter the exploitative and enduring logics of racialized fracture. The ground thus created cannot be mapped along the territorial lines of colonial cartography; it is not traceable as a redrawn territory of unified citizenship and more evenly shared sovereignty. Rather, it remains an elusive – yet potent – practice of living together in ways that echo Stephen Jackson's concept of "broken world thinking" (Jackson 2014) and Donna Haraway's encouragement to "stay with the trouble" (Haraway 2016). As Tatiana Thieme (2021: 1095) has recently written, in a passage that is worth quoting at length: "Notably, staying with the trouble is a disposition that gives permission for things not to work (necessarily) and not to be fixed (right away), at least not in the way that adheres to familiar and mainstream metrics of expertise (Haraway 2016). Here the disposition of "staying with" and "living within" are particularly relevant in precarious urban terrains, which have always experienced processes of socio-technical breakdown. But there are situations that allow breakdown to be stayed with, to be inhabited and lived within."

Conclusion

In this paper, we have foregrounded atmotechnics as the practice of deliberately inflecting situated atmospheres. Expanding the concept from Wall's (2019) work on policing and crowd management, we focus on radio animateurs in Abidjan (Joelle) and tour guides in Kingston (Birdie). Across these different places and profiles, we highlight a shared, complex and subtle craft of enlivening atmospheres. We describe atmotechnical craft as multisensory, embodied, and relational. On the airwaves or in the street, the atmotechnicians weave sound and music together with food, smells, walking and dancing. This craft is integral to the work that Joelle and Birdie do. Animating the local airwaves or taking visitors around the streets of Trench Town produces (if not requires) a sense of shared aliveness, through which affects circulate and participants can feel themselves part of a moment or scene.

Our analysis situates Birdie and Joelle 's atmotechnics within what we call fractured urban atmospheres. Kingston and Abidjan, each in their own way, have been shaped by colonial legacies, enduring inequalities, and more or less spectacular forms of violent marginalization. The fractures that result from these processes – often discussed by scholars in terms of social division or political conflict – imprint upon urban atmospheres, which they charge with classed, gendered and racialized senses of belonging and mutuality, or on the contrary, with fear, uncertainty and suffocation. In such contexts, atmotechnics take on added significance. We show that conviviality, as an outcome of atmotechnics, acts as a counter to the deadening effects of violence. Because atmospheres are in-common (even as they are contested), bridging conjunctural public moods and subjective impressions/projections, atmotechnics necessarily conjure up forms of togetherness. These may well be diffuse and elusive, certainly difficult to put into words, but they nonetheless carry meaning. By juxtaposing atmotechnics and urban fractures, we ask what meanings of togetherness can be enacted in and through atmospheres. We show that Joelle and Birdie's enlivening practices enact "stretched" and ambiguous spatialities and which are at once thoroughly emplaced and extensive, public and intimate, tangible and beyond reach.

However, we resist the temptation of reading these enlivened, relational spatialities in terms of repair and reconciliation. We argue that convivial atmotechnics foster togetherness in and as indeterminacy. They hold the real and the otherwise in suspension within a shared, unfolding, pulsating scene. They produce atmospheric conviviality that is anchored to the fleshy fact of co-presence, to shared feelings and undisclosed potentialities, *as well as* to the undeniability of difference, division, inequality, and lurking death. As such, convivial atmotechnics are neither prophetic, prefiguring a more harmonious city, nor prophylactic, staving off incipient violence. The atmospheric conviviality that they animate cannot be mapped onto a teleology of progress, with its dubious indicators, nor easily cartographied as functional urban multiculture. Amotechnics, in short, cannot suture or paper over long standing fractures. But they make collective life sensible within and despite these fractures. And in doing so, they challenge the very idea of togetherness as a settled space, with its mutually agreed positions and identifiable destination. This does not make convivial atmotechnics overtly counter-hegemonic, but locates

them within a long tradition of fugitive practices: practices always-already involved in making the in-common, outside of dominant frames of commonality.

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